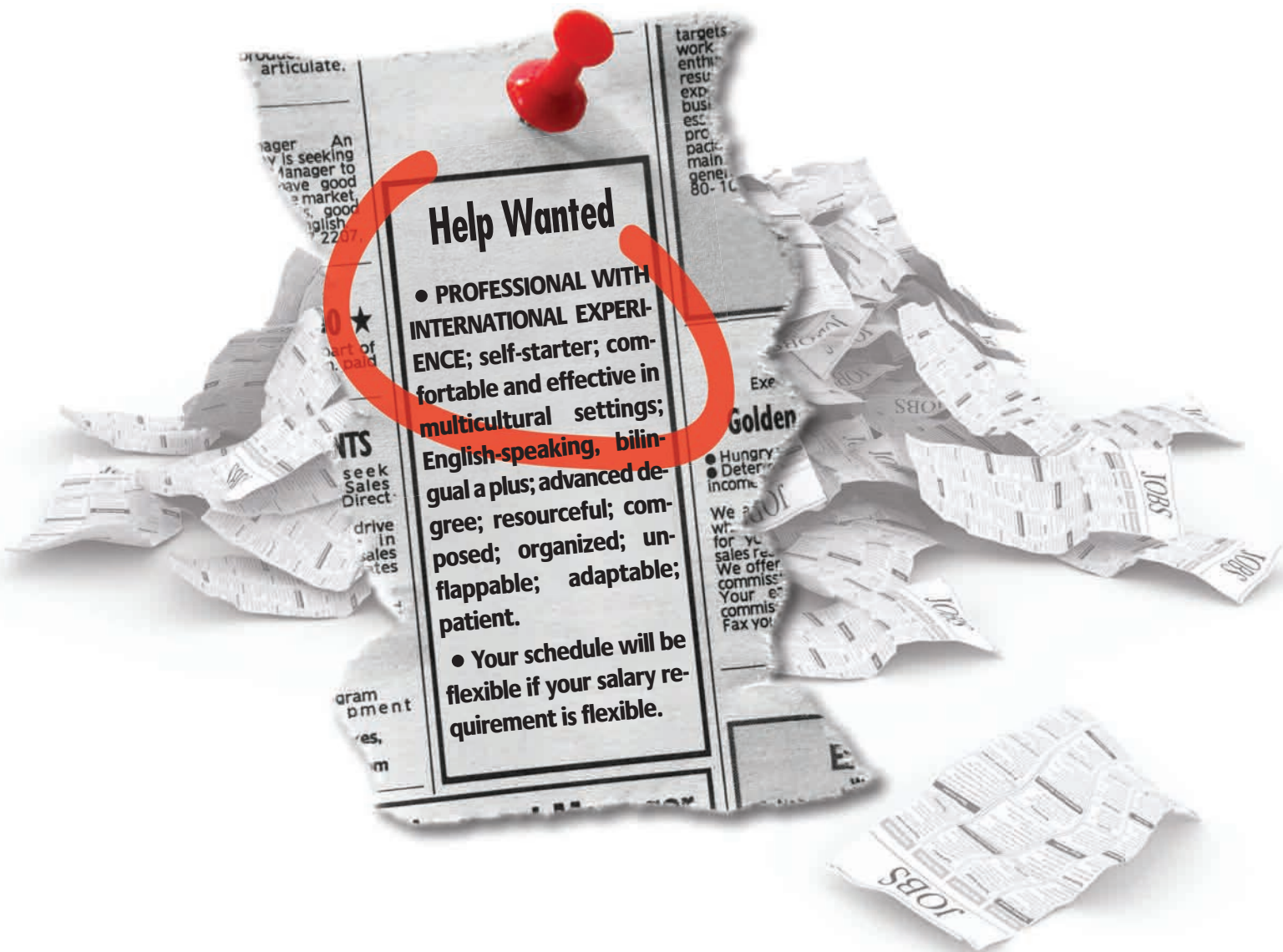


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JOURNAL

THE MAGAZINE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS



## FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT

*The Search for Meaningful Overseas Work*

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# PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

## *Professionalism versus Patronage & Elitism*

BY SUSAN R. JOHNSON

The Foreign Service is often called “elitist,” particularly when it resists appointments made on the basis of patronage or favoritism rather than merit. Such efforts, frequently dismissed as quixotic, also draw the caution that any resistance will itself be seen as elitist behavior.



A 2002 study of congressional staff attitudes toward the Foreign Service, funded by the Cox Foundation, found that most staffers believe the Foreign Service is “elitist” and “arrogant” — traits that alienate Congress. More recently, that same perception has been attributed to State Department leadership. In fact, today’s Foreign Service is more representative of the nation as a whole than ever before. So why does this prejudice persist?

History offers a possible explanation. The modern American Foreign Service was established as a professional diplomatic service by the Foreign Service Act of 1924, making the Department of State among the last parts of the federal government to move away from political patronage toward merit-based systems, a process initiated by the 1883 Pendleton Act.

By 1937, nearly half of U.S. ambassadors were career Foreign Service members, but that trend reached its zenith soon after that. Since World War II, about one-third of U.S. ambassadorships worldwide (and three-

quarters of those in major posts) have been reserved for political appointees, under Republican and Democratic administrations alike. By international standards, this is a very high proportion, and re-

fects the continuing strength of the patronage system. This legacy sustains the image of the Foreign Service as an elitist institution, even though it long ago ceased to be the exclusive domain of the wealthy and politically well-connected.

What do other diplomatic services do? In 2010 AFSA undertook a “benchmarking the competition” study. Like the United States, other major countries are grappling with challenges presented by technology, new global issues and, in some cases, significant generational change. They all emphasize high standards and tough requirements for entry to build a corps of professionals able to meet the responsibility to conduct multifaceted diplomacy abroad and provide policy and institutional leadership at home. They respect their diplomats for their professionalism and do not see them as elitist.

The American Foreign Service should be no different. In the Foreign Service Act of 1980, Congress deemed “a career Foreign Service, characterized by excellence and professionalism” essential to the national interest,

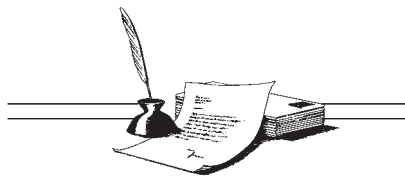
and affirmed that “the scope and complexity of the foreign affairs of the nation have heightened the need for a professional Foreign Service.”

The act calls for its members to “be representative of the American people ... knowledgeable of the affairs, cultures and languages of other countries, [and] available to serve in assignments throughout the world.” It also specifies that “the Foreign Service should be operated on the basis of merit principles” requiring “admission through impartial and rigorous examination...”

Recognition of merit as the underlying principle for advancement to positions of responsibility is important for morale and esprit de corps. Resorting to patronage undermines both.

Writing from a risk management perspective, Canadian diplomat Sam Hanson describes diplomacy as more complex than rocket science, observing that “if you get rocket science wrong you lose your spacecraft and crew. If you get diplomacy wrong ... you can get locked into wars with no way forward, no way out and no end in sight.” He concludes that “it is no more than prudent to take diplomacy as seriously as rocket science. Those who do not will have their heads handed to them by those who do.”

Most countries take diplomacy seriously and invest in top-notch, merit-based professional diplomatic services. Can we afford any less? ■



# LETTERS

## Esprit de Corps

I had to laugh out loud when I read Carol Urban's letter in the January *FSJ* commenting on Jon P. Dorschner's November 2011 Speaking Out column ("Why the Foreign Service Should Be More Like the Army"). In it, she alleges that Mr. Dorschner failed to cite any specific examples of the lack of esprit de corps and lack of concern for subordinates he says is prevalent within the Foreign Service. However, I thought he hit the nail on the head.

Since Ms. Urban requests examples, allow me to offer one from my time at the International Security Assistance Force regional command in Afghanistan. The deputy commander was an American colonel who would walk through the offices, common areas and dining hall, picking people at random with whom to sit down and talk.

It didn't matter whether they were in uniform or not — he just wanted to ask how they were doing, let them know their work was important, express his appreciation for what they were doing for the mission, and thank them for their dedication to duty and country.

By contrast, in the small State Department office where I worked, there was absolutely no communication, camaraderie or the slightest bit of appreciation for the contribution that each

employee made to the mission.

I could cite many other examples, but I feel confident that most of my Foreign Service colleagues see the truth of Mr. Dorschner's assessment. Too bad Ms. Urban does not.

*Daniel Reagan*  
*Regional Information*  
*Systems Security Officer*  
*Embassy Beijing*

## FS Code of Conduct

Thanks for the great and timely column by AFSA President Susan Johnson, "Essential Ingredients for a Professional Career Foreign Service," in the February *Journal*. I couldn't agree with her more.

We have operated far too long on assumptions of devotion to duty and adherence to proper codes of ethics; but speaking as someone who has chaired several promotion panels, I've seen that far too many of our colleagues fail at both. That's not because they're bad people, but because they don't have a "Code of Conduct" to guide them as the military has.

As a retired military officer and an about-to-retire Foreign Service officer, I've tried to instill something of the military code of ethics and behavior when I've been in charge of anyone or anything. Though AFSA is where it will have to start, Foreign Service

members will need to get on board for the concept to gain traction.

A good first step would probably be for AFSA to set up a panel, or (sorry for use of this word) commission, to start discussing and drafting a code of conduct and a guide to the general characteristics expected — *demand*ed — of all Foreign Service personnel. I would be more than happy to work with AFSA to help get something like this going.

*Charles A. Ray*  
*Ambassador*  
*Embassy Harare*

## A Bellwether for Technology

While I find all of your articles, editorials and assorted prose in each issue of the *Foreign Service Journal* to be consistently world-class and professional, I was especially delighted to read the item in the January Cybernotes section titled "Leading the Way on Cybersecurity." I hope your readership appreciates the truly substantive importance of such outstanding technical progress for U.S. diplomacy and development.

The Information Resource Management Bureau's determination and diligence (in what I am sure is very close collaboration with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security) toward improving systems security serve as a kind of





technological bellwether for future State Department forays into new reporting forums such as Foreign Service blogs, public diplomacy outreach programs and effective social media strategies.

As your article makes clear, IRM's achievements are now paying real dividends — not only by providing protection for the digital infrastructure entrusted with storage and processing of our national security information, but by commanding the active interest and professional recognition of many of today's leading corporations in the global IT sector.

I am pleased to let you know that I was quick to point your article out to many of my former management and IRM colleagues. Some of them may not be active members of AFSA or regular readers of the *Journal*, but with my little nudge, I'm sure they will find good reason to read the January issue.

I am also certain that when they do read it, they too will find themselves wearing a smile of present (or past) professional confidence. Thank you again and please keep up the outstanding reporting.

*Timothy C. Lawson  
Senior FSO, retired  
Prachuap Khirikhan,  
Thailand*

### Back to the Future

Two articles in the January issue — the Speaking Out column by George F. Jones, titled “The Next 50 Years,” and Margaret Sullivan's article, “Remembering Another Unforgettable Day” — brought back similarly indelible memories for me.

The first memory is from early March 1953. I was standing in a snow-packed park in Sioux City, Iowa, when someone said Josef Stalin had just died.

Even at the tender age of 8, I knew big changes were probably coming.

The second occurred just four months later, after our family had moved to Corpus Christi, Texas. The July 1953 announcement of the truce ending hostilities on the Korean Peninsula was big news to me, because it meant we would no longer be buying 10-cent and 25-cent stamps to fill up our war bond booklets. Nearly six decades later, our troops are still there, but I long ago cashed in my war bonds!

The third memory goes back to my junior year abroad as a student in Germany during the late spring of 1965. Following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in Vietnam, a fellow foreign student in my Munich dormitory blew up, ranting for almost half an hour about U.S. involvement there, which he compared with the 1953 CIA-backed coup in his country — Iran.

What he said disturbed me so much that I wrote a long letter to President Lyndon Johnson (or my member of Congress at the time, John Young; I no longer recall which one) detailing those allegations.

A month later I received a three-page letter from the State Department denying almost every allegation in my letter point by point. I shared it with everyone on my dorm floor, and they were all impressed.

While the Iranian student (appropriately) disbelieved the substance of the letter, he conceded that at least it was evident that we had democracy in America — which “we don't in Iran.”

Now, as I reflect on current conditions in Iran and U.S. relations with that country, I realize we are back to the future again.

*George Wilcox  
FSO, retired  
Tucson, Ariz. ■*



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# CYBERNOTES

## Lost in Translation

On Feb. 21 the *People's Daily* and *Global Times* posted an article, "U.S. Embassy Staff Test Totally 'Fake.'" The article by Yan Shuang reports: "A picture showing a written exam, which includes nine questions concerning subjects like history, sociology, political science, and even medicine and engineering, has been circulating on microblogs and online forums."

The "picture" is a Chinese translation of part of the Foreign Service exam parody published in AFSA's 2011 book, *Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work*.

Apparently provoking a viral outbreak of consternation, the test questions were reposted 22,000 times on Chinese online forums and microblogs by Feb. 20.

"Many Web users doubted whether it could be real, since it is too difficult," *Global Times* notes, adding: "U.S. embassy spokesman Richard Buangan made clear on his Sina microblog yesterday that an alleged 'recruitment test for expatriate employees at the U.S. embassy' is fake."

According to *Global Times*, the questions were published in *Vistastory* news magazine next to an interview with former Embassy Beijing Deputy Chief of Mission Dan Picutta (who is profiled in the book).

Among the translated test questions was one on medicine: "You have been

It's quite distressing to see two permanent members of the Security Council using their veto while people are being murdered — women, children, brave young men — and houses are being destroyed. It is just despicable, and I ask, whose side are they on? They are clearly not on the side of the Syrian people.

— Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, speaking at the Feb. 25 Friends of Syria conference in Tunis about the Russian and Chinese vetoes of a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning Syrian President Bashar Assad; *U.S. News and World Report* ([www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)).

provided with a razor blade, a piece of gauze, and a bottle of Scotch. Remove your appendix." And another on music: "Write a piano concerto. Orchestrate and perform it with flute and drum. You will find a piano under your seat."

While it is hard to imagine that such questions could be taken seriously, it does appear that the humor may have been lost in translation. Analysts intent on divining why a "not real" test would appear in a serious U.S. publication seem to have missed the joke entirely.

Indeed, Yan Shuang quotes *Vistastory* writer Chen Jingson explaining that their information was from *Inside a U.S. Embassy*: "In Chapter Five they introduced this test, and we took some questions, translated them and made our list." The *Global Times* also notes that the same exam was printed in the June 2008 *Foreign Service Journal*.

AFSA posted a clarification comment on both news sites. It was accepted by *Global Times*, but was taken

down after a day. The same comment was accepted for review by *People's Daily* but never appeared on the site.

To compound the irony, the same week that the *People's Daily* and *Global Times* were clarifying that the test was a fake, the AFSA-sanctioned Chinese translation of *Inside a U.S. Embassy* (2005 edition) was received at AFSA headquarters for review. With the help of Embassy Beijing, AFSA is checking that text carefully. Publication of the Chinese edition is expected in May.

— Shawn Dorman,  
Associate Editor

## Haiti, Two Years after the Quake

Shortly before Christmas, President Barack Obama announced the nomination of FSO Pamela Ann White as the next U.S. ambassador to Haiti. Chief of mission in The Gambia until her nomination, Ambassador White previously served as USAID mission director in Liberia, Tanzania



**SITE OF THE MONTH: <http://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/>**

Although North Korean negotiators reportedly have agreed to suspend uranium enrichment and nuclear tests, global anxiety continues to mount over the possibility that Tehran will soon develop its own nuclear capability — or that Israel will launch a pre-emptive strike to head off that possibility. Either scenario could trigger widespread conflict and instability.

Against that backdrop, it is timely that Alex Wellerstein, a science historian at the American Institute of Physics ([www.aip.org](http://www.aip.org)), recently added a new feature to his *Nuclear Secrecy* blog (<http://nuclearsecrecy.com>).

Ominously called *Nukemap*, the site prompts viewers to select a location and a bomb size, then illustrates the approximate blast radius and radiation reach when such a weapon is deployed. The program emerged from exercises Wellerstein developed while teaching physics at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

During the site's first month alone, more than 200,000 unique visitors set off an average of five detonations each. The majority of these "blasts" have taken place in the United States and Western Europe, but a map depicting visitors' selections makes clear that interest in the subject is truly worldwide.

Written from a nonpartisan perspective, *Nuclear Secrecy* analyzes current events related to nuclear weapons, civil defense and related subjects. It also offers a trove of historical documents and resources for teachers, students and researchers.

— Steven Alan Honley, Editor

and Mali, among many other Foreign Service assignments.

Once confirmed, Amb. White will need to draw on every bit of that career experience to succeed in her new posting. Recovery from the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake that registered 7.0 on the Richter scale, killed more than 300,000 people and destroyed the lives of thousands of others continues to be painfully slow. At least half a million Haitians are still living in temporary settlements, according to the International Organization for Migration (<http://reliefweb.int/>).

As if the death toll and damage to infrastructure were not enough, Haiti is also struggling to rebuild political, economic and social institutions hollowed out by many decades of social injustice and political turmoil. According to a United Nations Development

Program study ([www.undp.gov](http://www.undp.gov)), three quarters of the population "lives on less than \$2 per day, and 56 percent — four and a half million people — live on less than \$1 per day."

Michel Martelly, a former musician with the stage name "Sweet Micky," has been president of Haiti since May 2011. He won office on a platform of jump-starting the country's recovery and fighting corruption.

Despite initial doubts about his abilities, his administration has made real progress. The Inter-American Dialogue ([www.thedialogue.org](http://www.thedialogue.org)) reports that more than half of the 10 million cubic feet of debris from the disaster has been removed, and notes that plans to set up an industrial park in the northeastern part of the island could bring 20,000 jobs.

Martelly has had much less success

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## CYBERNOTES



on the political front, however. On Feb. 25, Prime Minister Garry Conille resigned after just four months in office, with no successor in sight. Reuters reports that his ouster follows a series of increasingly public clashes with Martelly over earthquake reconstruction contracts and a parliamentary investigation into dual citizenship of government ministers, which is illegal under Haitian law ([www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)).

Conille, a 45-year-old medical doctor and U.N. development expert, was popular with foreign aid donors and many members of the international community, so his departure is likely to slow down progress even further.

Though more than 100 countries pledged a total of \$5 billion for reconstruction at a March 2010 United Nations-sponsored donor conference for Haiti, they have delivered barely half of that total two years later. While the United States has contributed less than a third of the \$914 million it pledged, it still leads the rest of the world by a large margin, according to a report in the Jan. 11 *Guardian* ([www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)).

One of the leading private charities on the rebuilding front is the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund ([www.clintonbushhaitifund.org](http://www.clintonbushhaitifund.org)). Headed by former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, the organization has raised more than \$54 million thus far, and uses a variety of approaches and programs to stretch its donations. The fund's bottom-up approach encompasses 34 different aid programs of various sizes in fields ranging from solar energy to artisan exports and work-force development.

On Jan. 16, CNN reports, Laurent Lamothe, Haiti's minister of foreign and religious affairs, named actor Sean

Penn an Ambassador at Large for Haiti during a fundraiser at the Cinema for Peace in Beverly Hills, Calif., that raised over \$5 million. Penn was honored for his charity work, which includes leading the construction of a camp for tens of thousands of Haitians (<http://marquee.blogs.cnn.com>).

— David J. Barton,  
Editorial Intern

### Happy 20th Birthday, GLIFAA!

On March 8, 1992, Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies ([www.glifaa.org](http://www.glifaa.org)) was born over brunch in the living room of David Buss and David Larson. The couple had invited about a dozen other State Department and USAID employees who, like Buss, were under criminal investigation by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security because of allegations they were homosexual.

A few weeks later, GLIFAA arrived at a consensus on a name for the group, drafted bylaws and policies, and began reaching out to AFSA, State's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and other allies. Though it grew slowly at first, the organization now has more than 300 members, including a network of post representatives who help to address the needs of members and allies serving overseas.

The issuance of a non-discrimination policy by Secretary of State Warren Christopher in 1993 was one of the organization's early successes. It has also worked closely with State and other foreign affairs agencies to develop and implement rights and privileges for same-sex partners of employees overseas.

In the summer of 2009, the Department of State granted Eligible Family Member status to domestic



## 50 Years Ago...

There was once a Foreign Service wife who knew the name of every chief of state in Africa. She could (and frequently would) discourse upon such matters as revanchist tendencies in the Balkans or nationalist cross-currents in South Asia. She had highly vocal views about domestic politics, “The Ugly American,” de Gaulle, the Wriston Program, the inadequacy of Foreign Service pay and the promotion list.

One day her husband was advised that he was being considered for assignment to a certain post abroad. When he reached home that night his wife said, as she always did, “What’s new down at the department, dear?”

When he mentioned the impending transfer, she immediately recalled an article in *Foreign Affairs* on the country. Prognosis of unrest. She remembered that a friend, whose husband was in INR, had known a man who had once served there. Dreadful housing. Furthermore, the wife of the DCM was notoriously lax on protocol.

The wife strongly advised against going to the new post, although she wanted to have a final check with the girls at the Foreign Service Wives luncheon. They confirmed her worst fears, and so the offer was turned down.

The Office of Personnel reacted to this refusal in its normal fashion: It flew into a state of dudgeon. The couple was forthwith ordered to the central Dashi-i-Lut, a post from which all other places look divine.

The job was then offered to another Foreign Service officer, who rushed home to tell his wife. She couldn’t tell the difference between G/PM and GPU, but she was very pretty and wore wonderful hats.

When he came hurrying up the walk, bursting with his news, she met him at the door and gave him a rapid report of her day’s domestic disasters, an account of the children’s experiences at school, an inquiry into the state of the family finances, and a clinical description of the maid’s condition, ending with a frantic plea to look through all those magazines piling up in the front room.

When finally he managed to blurt out his news, she said, “That’s fine, dear. Where is it? Now tell me what you had for lunch; I must go and fix dinner.”

They proceeded without further comment to their new post, and he rose rapidly to the heights in his career.

MORAL: She who looks before he leaps is lost.

— Fables for the Foreign Service: “The Wife,” *FSJ*, April 1962.



partners of its employees and to their children. This breakthrough was followed by similar steps at other agencies that send employees overseas.

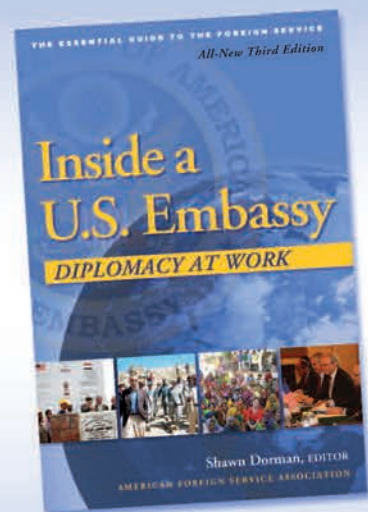
Thanks in large part to the work of GLIFAA over the past two decades, the ability of lesbian, gay, bisexual and

transgender personnel, whether in the Foreign Service or Civil Service, to serve openly and successfully in U.S. foreign affairs agencies is now greater than ever.

— Steven Alan Honley,  
Editor ■

## The Cure for the Blank Stare...

For all those times you get a blank stare when you say “I’m in the Foreign Service,” wouldn’t it be nice to have an easy explanation? It is. Just hand over a copy of *Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work*, AFSA’s introduction to the Foreign Service. The book is also a great resource for when you visit a university or high school.



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# SPEAKING OUT

## *Purchasing Parity: USAID's EFM Language Training Policy*

BY BRENDAN M. WHEELER

Attention, U.S. Agency for International Development FSOs preparing for language-designated positions: You may want to get out your checkbooks. An assignment to a language-designated post can cost you and your family thousands of dollars more than it would your State counterparts.

As with many other American families, it is common for Foreign Service families to have two working adult professionals, whether to maintain long-term financial stability, maintain a healthy relationship dynamic, or shed any feeling of dependency. Whatever the reason, many Eligible Family Members simply enjoy the work they do and, understandably, don't want to leave it behind when their spouse is posted to a faraway city with a name that their colleagues struggle to pronounce.

Still, it is no secret that EFM jobs at many posts either aren't available or aren't the right fit professionally. So many spouses and partners look to an American company, an international organization or a nongovernmental organization for opportunities.

Too often, however, EFMs lack the language fluency needed to compete successfully for jobs on the local economy. So how can they acquire such proficiency?

*Giving USAID Eligible Family Members affordable access to language instruction would be expensive. But it can be done.*



### **One Service, Two Agencies, Two Policies**

If a State Department Foreign Service employee is slated for language training at the Foreign Service Institute, he or she can make a quick call to his or her career development officer to have the spouse or partner enrolled in the same course. Assuming space is available, several months later (after a lot of hard work) the officer and EFM can debate the fine points of U.S. policy in one of the 70 languages FSI teaches.

The same is *not* true for USAID FSOs. Their agency's policy on language training for Eligible Family Members diverges sharply from State's, creating a lack of parity for USAID Foreign Service families.

According to the Foreign Affairs Manual (13 FAM 110), FSI is gener-

ally funded by the Department of State to train direct-hire State employees and State EFMs at no cost to the bureau or post. In contrast, the other foreign affairs agencies must pay tuition to train their employees or family members at FSI.

Currently, USAID purchases no more than eight weeks of language training for each EFM. And those eight weeks usually come in the form of a FAST course.

For instance, a State EFM destined for Dakar may receive the full 30-week French Basic course at FSI. At the end of the course, the EFM can expect to speak and read at the "3" level. A "3" represents General Professional Proficiency, according to the five-point Interagency Language Roundtable scale FSI uses.

In contrast, a USAID EFM going to the same post can only enroll in the eight-week FAST course. With 22 fewer weeks of training, he or she can only expect to develop language skills at the "1" (Elementary) or "1+" (Elementary, plus) level.

To be fair, some USAID EFMs may already have strong language skills as a result of previous study or experience. The eight weeks at FSI will allow them to "top up" or refresh their ability before getting to post. And others may be among the envied few who take to



languages easily. For them, a FAST course could be all they need to master the proper use of the imparfait versus the passé composé and all the other wonders of French grammar, for instance.

But what about everyone else? Lack of proficiency in the local language makes a job applicant less competitive. And those EFMs who do land jobs outside the mission will find it tough to function in a professional environment with limited fluency.

### Purchasing Parity

There is no getting around the fact that it would be costly for FSI to give USAID EFMs the same access to language instruction as their State counterparts routinely receive. But what about other ways to offer them parity?

Let us assume that a student with no previous French-language instruction requires five contact hours a day for a period of 30 weeks to develop “3” level speaking and reading skills. An EFM who is new to the language can complete the eight-week FAST course at government expense, but he or she will still require approximately 22 weeks — 550 hours — of instruction to reach the “3” level.

The Washington, D.C., area is home to many private language schools. But they generally charge \$45-\$50 per hour for one-on-one instruction. At that rate, the cost for 550 hours of training comes to around \$25,000. Even EFMs in the “1 percent” may find that *trés cher*!

Let us further assume that one-on-one instruction at a reputable private language school will allow a motivated spouse or partner to learn the language faster. Even if they can cut the number of hours in half, at \$47 per hour the tuition bill for 225 hours of instruction

still comes to more than \$10,000.

If the family member is lucky, the school will put him or her with another student at the same proficiency level, who has the same schedule and desire to learn the language, to form a semi-private or small group class. At approximately \$30 per hour each, a semi-private class for an EFM who wishes to attain the “3” level would cost \$6,000.

What about the post language program or local instructors? It is true that USAID EFMs can participate in post language programs. In addition, local instructors are generally less expensive than those in Washington. But unfortunately, post language programs are not designed or resourced to bring beginner students from the “0” or even the “1+” level to the “3” level quickly.

### A Glass Half Full?

Let us assume that the FSO needs to learn French for his or her next post. The French Basic course at FSI lasts 30 weeks. The family can expect to relocate to Washington, D.C., for at least eight months while the officer attends FSI.

Hopefully, the Eligible Family Member already has a career and an employer flexible enough to allow him or her to work from Washington, D.C., during these eight months. If so, it may make financial sense to postpone language training until arrival at post, when the family member can take advantage of lower instruction rates. Meanwhile, the EFM can continue to pursue his or her career, drawing a paycheck.

Of course, not every Foreign Service family is that lucky. Spending eight months in Washington, D.C., may require the EFM to stop working. A “glass half-full” EFM will see

the positive in this situation: Eight months in Washington will allow him or her to concentrate on the language. The EFM then can hit the ground running at post.

But remember: the glass is still half-empty. Patching together a two-month, full-time FAST course at FSI and full- or part-time instruction at a private school in Washington, to get an EFM to the “3” level in eight months may require \$6,000 to \$10,000 in outlays.

In addition, if the EFM cannot work while in training, the family could lose its second income. Assume the EFM draws \$50,000 annually. Lost income plus outlays during that eight-month period could cost the family upwards of \$40,000.

There is no easy solution to this problem. Imagine for a moment that USAID allowed its EFMs to study side-by-side with their State counterparts in basic language courses at FSI. Such a change would achieve parity, but both the USAID and State families will still experience lost income amounting to thousands of dollars. In addition, USAID would have to expend scarce operating expenses to support full-time EFM language training.

Fortunately, a creative workaround exists. Currently, USAID pays FSI approximately \$1,100 per week for a short-term, concentrated eight-week FAST course. Why not give the family member the option of applying the equivalent amount to sustained, part-time, one-on-one training at a local private language school?

At \$47 per hour for one-on-one study, an EFM could study for two hours each day, four days per week, for almost six months with the \$8,800 USAID would otherwise spend at FSI

## SPEAKING OUT



for the two-month FAST course. In this way, EFMs could enjoy sustained contact with the language while still having enough time to work part-time or see to family responsibilities.

For that matter, if there is a seat available at FSI and an eager USAID spouse or partner wishes to fill it, why charge USAID at all? Is it really better to leave it empty?

### Catching Up

USAID should be commended for its general support of Foreign Service families. The current USAID EFM language training policy is well-intentioned and reflects a step in the right direction. The policy ensures that family members can develop the basic language skills needed to engage socially

with host communities abroad.

Still, the policy does not help prepare them to succeed professionally at post. Also, when compared to how State supports its EFMs with language training, USAID's budget appears to leave us a step behind.

But USAID can catch up — and AFSA is already helping. Late last year, AFSA included EFM language training in a package of parity issues it presented to USAID. While it has not yet announced any decisions on these issues, the agency is reviewing its options. To help spur discussion, here are three ways forward for USAID and others to consider.

1. State, USAID, AFSA and others could work together to rewrite 13 FAM 110 to expand FSI's mandate

to all appropriate Foreign Service personnel and their Eligible Family Members. State should then ensure FSI receives the necessary resources to implement the new policy.

2. USAID could give EFMs the option to matriculate in basic language courses at FSI, rather than only be eligible for FAST courses.

3. USAID could give EFMs the option for long-term, part-time training at a local private language school at a cost equivalent to that of a FAST course. ■

*Brendan M. Wheeler, a USAID FSO since 2008, is currently in language training in advance of his assignment in Dakar. He previously served in Addis Ababa.*

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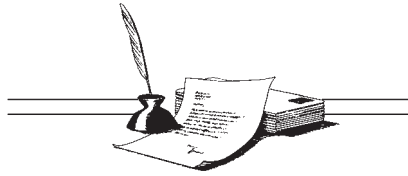
  
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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

On behalf of my colleagues at the *Foreign Service Journal* and AFSA, I would like to thank the 796 people who took part in our recent online reader survey. That total represents nearly 5 percent of our current circulation of 17,000 — a very healthy response that has provided us with a lot of useful information.

First, a few notes on the demographics of the survey participants. Active-duty Foreign Service personnel comprised 60 percent of the respondents, while 38 percent are FS retirees; the remaining 2 percent are not affiliated with the Foreign Service. Most of the respondents are between 35 and 49 years old (27 percent), 50 and 59 (21 percent) or 60 and 65 (14 percent).

Of the active-duty FS cohort, 20 percent are entry-level, 65 percent mid-level and 14 percent are in the Senior Foreign Service. (The rest did not indicate their grade.) Two-thirds of them are currently posted abroad.

We asked respondents to rate the quality of the *Foreign Service Journal* as a whole, with 1 being poor and 10 being the best. Twenty-four percent selected 7 as the ranking, 30 percent chose 8, 11 percent said 9 and 4 percent give it a 10. (Only 10 percent assigned a rating between 1 and 4.)

When asked how many of the 11 issues published last year they had read, 43 percent of respondents said they'd

*Thanks to all who  
took part in our  
reader survey,  
especially those who  
offered thoughtful  
comments on our  
content and format.*



read 10 or 11; an additional 18 percent said they'd read seven to nine, and another 17 percent had read four to six issues from the past year. In terms of how much of a typical issue they read, 38 percent said between 26 and 50 percent, 25 percent said they read 51-75 percent, and 13 percent read 76-100 percent of each issue.

We then listed all sections of the *Journal* (whether they appear every month or occasionally) and asked respondents to tell us whether they read each one always, often, rarely or never. As in the 2008 reader survey, *AFSA News* remains extremely popular: 36 percent of survey participants always read it and another 42 percent do so often, for a total of 78 percent. But several other sections also rank high: standalone features (81 percent), *Speaking Out* columns (79 percent) and *Letters* (78 percent).

Next, we asked a series of questions related to the online version of the magazine ([www.afsa.org/fsj](http://www.afsa.org/fsj)). Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of respondents said they prefer to read the print edition of the magazine.

Of those who prefer the digital format, a third (34 percent) regularly look at the current issue online, while 70 percent consult back issues posted online at least a few times a year. (You can now read all issues going back to January 2003, and we are in the process of adding issues from 2000, 2001 and 2002 to the online archives.)

Most respondents said their overall experience with the digital version has been good (55 percent), fair (28 percent) or excellent (7 percent). A quarter of online readers would be interested in having the magazine available via a mobile device or app, an option we are investigating.

Five questions invited respondents to offer written comments and suggestions, an invitation that several hundred of you took us up on. We are truly gratified by the degree of interest in the magazine the additional input demonstrates, and are in the process of going through those comments with a view to implementing those ideas that are feasible.

In that spirit, we always welcome your thoughts and submissions. Please contact us at [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org) and we will be delighted to respond. ■

# FS SPOUSAL EMPLOYMENT: SLOW BUT STEADY PROGRESS



**F**

IT'S GETTING EASIER FOR FOREIGN SERVICE FAMILY MEMBERS TO FIND MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT OVERSEAS, BUT THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO.

BY SHAWN ZELLER

First the bad news. Finding rewarding work while accompanying a Foreign Service employee overseas remains an incredible challenge. Many chiefs of mission do not make it a high priority to help spouses and partners find work, and many of the jobs within posts are clerical or short-term.

Jobs on the local economy are hard to come by and often pay wages far lower than similar jobs in the United States. American companies have yet to fully embrace teleworking, and starting your own business carries all the perils it does

back in the States — and then some.

State's own numbers confirm that finding a job — any job — while your spouse or partner is serving overseas is not easy. Of the 11,056 Eligible Family Members abroad in 2011, more than six in 10 were not working.

Now for the good news. It's becoming less difficult for EFMs to find meaningful employment overseas. According to 2011 data provided by the State Department's Family Liaison Office, the percentage of family members working rose from 35 percent in 2004 to 41 percent in 2010. The figure slipped to 37 percent last year, but the overall trend is encouraging.

Despite the progress, the picture is still disheartening for spouses and partners who want or, for financial reasons, need to work. The American Foreign Service Association is making the case to State Department leaders that much more could be done to help spouses and partners, notes AFSA State Department Vice President Daniel Hirsch.

Hirsch says that more spousal jobs at posts should be centrally funded to ensure that they are there, regardless of any financial difficulties the post may face. Leaving it up to individual missions to find the money for family member jobs "makes it optional and frequently one of the first pieces of funding to disappear in tough times," he observes.

Second, AFSA wants State to set up a central job bank of all family member positions and a skills bank listing the experience and education of the family members who want to work. By publicizing all that information during bidding season, Foreign Service employees and their spouses could make more informed choices about where they want to go. For their part, posts would be able to offer spouses more challenging work because they'd have more assurance that people with the skills to do the job would be available.

Finally, Hirsch says that the department should develop teleworking opportunities for family members overseas, enabling them to telework to jobs either from one

***AFSA continues to make the case to State that it needs to do much more to help spouses and partners find work.***

post to another, or from overseas back to Washington. "While not all jobs lend themselves to telework, many do," Hirsch notes, adding: "Telework could dramatically increase opportunities to match skilled eligible family members with jobs needing their skills."

Still, Hirsch points out, spouses and partners have to accept that the burden will always remain on them

to secure employment, and that the Foreign Service lifestyle will create headaches and conflicts. "You unfortunately have to realize that you may not be able to do exactly what you want to do. You have to be flexible," he notes.

***Finding Work in the Embassy or Consulate***

Responses from active-duty Foreign Service employees the *Foreign Service Journal* invited to comment on these issues earlier this year contained lots of helpful advice, on everything from working in an embassy to starting your own business, teleworking and finding positions on the local economy.

Still, most spouses who find work continue to find it at the U.S. embassy, consulate or mission where their spouse is stationed. That was the case for two out of every three family members who held down jobs in 2011, according to FLO.

Jobs in the mission are usually the easiest and safest employment for spouses and partners to secure. And thanks to federal employment rules, such positions confer the opportunity to quickly become a Civil Service employee, with all the rights and benefits that status entails.

The drawback is that many top embassy officials don't want to make special accommodations for spouses and partners, or see doing so as unwise. The reasons for this are sometimes understandable: Family members can take a while to hire, considering that many posts come with a security clearance requirement and spouses sometimes quit early to handle the logistics of moving to the next posting. Often, it's also easier and cheaper to find local employees to do the work.

Numerous spouses who responded to the AFSA survey said nepotism rules, which bar hiring the spouses of certain embassy officials, had prevented them from getting

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

hired. But others vociferously defended the nepotism rules as safeguards against double standards and unfairness.

In any case, most current embassy jobs are clerical. In 2010 (the most recent year for which data are available), more than half of all spouses in embassy jobs were working as administrative assistants (19 percent) or in management support (13 percent), consular affairs (12 percent), security (10 percent), or program support (7 percent).

But that is slowly changing. Thanks to the professional associates program, which is open to both civil servants and eligible family members, and the four-year-old expanded professional associates program, which is limited to family members, an increasing number of spouses are obtaining more satisfying jobs in embassies or consulates.

Only a handful of spouses typically find jobs through the professional associates program, but the expanded program now offers 160 jobs to eligible family members in entry-level (FS-7 to FS-4) positions. These jobs span most of those available to Foreign Service personnel. Applicants must commit to working full time for at least a full year.

These jobs are centrally funded, which means they don't depend on the vicissitudes of individual embassy finances. The application process is rigorous, but those who have gone through the program say the work was enjoyable.

### **“Take the Training”**

When Carl Henriksen's spouse decided to make a late-career switch to the Foreign Service in 2009, Henriksen decided to take advantage of the opportunities available for spouses to take courses at the Foreign Service Institute. He had plenty of business experience from working for a company exporting forest products machinery to China, but wanted to learn more about how the federal government operates.

Toward that end, he took general services courses at FSI, as well as Spanish, to prepare for his wife's stint in Mexico. “One of the things I decided to do when I found myself getting into this world is that I would take any training they would give me,” he says. “That has stood me in good stead.”

## ***Most EFMs who work overseas do so at the embassy, consulate or mission where their spouse is stationed.***

In 2010 Henriksen landed a job in Embassy Mexico City's narcotics affairs section as a contracting officer, just as U.S. aid began flowing into Mexico to help it fight drug smuggling. The previous year, Congress had launched the Mérida Initiative, and has since appropriated some \$1.5 billion to help Mexico train police and prosecutors and reform its correction system. The money is also

bolstering Mexico's armed forces and police with new helicopters and X-ray equipment.

“It was good timing and luck. I got there right as we were trying to address training and equipment needs,” says Henriksen. “The narcotics affairs office had 20 people when I started, and when I left it had 160.” Mid-tour, that job led to an opportunity to become procurement and contracting general services officer for Mission Mexico through the expanded professional associates program.

When his wife's tour ended last April, Henriksen recalled a presentation given by the Family Liaison Office explaining Executive Order 12721. First issued by President George H.W. Bush and maintained ever since, the order allows family members who have served 52 weeks in an embassy position to enter the Civil Service without going through the competitive process. “It's important to get a letter from Human Resources confirming your eligibility before you leave post,” Henriksen says.

That's also a boon for agencies looking to hire qualified personnel quickly — and for people like Henriksen, who want to parlay their experience overseas into full-time jobs. Now a GS-11 civil servant in State's Bureau of Narcotics and Law Enforcement, he is involved in contracting for U.S. aid to law enforcement agencies in seven Central American countries. And he's able to do it while teleworking from his wife's new post in Honduras.

“My intention is to stay with State,” he says. “My plan is to continue to work in whatever post and telework to the same office.”

### **State Isn't the Only Agency Hiring**

Another option is to find work with a foreign affairs agency other than State.

During her first overseas posting, Catherine Pierce

## FOCUS

says she was happy to land a job with the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service helping American companies trying to export products to Africa.

Before Pierce arrived in Senegal, she asked the community liaison officer there to put her on the newsletter mailing list so she could get a feel for what kind of jobs might be available. She started applying in March, four months before her July arrival, and by April she'd landed an interview with FCS.

The job paid better than the clerical positions the embassy was offering, and Pierce hopes it will serve her well when she again seeks private-sector work in marketing. The disadvantage was that the Commercial Service, part of the Commerce Department, doesn't recognize eligible family member status. That means she could only be employed as a contractor, without earning any federal benefits.

Her advice: Learn the local language and take relevant courses at the Foreign Service Institute and start

looking for work as soon as possible. "And, like the Boy Scouts: always be prepared."

### **Working Outside the Embassy**

The prospects for spouses and partners working outside the embassy are slowly getting better, but they still have a long way to go. So far, State has concluded bilateral work agreements with 114 countries, authorizing spouses to pursue jobs on the local economy. Most of those arrangements have long been in place, but the U.S. has signed a dozen of them in the last five years, most recently with Austria and Germany.

Though all spouses retain full immunity from criminal prosecutions in these countries under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, even under the work agreements they do not have civil and administrative immunity stemming from anything related to their local employment.

Informal arrangements exist with 42 other countries,

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including France and Japan, that (at least in theory) allow spouses and partners to find local jobs. The Family Liaison Office recommends that in those countries, spouses first secure employment offers, then host-government work permits, before starting work. You risk getting in trouble by doing otherwise.

No bilateral work agreements of any kind exist with four large Asian countries, however: China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. FLO's director, Leslie Teixeira, says she sees little prospect of Beijing or Jakarta changing its position, but she's more hopeful about Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile, State has continued to implement its Global Employment Initiative, which now has 17 advisers who offer guidance on finding local jobs to family members at 65 posts. The program gets mixed reviews from participants, however. FLO also acknowledges that a partnership with the U.S. headhunting firm Manpower Inc., aimed at providing on-the-ground support and job placement services for eligible family members, has proven less successful than hoped.

In seeking work on the local economy of a foreign country, spouses face all the usual hurdles facing job-seekers anywhere, as well as others arising from their status as Foreign Service spouses. The chief barriers are a lack of language proficiency and an inability to commit to long-term employment. Sometimes businesses are intrigued by the idea of taking on an American employee for a short-term stint, but oftentimes the other factors preclude it.

Security and safety concerns, as well as the low wages paid by businesses in the developing world, can also act as disincentives for Foreign Service family members.

For all these reasons, the number of spouses working on the local economy remains small: just 665 in 2011, according to FLO. Of these, 179 had positions with local companies; 416 worked in education, which continues to be the most prevalent source of outside employment; and 70 landed jobs with nongovernmental and international organizations.

### **The Role of Serendipity**

Foreign Service family members who have made it work, like Diane Holt, say there are things one can do to distinguish oneself from other potential candidates: learning the language, studying the country's history and pursuing positions in niche markets where your skills or U.S.

background are all desirable. But Holt, who has practiced law in Prague and handled mergers and acquisitions for an Italian electric company — all while accompanying her Foreign Service spouse overseas — says there's "a lot of serendipity" involved, as well.

When Holt moved to Prague in 1993, the country was rapidly changing following the fall of communism, and her U.S. legal background proved appealing to potential employers. She ended up joining, and later managing, a legal and consulting firm in which 80 percent of her colleagues were Czech or Slovak.

Several years later, in Italy, Holt parlayed an informational interview with an executive she'd met through a mutual acquaintance into a position as an in-house counsel for the country's electric monopoly. She was one of only two foreigners in a large headquarters office.

As with any job search, contacts and networking matter. In 1987, Ann La Porta found work in New Zealand much as Holt did. "My husband, Al [who was deputy chief of mission in Wellington], happened to sit next to a lawyer at a meeting who was looking for someone to replace a lawyer in a railroad housing case. He volunteered me," she says. Later, La Porta continued to work with a Maori lawyer she'd met through that case.

When La Porta couldn't find paying work, she built up her network by volunteering. In Sumatra, for example, she worked with the local university to help set up a legal aid department. And in Mongolia, she helped establish a shelter for women who were victims of domestic violence. "I made it my job to meet the people in the country who were prominent members of the legal profession," she recalls.

### **Teleworking**

Though it is not yet a major source of employment, teleworking with firms or government agencies back in the U.S. offers perhaps the greatest potential. Last year, FLO says, 129 family members teleworked from overseas.

FLO Director Leslie Teixeira recommends that spouses who are hopeful that their U.S. employer will allow them to continue to work from abroad prepare their case well. It's much harder, she says, to convince a brand-new employer to bring on a teleworker, especially from overseas.

Though telework continues to carry a stigma in many offices — the notion that working from home is not really work — there's plenty of evidence to help aspiring

## FOCUS

teleworkers make their case. A Brigham Young University study last year, for example, found that teleworkers tended to put in *more* hours than their counterparts at the workplace. At the same time, they were also able to better balance work and family obligations.

Another report, by the Telework Research Network, a firm that advises companies on setting up telework plans, found that companies that allow employees to telework can save as much as \$10,000 a year in real estate, electricity and other costs. It also helps companies avoid having to train new workers.

Seeking such opportunities with the federal government, as Carl Henriksen did, is particularly promising. In 2010, Congress passed legislation requiring agencies to develop plans to encourage teleworking and ordered the White House's Office of Personnel Management to report

***Though the Family Liaison Office and other institutions can help, ultimately it is still up to each EFM to find his or her own way.***

back annually on their progress. So far, the numbers are encouraging. Last year, OPM reported that 11,046 more employees were working outside the office in 2009 than in the previous year, and that nearly 6 percent of all civil servants teleworked on a regular basis in 2011.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Another potential growth area is entrepreneurship. According to FLO, 144 family members were running their own businesses in 2011. And those who have taken the plunge say the experience has been rewarding and professionally satisfying.

Consider Rebecca Grappo's experience. When her husband joined the Foreign Service 26 years ago, she spent time working an embassy job as a community liaison officer and an administrative assistant, then took time off to raise a family before going into teaching.

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In 2002, she parlayed her education experience into a job as the education and youth officer at the Family Liaison Office. Grappo worked there until 2006, when her husband was appointed ambassador to Oman and she was forced to think about employment again.

She knew that this time she would have trouble combining her new role with teaching, so it was her “now or never” moment. Having taken an entrepreneurship course offered by FLO and completed other professional training, she launched her own educational consulting business, advising families on the best schools for their children.

Her first client was an Omani family that paid her with a box of chocolates. But her business has turned profitable and has continued to grow through four overseas moves. “I plan to keep working until I can’t do it anymore,” she says.

To gin up clients, Grappo developed a Web site, uses social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, and gives presentations at American schools overseas. She also relies on the referrals of former clients. Most of her clients are expatriate Americans, but only a few of them are State Department personnel.

“What I love about what I’m doing is that I’m my own boss,” she says. But there are drawbacks to running your own business too, she warns. “There’s a lot of stress and you never have a day off,” she says. “I have to work wherever I am.”

In 2006, Scott Beale was living in New Delhi with his wife, an FSO, and working in the embassy on combating human trafficking. He had considered going the tandem route by joining the Foreign Service himself, but then he had an epiphany.

What triggered it was *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman’s book, *The World Is Flat* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005), about the growing importance of international ties. Through his embassy work, he’d met a number of Indian nonprofit leaders and thought: “It would be pretty neat if these talented Indians could go volunteer in the U.S.”

As it turns out, many American nonprofits were eager to have them. Since Beale launched his Atlas Service Corps in 2006, he’s brought more than 100 international

***State has concluded  
bilateral work agreements  
with 114 countries, and has  
informal arrangements in  
42 other countries.***

nonprofit leaders from 32 countries to the United States to work for nonprofits on one-year fellowships. The fellows get room, board and living expenses, but more importantly, exposure to U.S. nonprofit management and training.

The program has proven popular: Last year, 2,000 people applied for 50 positions with nonprofits like the breast cancer treatment advocacy group, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, and environmental groups such as the World Wildlife Fund.

Underwriters like the Omidyar Foundation, created by eBay’s founder, have boosted the group’s budget to \$1.4 million a year. Beale, who leads a staff of nine, is now in Monterey with his wife. He says the moves required by the Foreign Service actually help him build more contacts and spread the word to more international nonprofit leaders.

He adds that he may never have been willing to start his own nonprofit if not for the financial security provided by his wife’s Foreign Service job. “I encourage people to really think through what they are most passionate about and then give it a try. As an entrepreneur, if your spouse is in the Foreign Service, it’s a blessing.”

**Going Tandem**

Starting one’s own company or nonprofit requires a great idea and a business plan. Getting a job through State’s expanded professional associates program is a long shot. And many American employers are reluctant to try a teleworking arrangement.

As a result, it’s inevitable that many spouses begin to think about joining the Foreign Service themselves. Beale considered it, and Henriksen says that if he’d become a Foreign Service spouse earlier in his career, it’s the route he would have pursued.

Many tandem couples speak highly of the experience. Several of them told the *FSJ* that they thought State would be wise to make it easier for spouses to join the Foreign Service and to be assigned to the same post as their spouse or partner.

Longtime tandems Dave and Terry Jones, for instance, say it was the right decision for them. They point out that going tandem offers both spouses the chance to pursue rewarding, professional careers with all the benefits of fed-



## FOCUS

eral employment. In addition, those couples can talk shop without fear of violating security protocols. And the conflicts that might arise if an accompanying spouse finds a rewarding private-sector job, then has to quit in order to move to the next post, are avoided.

At the same time, tandem couples are at constant risk of separation, and nepotism rules can sometimes make it difficult to stay together. Still, the State Department is more generous than many private employers would be in offering leave without pay or time off to have a child. "Couples could take turns on assignments, or even take turns on leave without pay," says Dave.

Different career tracks within State would help too, he notes. Terry was fortunate "that her science specialization opened assignments that were less time-consuming than the normal political-military assignments that I had. So it worked out. But it worked because we both knew what

***Chances of success will depend on one's skills, experience, the local economy and serendipity.***

we got, what we gave up, and what we were willing to do."

### **A Mixed Bag**

As you can see, eligible family members who wish to work overseas have many options to choose from — in theory, anyway. But their chances of success will de-

pend on their skills, experience, the local economy and a certain degree of serendipity. In some countries, there will be many avenues to employment and few barriers. In many others, opportunities will be severely limited, creating stiff competition for a handful of positions.

Moreover, while the post, the Family Liaison Office and (possibly) other institutions are available to offer guidance and encouragement, ultimately it is still up to each individual family member to find his or her own way. The picture is, overall, brighter than it was just a few years ago. But there is still a long way to go. ■




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# PATIENCE: THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL EFM EMPLOYMENT

ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS CAN LAND AMAZING JOBS WITH THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF FLEXIBILITY, PREPARATION AND, YES, LUCK.

BY JEN DINOIA

**I**t was just about 14 years ago that we started on our Foreign Service adventure. After years of regaling me with tales of safaris, overseas travel and exciting job opportunities, Peter became a Diplomatic Security special agent in 1998. I gleefully accepted my own challenge by becoming an Eligible Family Member — even though I was three months pregnant at the time.

Due to the nature of the job, my husband's age and his work experience, we took a bit of a pay cut. So, despite my pregnancy, I kept my full-time position at a non-profit. But soon I realized that the job was just that, not a career, and became eager to move overseas to find my niche in the Foreign Service world.

As soon as Peter first broached the Foreign Service

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*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 (where she worked in the U.S. embassy) and Reykjavik (where she worked for the International School of Iceland). A longtime volunteer with Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, she is the founder and moderator of the DS Spouse Yahoo group, moderates the Livelines listserv and blogs at [www.dinoiafamily.typepad.com](http://www.dinoiafamily.typepad.com).*

option to me, I began dreaming of working in exotic locales, whether in the embassy or consulate or for a local business. I would become fabulously fluent in the local language and have no trouble “finding my passion,” one that would easily transfer from post to post. Naive, perhaps, but that naiveté kept me going through six months of training, and more travel for my husband than I thought possible during his first year at the field office. Given that it was also the first year of life for Caitlin, our eldest child, it was a demanding time for us all!

The bid list for 2000 contained about 20 positions, but jobs in South America topped the list for us. Within two months, Peter had a handshake on an Assistant Regional Security Officer position in Caracas. After only 14 months in the field office, he was suddenly immersed in RSO training and language school.

Given the tumultuous schedule of the previous year, I finally realized that working full time was no longer an option. I turned in my notice. I was thrilled to register at the Foreign Service Institute for a morning class that would put me well on my way to fluency in Spanish.

## The Best-Laid Plans

Since I was no longer employed, there were no extra funds for day care. To make the schedule work, I had to

attend a very early morning class, while Peter attended an all-day course. That way, he could watch Caitlin in the morning until I relieved him. But at least we could both get the training we needed for our time in Caracas.

Our plan was marvelous — until the first day of class. An unexpected location change was so impractical that it made it impossible for me to attend and make it back in time to take over for Peter. With no other choice, I dropped the class and took a self-study course at home.

Undaunted, I still planned to work at the embassy. I just needed to find a position that did not require fluency in Spanish until I could develop my skills.

While I am glad I felt so confident at the time, reality soon set in. There were few jobs for Eligible Family Members (in State Department-speak) at Embassy Caracas, and those that existed were hotly sought after. Still, I felt sure I would easily land my first-choice job of newsletter editor. After all, I had plenty of editorial experience, was a good writer and had the computer skills. Why wouldn't they hire me?

It turned out that several other EFMs at post felt the same way — and also had time, talents and experience. As a result, I did not get the job on the first go-round. Rather than dwell on what could have been, I used the time to explore my new environment, enroll in Spanish classes at the embassy, expand my circle of friends and volunteer in the community.

Lo and behold, six months later the job opened up again, and I was the only applicant. Since I was well-qualified, I was welcomed with open arms. I jumped into a part-time job that I loved until I felt the need for a bigger challenge.

Just prior to taking the job, I had also applied for the Community Liaison Coordinator position. This involved a wide range of duties, from assisting families newly transferred to post to creating events the entire embassy community could enjoy.

Remember my description of the interview process above? Exact same scenario: I was pitted against (pun intended) another EFM at post, and while I was qualified, she had worked as a CLO at her previous post. So she got the job. However, within six months she left the position, and by then I could easily fill her shoes.

*Our family's plan to  
juggle work, school and  
child care was marvelous —  
until the first day of class.*

I worked as the CLO coordinator quite happily until I resigned in February 2002 to fly back to the States to give birth to our second daughter, Kelsey. Although I returned to post, I did not resume the position since we were moving back to the United States in late August of that year.

**Working Hard to Find Work**

Upon our return to Northern Virginia, Peter was assigned to the Secretary of State's protective detail. While it was an enormously exciting opportunity for him, the travel was constant. And with two small children at home, even part-time work would have required real sacrifice. I consoled myself with the hope that our next post would offer me the employment I might crave by then.

Peter ended up working a full three years on the detail, and the bidding process came when his assignment was drawing to a close. We thought we had a post in the bag (I was already planning vacations around its school schedules), but then everything changed. One day, we were planning to live in the tropics; the next, we were heading to L.L. Bean for winter gear.

Embassy Reykjavik was much smaller than Embassy Caracas, with only 13 officers. We were assured it was family-friendly and had a U.S. Navy base not far away. But it was not until we got there in 2005 that we realized just why we'd gotten so little information on spousal employment options: jobs for EFMs were nearly non-existent. We were at a tiny embassy on a small island where not even a CLO was needed, as everyone was immersed in the local culture. There was no embassy "bubble" because the place was simply too small. Everything from doctor visits to grocery shopping was done on the local economy, especially once the Navy base closed in October 2006.

Once both girls were in school, I wanted to work, but could not find anything other than occasional contract jobs. The tragedy of my mother's unexpected death just then jolted me out of the job hunt, and I did not reconsider working until the following year, in the fall of 2006. The only question was: where to apply?

I eventually decided to volunteer at the International School, where I was already in constant contact with the principal (the school had only 11 students at the time), of-

fering advice on everything from Web site content to plans for expansion. I was quickly nominated to the school board and by the following fall, was a fully indoctrinated volunteer. The school was growing quickly, though, and I was asked to do more than just help out: they wanted to pay me for my efforts.

Despite the fact that Iceland and the U.S. had a de facto bilateral work agreement, no diplomatic American citizen spouse had ever worked on the local economy. So no one knew exactly how to get a work permit, since it had never happened before. As luck would have it, the new human resources assistant at the embassy was not only willing to help, but felt (as did I) that success would set a precedent for future U.S. citizen Eligible Family Members at post.

Six long months later, I had my Icelandic work permit and could officially receive my paycheck from the school. I was able to teach English as a Second Language at a school

***No diplomatic American citizen spouse had ever worked on the local economy before me.***

that now had 47 registered students, as well as substitute when other teachers were absent.

The irony? I ended up leaving my position after working full time for just one semester. I was eight months pregnant with my third child and wanted the full Icelandic birth experience and bonding time with

our little guy, Nicholas.

By far, my Icelandic employment was the most difficult experience in many respects. While the job was mine the minute I wanted it, the permit process was much more challenging to complete. However, I have learned that even the impossible is yours if you truly want it and refuse to give up.

I'm not working right now for a variety of reasons, but I do know this much. If I desire a job at our next post, my 14 years as an Eligible Family Member has given me the patience and tenacity to see it through. ■



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# LOCAL EMPLOYMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE AND BRAZIL

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IS IT POSSIBLE TO LIVE AND WORK OVERSEAS,  
PURSUING A PROFESSIONAL CAREER, DESPITE  
FREQUENT MOVES? ABSOLUTELY!

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BY RAQUEL LIMA MIRANDA

y family and I are beginning to plan our next Foreign Service assignment, now just a few months away, and are getting excited. Speaking as a foreign-born spouse who is currently raising three third-culture children, moving every couple of years has become more intriguing than challenging. This is particularly true of my employment experiences as an Eligible Family Member.

In 2006, our family headed to Mozambique for a two-year assignment. I initially thought I was leaving behind my previous career as a trained scientist and researcher. Little did I know that the large U.S. embassy in Maputo, which encompasses the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Centers for Disease Control, as well as several other federal agencies and U.S. and international nongovernmental organizations, would be able to fulfill my working ambitions.

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*Raquel Lima Miranda is the spouse of FSO Leonel Miranda, a political-economic officer in Recife. An author and reviewer for scientific journals, she currently teaches at the American School of Recife. The Mirandas have a blog, 3rd Culture Children.com: Life of a Globetrotting Family of 5 (<http://3rdculturechildren.wordpress.com>). This summer, they will begin a new assignment in La Paz.*

I worked for a USAID-contractor NGO, funded under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, as the coordinator for HIV/AIDS laboratory logistics. In that capacity, I dealt with local government agencies, international partners, volunteer programs and the national warehousing/distribution systems for HIV/AIDS testing and prevention.

Because the job was to be performed at an organization outside the U.S. mission, I had to obtain an authorization to work under the local labor laws. Fortunately, that was not a problem, thanks to our bilateral work agreement and the great work of Embassy Maputo's human resources department, for which I am very grateful. As a bonus, my success opened doors for other EFMs to apply for jobs outside the mission: one went to work for World Vision, another PEPFAR partner organization.

Admittedly, it helped that I was a naturalized American citizen who had been born and raised in Brazil, and could furnish all my school and college transcripts in Portuguese, Mozambique's national language. My fluency was a real asset on the job, as well, especially when it came to travel to remote areas, where I supervised health centers and trained health care personnel. All in all, it was an extremely positive experience, with unconditional support from all my American counterparts, supervisors

and managers.

True, there were also some challenges along the way. Working with the Mozambican Ministry of Health and its branches was tricky, demanding around-the-clock diplomacy, particularly when it came to suggesting better ways for the ministry to conduct certain operations.

During my final year there, the ministry appeared to believe that expatriates were “stealing” highly qualified jobs from Mozambicans. As a result, I saw several colleagues and partners lose both their jobs and their work visas, effectively forcing them to return home. But while I had to request and renew special work authorizations from the Ministry of Labor, I was able to remain working throughout the period.

Despite the hurdles, I enjoyed the experience so much that when my husband completed his tour and had to return to Washington for his next assignment, we agreed that I would stay behind to finish my commitment to the contractor. (I had started a national staff training program, and needed to see it through.)

Was it difficult to be separated for almost an entire year,

with two little children? Absolutely. But it was also well worth the sacrifices we all made. The experience gave me a sense of confidence, responsibility and self-respect. And I believe it can be an example for other eligible family members seeking overseas job opportunities, whether within or outside the U.S. mission. One can do anything with the proper guidance and support.

### **Back in Brazil**

My husband, Leonel, has been a political-economic officer at the U.S. consulate in Recife since 2010. Although it's a small (but fast-growing!) post, there have always been opportunities for EFMs to work, whether in the consulate or within the local economy.

Still, getting back into the work force wasn't easy. Our family arrived in Brazil two years ago, with two toddlers and a baby on the way. Just a few months after our youngest child was born, I began working full time as a math and science teacher at the American School of Recife. In coordination with the school principal, I've also launched an experimental program to expose elementary school children to science.

Another successful program I have worked with, hosted by the Northeastern Technology Center (CETENE), is called “Future Scientists.” Intended to tailor female high school students to pursue careers in science, the program has the support of Brazil's national government and U.S. Consulate Recife.

The original idea for this project came from the Brazilian government's interest in finding innovative ways to encourage young women to pursue careers in science and technology. I see my role as sharing experiences as a female scientist working, researching and teaching in Brazil, and discussing the challenges I've encountered and ways to overcome them.

As an Eligible Family Member, a mom and a scientist, I am frequently invited to share my thoughts on work-life balance with program participants. These young Brazilian professionals want to know if it's possible to live and work overseas, pursuing and keeping a professional career, despite frequent moves. My answer? “Absolutely! It may not be easy, but it's definitely possible.”

We Foreign Service family members all have a special responsibility to share success stories about being locally employed overseas. In that spirit, I hope my own experiences will help inspire other EFMs out there. That would be a great reward. ■

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# HOC ROCKS!

THE “HUSBANDS OF CHENNAI” HAS BECOME A WAY TO FORGE FRIENDSHIPS AND BUILD A COMMUNITY AMONG TRAILING HUSBANDS OF CONSULATE EMPLOYEES.

BY AILEEN CROWE NANDI

Last February a group of consulate husbands gathered, a bit nervously perhaps, at a five-star hotel. They were there to unveil a “Husbands of Chennai 2011” calendar before a crowd of Indian journalists, consulate staff and onlookers.

The nine men had each posed for photos, which were compiled into a March-December calendar. One husband coordinated the photo shoots and another orchestrated the media efforts. The main purpose of the calendar was to raise money for the local Blue Cross Animal Shelter, but it also celebrated the men’s camaraderie.

My husband, Rahul, had come to be recognized as the resident authority for the male spouses of consulate Foreign Service officers. Though he still had a job in Calcutta (our previous post) at the time, each weekend

he took the new arrivals under his wing and helped them acclimate themselves to life in bustling Chennai. He invited them to join the Chennai Runners’ Club, introduced them to his friends and showed them where to buy beef (yes, even in India).

Slowly the group morphed into Husbands of Chennai, with monthly (when they could remember to schedule something at the last minute) lunches and pool-shooting sessions. Their bond became so strong that soon the wives asked to join, too.

Even for husbands intrepid enough to join a Women’s Club (we’d had a friend in Mexico who delighted in participating in the local one while his wife worked), many expatriate groups — including most in Chennai — remain off-limits to husbands. So HOC became a semi-formal way of forging friendships and building a community for trailing husbands.

## “What Is Your Designation?”

Life as an expatriate is inherently challenging, particularly for those who are new to a post — and still harder for anyone who is new to the Foreign Service. But trailing husbands in a conservative society like India run into some unusual problems. Whenever Rahul and I landed at the airport in Chennai or Calcutta late at night after a trip

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*Aileen Crowe Nandi is a Foreign Commercial Service officer who currently serves in San Jose, Calif., after overseas assignments in Chennai, Calcutta and Mexico City. She would like to thank the colleagues and friends who have contributed to this article and offered moral support. She also salutes all trailing spouses who succeed in their professional endeavors despite frequent moves and many other challenges.*



PAUL COHN

*The Blue Cross Animal Shelter dedicated this plaque to the Husbands of Chennai for donating proceeds from the HOC calendar.*

abroad, the immigration officer invariably asked him, “And what is your designation?” Even well-traveled business contacts seemed bemused that a husband would follow his wife. On a positive note, this provided plenty of fodder for chitchat on the cocktail circuit in India.

Organizing social activities, even when trailing spouses do it for their peers, is the easy part of adjusting to the Foreign Service. What is harder is figuring out how to support a spouse’s career aspirations while trying to maintain some semblance of one’s own career. Constantly having to uproot and reinvent oneself can take a real toll on self-esteem, family life and marriage, though those of us in the Foreign Service don’t talk about it much.

Still, many trailing husbands — and wives — do achieve their professional goals all over the world even as their spouses thrive in the Foreign Service. Some of them pursue independent careers in fields such as research, photography, writing and consulting. Others teach in international schools or work for large companies that facilitate transfers. And some, like Rahul, find different jobs in each country.

Unfortunately, though, many of these don’t include Social Security contributions or allow employees to observe U.S. holidays, pay substantially lower salaries and require onerous reporting of foreign taxes and earnings. Moreover, months spent searching for employment can generate terrible anxiety, and a significant loss of income can affect dependent care benefits. But at the same time, working in the local economy can open a new world of friends and increase one’s appreciation of the host country.

Employment outside the mission has benefits for the

U.S. government, too. Spouses and family members working in local jobs are often astute (albeit unofficial) representatives for the United States, able to connect with and befriend professional, middle-class colleagues who are not necessarily part of the embassy’s or consulate’s orbit. I can attest to the fact that in-depth interaction with Rahul’s office colleagues and their families strongly enhanced our experiences, both in Mexico and India.

### Job-Hunting Tips for EFMs

Besides dogged determination and the ability to withstand potential rejection in a foreign language, the following tips can help eligible family members find jobs outside the mission and not get too discouraged by setbacks along the way:

- *Know before you go.* Identify countries that offer work visas for diplomatic spouses, research the companies operating in the country (the American Chamber of Commerce often provides a list of its members), and make a target list before you arrive at post. Though some spouses are able to find employment before arriving, most companies require an in-person interview and are more likely to entertain the option of hiring a foreigner when he or she is in-country.

- *Network, network, network.* Attend every cocktail reception you can, accept all social invitations and request informal interviews at the companies you’ve targeted from your research. FCS officers are a good source of information about companies and local business contacts. And don’t forget to ask trailing spouses already at post to help; even if they’re not working, they probably have good contacts and are usually eager to lend a hand. Rahul once picked up two critical leads from a colleague’s husband (who lived in a different city), and he, in turn, helped another spouse get a job at the same company.

- *Leverage all resources, far and wide.* Talk to the Global Employment Adviser (if there is one at post) and contact the Family Liaison Office for international job-hunting pointers.

- *Screen potential employers.* One reputable company in Chennai met with Rahul three times, only to offhandedly request a list of the officers at the consulate in the final meeting. Though he managed to work for a large multinational company in Mexico for two years before his colleagues learned of our diplomatic status, in posts where officers and their families are “big fish in small ponds,” it’s



## FOCUS

not easy or feasible to withhold the spouse's diplomatic duties.

• *Keep in touch with former colleagues and clients.* A trailing husband we know regularly calls former colleagues and clients to update them on industry trends in his country and hear their news. With people widely connected through international travel and work abroad, these contacts can also be helpful for job searches or to line up consulting gigs. LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media tools are useful ways to maintain contact, as well.

• *Be ready to wait.* And wait, and wait! After a grueling job search finally leads to a promising position, the applicant is usually eager to dive into the work. However, it can take a while for the host country to issue the necessary permits.

***Until assisting families becomes a priority, the Foreign Service will continue to experience a substantial loss in work productivity.***

Having a string of interesting jobs does not necessarily a career make. No one talks about it, but there is an invisible yet abrasive dynamic in most two-career Foreign Service marriages and relationships. Even if the spouse or partner is able to line up interesting, lucrative work in each new country, there is no guarantee that will lead to a career. This is particularly true because the Foreign Service expects its members to be ready and willing to serve any-

where in the world — even if the onward assignment offers nothing for the trailing spouse.

Yes, the needs of the Service should, and do, come first. But high among those needs is keeping FS families fulfilled, professionally and personally. Until this becomes a priority, the Foreign Service will continue to experience a substantial loss in work productivity, cur-

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tailments of assignments and broken families. (If anyone undertook an analysis of divorce rates within the Foreign Service community, they would probably find them shockingly high.)

### How Uncle Sam Can Help

What can State and the other foreign affairs agencies do to improve the outlook for EFMs seeking meaningful employment? While it's up to spouses to define their career goals and find jobs, federal agencies can create a robust framework to enable as many spouses as possible to work outside the embassy or consulate. Specifically, they should:

- Negotiate more bilateral work agreements to expand the list of potential countries where diplomatic spouses and partners can work, and press host governments to ensure reciprocal issuance of work visas.
- Provide more job-hunting resources for spouses at embassies and consulates, ideally staffed by headhunting professionals with substantial contacts in multiple indus-

tries. Additionally, they can expand existing resources by contracting with headhunting services.

- Enact more generous policies regarding a leave of absence for a Foreign Service employee whose spouse has specific professional needs (particularly in regard to tandem couples).

- Give the same consideration to spouses' professional goals during the assignments process that tandem spouses receive.

Happy, fulfilled spouses and partners enhance the outreach of the U.S. mission, for they serve as tremendous public outreach models in their local communities. To retain talent and encourage diversity at all levels, especially in the senior ranks, management in the various Foreign Services agencies must pay greater attention to spousal employment needs.

When family members thrive in the local economy, that conveys a positive message to our partners and allies around the world — just like the successful launch of the “Husbands of Chennai” calendar. ■

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# MY SO-CALLED CAREER

A

s newlyweds, my husband and I had a plan. He would finish his Ph.D. and become a Russian professor, and I would work in college administration and sing professionally. But it was the 1980s, and academic jobs were few and far between. Plan B was this little thing called the Foreign Service exam that he figured he might as well take. You can guess the rest.

When the packet arrived, he started jumping up and down in the lobby of our Columbia University apartment building. He finally had a real job with a future, and we were actually going to be paid to learn languages and travel the world.

I was excited, too, because singing seemed about as portable a career as could be — all I had to do was take my voice with me. I quit my job at the Manhattan School of Music and followed him to Washington, D.C. At first it was good not to work for a while, and just attend A-100 classes, meet other new spouses and walk along the canal

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*Francesca Kelly, a Foreign Service spouse since 1985, currently resides in Vienna, Austria, with her husband, Ian, who is the U.S. representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with the rank of ambassador. She was AFSA News editor for the Foreign Service Journal from 2008 to 2010.*

THE CAREER YOU START WITH PROBABLY WON'T BE THE CAREER YOU END WITH, ONE FS SPOUSE EXPLAINS.

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BY FRANCESCA KELLY

towpath with my dog, wondering what adventures we would have.

Then I got pregnant. And we moved — a lot. Five years later, we had moved no fewer than seven times and had two toddlers in tow. Within another three years, we had moved four more times and added two more kids. Singing career? What singing career?

Somehow, little by little, I figured out a way to squeeze professional activities into my life, both overseas and on our stateside postings. Those professional activities often started as one thing and led to another. Now, 28 years have passed since we began our Foreign Service lifestyle. Over that time my “portable career” didn’t so much charge ahead like a thoroughbred as move like one of those zigzagging Southwestern snakes called a sidewinder.

## A Look at How Things Evolved

**Singing.** Making new contacts and getting embedded in the local music world takes a couple of years. But there we were, leaving again before we had even finished unpacking.

Did I find singing opportunities? Yes, everywhere we’ve ever lived. I’ve sung at women’s clubs, school fundraisers and churches. As the sole American singer at post, I’ve also done more versions of “The Star-Spangled Ban-

ner” than I care to count at Fourth of July events. Yet Washington was the only city where I could earn a regular income as a singer.

**Writing.** In 1991, fellow FS spouse Fritz Galt and I started an irreverent, photocopied publication called the *Spouses’ Underground Newsletter*. It ran for nine years on donations and subscription fees. We were never able to pay ourselves, but it was fun to provide an apparently much-needed outlet for humor and spousal ranting. And that venture gave me the courage to try freelance writing for magazines like *Family Circle* and *Redbook*. Selling an average of two to three articles a year, I made, let’s see — well, enough to pay for our annual family vacation.

**Editing.** Publishing the *SUN* led to my first paid editing job, for the magazine *Welcome Home* (oh, the irony), the first time we returned to the Washington, D.C., area. Once back overseas, I helped to found *Tales from a Small Planet* ([www.talesmag.com](http://www.talesmag.com)). Again, pay was nonexistent or negligible, but the cause was worthy and eventually led to a rewarding editorial job at the very magazine you are now reading.

**Counseling.** When the first of our four children went through the college application process from overseas, I educated myself and then wrote about it. The more I learned, the more articles I sold. This led to the most unexpected and fulfilling job I’ve ever had while overseas: a one-year appointment as the high school guidance counselor at St. John’s International School in Brussels.

**Acting.** My motto about landing an out-of-the-blue job for which one is not well qualified (or at all qualified, in my case) is to act the part until you grow into it. For instance, as a guidance counselor I addressed the parents of seniors at Back-to-School Night a few hours after I was hired, assuring them that, yes, we would find the right college for their child. And I came home that night thinking, “Oh, my God, what have I done?”

But in fact, it turned out that with a lot of on- and off-the-job cramming, and no shyness about asking questions, I did just fine. I ended up loving the job so much that I’m considering getting a master’s degree in school counseling.

**College Essay Tutoring.** Combining my love of editing and interest in counseling, I’m currently telecommuting from overseas for a private U.S. college counseling firm, and enjoying the work.

### Lessons Learned


Most diplomatic missions have some positions available for spouses, and many spouses are happily employed by the U.S. government. Still, you should never count on getting a job overseas in your field. Be open to other options, such as volunteer work that leads to paying work — sometimes in surprising ways.

One of those options may be staying at home with your children. That isn’t always easy, but I’m very grateful now that I had the luxury to choose this path.


The career you start with will probably not be the career you end with. So flexibility, networking and openness to unexpected opportunities will help you along the way.

Not finding work overseas can be turned into something positive, too. My husband has loved his career, but he’s also been locked into it. I’m the one who could create my own opportunities. After all, how many people back home have the chance to explore, travel, learn languages, earn an online master’s degree, start a business or take art lessons? Ian and I have never lost sight of how cool that is!

For all these reasons, I’m happy with the different avenues my so-called career has followed. ■



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# SEVEN BILLION AND GROWING

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THERE IS STILL TIME TO TURN BACK THE POPULATION SURGE.  
BUT IT COULD ALSO BUILD UP INTO A TRUE DISASTER.

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BY BEN BARBER

**T**his planet is getting seriously overcrowded. You can see it when you visit teeming megacities such as Mexico City, Bangkok, Shanghai, Cairo and Lagos, where millions live in tin shanties without power, water, sanitation and jobs. And all over the world, from Washington to Hong Kong, billions of commuters stew in gridlocked traffic each day.

When I studied in Paris in the 1960s, I could wander into Notre Dame Cathedral any hour of day or night to contemplate its beauty. Last time I went, I had to wait in a line of tourists four abreast and a hundred yards long.

In the 1980s, you could dive into the Andaman Sea off the Thai coast and view spectacular coral reefs with colored fish darting in the sunlight. Today, those reefs are dead, coated in silt from overfishing, tourism, or coastal degradation and global warming.

When I was a kid, the planet held about two billion people. This October, the planet's population officially crossed a new threshold — seven billion people. And at the current rate of growth — about 80 million people each year — another three billion humans will join us on our merry trip through the uni-

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*Ben Barber writes about the developing world for McClatchy Newspapers, and has also contributed to Newsday, the London Observer, the Christian Science Monitor, Foreign Affairs, the Washington Times, USA Today and Salon.com. From 2003 to 2010, he was a senior writer at the U.S. Agency for International Development. His photojournalism book, Ground Truth: Work, Play and Conflict in The Third World, is to be published later this year by de.MO Design.org.*

verse by the year 2050.

The most recent United Nations Population Report, issued in May 2011, predicted that we can still reverse the trend. But time is running out.

## Two Competing Visions

If the planet decides to do something serious to achieve a low growth rate, such as putting one to two billion dollars a year into additional aid for family planning, the planetary population could actually peak at 7.5 billion and then fall to 6.2 billion by 2100.

But if, instead, political leaders cut the current level of support for international family planning, and religious movements further gut or block foreign aid for family planning, the human population could climb as high as 15 billion by the end of this century.

Most of the population growth will occur in the very poorest countries on earth — countries that cannot feed and educate their people today.

To give an idea of what that situation would look like, consider the following projections. Nigeria's 2010 population of 158 million would reach one billion people at the end of the century. The Democratic Republic of the Congo would quintuple in population from 63 million to 314 million. And Bangladesh, the size of Wisconsin, would grow to 314 million people.

Bear in mind that these are countries that already fail to provide basic health, education, water, food, roads and security for many of their citizens. As has long been understood by U.S. and world leaders, when billions of people fall into poverty, despair, disease and conflict, these problems soon cross borders and affect even the stable, wealthy nations of the

Western world. Crime, drugs, disease and instability are all highly exportable.

### **The Battle over Birth Control**

How did we lose the population battle? Back in 1968, Paul and Anne Ehrlich wrote in *The Population Bomb* that the planet faced mass hunger and upheavals due to overcrowding. But these predictions were dismissed by experts and leaders who believed the world could utilize modern agriculture techniques such as the Green Revolution to keep up with the growing population.

Later, family planning was dragged into a cultural and religious war that erupted in the 1980s, when anti-abortion activists successfully conflated family planning with abortion. In fact, population experts say that an additional \$3.9 billion in funding for family planning could prevent 22 million abortions a year.

Social conservatives sometimes maintain that when people have access to birth control, they become more promiscuous. A turning point in that debate came at the 1994 Cairo Population Conference, when Nils Daulaire, who served as senior international health adviser for the U.S. Agency for International Development from 1993 to 1998, and other Clinton administration officials joined with representatives of other donor countries to support proposals to boost aid for family planning programs. The hope was that such programs, and efforts to empower women through education and health care, would limit births.

Instead, the U.S. delegation was blindsided by an unholy alliance against family planning led by Muslim, Catholic and evangelical Protestant leaders. Putting aside their doctrinal differences, these groups decided to work together to block international efforts to provide family planning to hundreds of millions of families and to protect the rights of women.

Opposition to family planning was

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*When billions of people  
fall into poverty, despair,  
disease and conflict, these  
problems soon cross  
borders and affect even  
highly developed nations.*

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around long before then, of course. Some opponents claim birth control is meant to limit the number of people of color, part of a scheme by Europeans and Americans to retain world dominance. Other opponents of contraception are in a population competition, seeking to bring more Muslims, Christians or Arabs into the world and increase their clout.

We saw the latest skirmish in the family planning wars in February when the Obama administration ordered Catholic schools and hospitals to provide birth control to employees as part of their health insurance. The Roman Catholic Church, conservative Christians and Republican presidential candidates all attacked the proposal, even though the vast majority of Catholic women have used contraceptives at some time during their lives. Under fire, the White House backtracked, ruling that health insurance companies would pay the \$600 per year cost of birth control.

But as the world failed to facilitate or encourage the use of birth control, and modern antibiotics helped millions of babies survive childhood, poor countries found themselves with hundreds of millions of young people who lacked classrooms, books, training, food and jobs. In Cairo one evening last year, I found six young men in their 20s seated on a bench behind the register at my

hotel. All were university graduates but still had to work the night shift at \$1 per day doing nothing. No good job was available without family connections, they told me.

The tragic impact of overpopulation is becoming more and more apparent all over the globe. As many as three billion people have no regular access to toilets, or even to a latrine. They simply defecate in the open. Insects and animals then spread diseases.

Population growth also means farmers have to divide their land into smaller and smaller parcels to give to their many children. Those that get no land go to marginal holdings, such as steep hillsides and flood plains, to grow food. When storms hit, even those areas are washed away, along with the fertility of the soil.

Growing populations sell their timber, leaving hillsides vulnerable to erosion and flooding. The megacities of China need electric power, so coal-fired power plants are built, spewing pollution that leaves millions coughing.

### **Food Fights**

In February 2011, the highest food prices on record increased the global ranks of the hungry to one billion people. To feed billions of mouths, farmers resort to chemicals and other techniques, leaving soils depleted and yields declining.

Despite such efforts, every day 160,000 children die of hunger, according to Shenggen Fan, director general of the U.S.-funded International Food Policy Research Institute. As the global population continues to burgeon, that horrific toll will only mount.

There are various reasons that food production has not been able to keep up with population, despite the euphoria over the Green Revolution. China and India now both consume more meat; droughts related to global warming have hit China, Australia and Pakistan, among other countries; U.S. ethanol production consumes 40 per-

cent of U.S. corn harvests; and oil prices exceeding \$100 a barrel hike the cost of transportation, fertilizer and fuel for farm machinery.

Population growth also leads to political, ethnic and economic conflict. Some governments banned all food exports when food prices spiked last year, leading others to seek to buy or manage farms in other countries. Burma recently pulled the plug on a dam China was building, both because the project ignored local environmental concerns and because Beijing planned to send the dam's electric power back to the PRC.

Cote d'Ivoire just resolved a series of civil wars largely fought over Christian opposition to Muslim immigrants escaping poverty in Burkina Faso and Mali. The United States and Europe are both wrestling with how to handle millions of immigrants, some of whom allegedly have connections to terrorism.

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*If humanity puts one or two billion dollars a year into additional aid for family planning, the world population could peak at a sustainable level.*

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Particularly among young people in countries from Morocco to Iraq, there appears to be a correlation between sympathy for Islamist extremism and having to live without jobs or ways to start a family.

Finally, countries with the highest rate of population growth also experi-

ence the highest rates of environmental degradation.

### **Money Well Spent**

Worldwide, about \$10 billion is allocated each year for family planning. Seventy percent of that is spent by countries seeking to limit their own growth.

Heather Boonstra, a senior public policy associate at the Guttmacher Institute ([www.guttmacher.org](http://www.guttmacher.org)) — an organization dedicated to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights through an interrelated program of research, policy analysis and public education — estimates that there are at least 200 million women around the world who want to stop bearing children but lack contraceptives.

She cites estimates by former USAID population officials that if U.S. aid for family planning doubled from the current level, that would meet the

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need of all those families. (Countries that received U.S. family planning aid and have already reached stability between births and deaths include Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea and Thailand.)

Over the past decade, even as total U.S. foreign aid tripled to more than \$20 billion a year, family planning assistance actually fell to \$460 million by 2008. For example, \$244 million in aid over eight years to the U.N. Fund for Population Activities was cut after U.S. officials declared there had been some sharing of space by UNFPA and Chinese officials accused of forced abortions and sterilizations.

There was a time when prominent Republican leaders, including George H.W. Bush (both as a member of Congress and president), supported family planning; some, such as Representative Frank Wolf, R-Va., still do. But since the Reagan administration, most con-

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*Most population growth is occurring in the poorest countries on earth, which cannot feed and educate their current inhabitants.*

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servatives have moved to tighten restrictions on access to family planning.

For instance, the so-called “Mexico City rules,” first issued in 1984, prevent any group receiving U.S. funds from even discussing abortion with families getting birth control aid. (The use of such aid for actual abortions has been illegal since the 1973 Helms Amend-

ment.) Also called the “gag rule,” that policy has regularly been imposed by Republican administrations and annulled by Democratic ones.

Due to the economic downturn, U.S. family planning assistance, which climbed to \$648 million in Fiscal Year 2010, dropped to \$615 million in FY 2011 and \$610 million in FY 2012. The administration has requested an increase to \$643 million in its FY 2013 budget, but prospects are not encouraging. House Republicans have already voted three times to cut international family planning, notes Boonstra.

Last year alone, these funds:

- Provided contraceptives to 39 million women and couples
- Prevented 12 million unintended pregnancies and five million unplanned births
- Prevented five million abortions (four million of them unsafe)
- Prevented 33,000 maternal deaths.

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“The U.S. international family planning and reproductive health program stands out as one of our nation’s flagship foreign aid investments and is a cornerstone of the new Global Health Initiative,” says Susan Cohen, a family planning expert at Guttmacher. “Cutting funding for this highly effective program would be disastrous for women and families in poor countries, while barely making a scratch in the U.S. budget deficit.”

### Getting Creative

Condoms and other birth control methods are not the only way to halt the population explosion, of course. In Brazil, popular soap operas tell the stories of families — poor, middle and upper class — with two parents and two kids. Such programs inspired a cultural shift in how Brazilians saw the perfect family size and led to a reduction in births.

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*In Latin America and Southeast Asia, birth rates fell from seven per family to the replacement rate of two kids per family.*

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In Latin America and Southeast Asia, as the economy improved and parents increased their expectations for their children — especially in terms of getting a good education that led to a job — birth rates fell from seven per family to the replacement rate of two kids per family.

Another way to curb the population explosion is through educating and em-

powering women. It’s been widely known since the 1970s that when girls and women are taught to read, the health of their families improves. So does the ability to speak up in family discussions, where the decision to adopt birth control may be opposed by men who see small families as a sign of loss of community stature. The big man has a big family, many reason. Often the husband’s siblings and parents push for larger families, as well.

But once people in Latin America, Italy and other predominantly Roman Catholic societies become convinced of the benefits of family planning and are given access to it, they began ignoring the religious prohibition on birth control (as has already happened among American Catholics).

The Council on Foreign Relations ([www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)) issued a report in April 2011 appealing for greater support for family planning. It noted that “Global

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demographic and health trends affect a wide range of vital U.S. foreign policy interests. These include the desire to promote healthy, productive families and communities, prosperous and stable societies, resource and food security, and environmental sustainability.”

The CFR report concludes: “International family planning is one intervention that can advance all these interests in a cost-effective manner.”

### Good News and Bad

Our reaching the seven billion mark does not mean family planning campaigns have failed. Indeed, we might have exceeded that figure many years earlier were it not for the efforts already made. But the time it takes for the current rate of growth to fall to zero — the point of equilibrium at which births equal deaths — will determine how much more crowded the planet becomes.

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*The tragic impact  
of overpopulation is  
becoming more and  
more apparent all  
over the world.*

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Some population experts point with pride to the fact that we are only adding 80 million people a year to the planet (above deaths), a significant fall from the 90 million a year at the peak of growth a decade ago. They also note that the use of family planning in developing countries leapt from 10 percent of women in 1965 to 53 percent in 2005. Worldwide, mothers now have

an average of three children, down from six in the 1960s.

We have long heard that the population explosion might lead to disaster. The classic dystopian film “Soylent Green” describes an American city overwhelmed by people sleeping in stairwells and churches and living off government rations — which, we learn at the end, are made from dead people.

For now, such a fate is still fiction. But the many instances of conflict over land, resources and ethnicity — along with the specter of more than 160,000 children dying each day of hunger — should remind us of the urgency of an issue first aired half a century ago.

Fortunately, there is still time to decide whether we’ll live on a decent, sustainable planet with six or seven billion people — or a teeming, swarming world of 15 billion, most of them condemned to permanent poverty and early death. ■

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## FS FICTION

# THE DECISION

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SET IN AN UNNAMED COUNTRY, THIS STORY CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF WHAT LAUNCHED THE ARAB SPRING LAST YEAR — AND KEEPS IT GOING.

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BY MATT KEENE

**M**arwan was a quiet, unassuming man. A father of four who had worked from the time he was 14 years old, Marwan didn't have the luxury of the rich to sip coffee and contemplate the meaning of life. He was too busy working to feed the mouths at home.

He'd always had a knack for fixing things, so it wasn't a great surprise to those who knew him when Marwan became an auto mechanic. He could count on one hand the number of his friends who could afford to buy a used car; no one he knew had ever purchased a new one. That meant he had enough business fixing cars to feed his family. He was not getting rich, but, thank God, he made enough to get by.

Marwan never thought much about the world beyond his neighborhood — or those in his country who occasionally sped past his shop in their fancy new Mercedes toward somewhere impressive to do something important. It was not his business. It never occurred to him to ask who they actually were, with what they actually preoccupied themselves, or how they actually achieved their status. Mufflers, brakes and transmissions didn't install themselves.

On particularly slow mornings, Marwan would play backgammon and smoke Marlboro Reds with Ahmed, the

owner of the gift shop across the street. Ahmed was a big talker, in Marwan's view. He always had an opinion about everything, and spoke a little too loudly about things better left undiscussed for Marwan's taste. He always threw the dice with a wrist snap that conveyed disgust, and glared with contempt at any car worth more than \$5,000 that sailed by.

"No one makes money in this country without stealing it from someone else," he used to sputter.

"What do you care?" Marwan would retort disinterestedly. "Your shop's doing well enough."

"You're missing the point, arse," Ahmed would fire back. "That jackass behind the wheel has no more right to his money than you do. He was just lucky enough to be born into the right family!"

"Shhh!" Marwan would admonish as he grabbed Ahmed by the wrist. "Don't cause trouble in front of my shop. Or else you can go play backgammon with Farhat."

Farhat was the grocer next door to Ahmed. He was blind in one eye, a raging alcoholic, and absolutely no good at backgammon.

"Marwan," Ahmed would say. "Your problem is that you never ask why."

"I have four kids and a wife," Marwan would retort. "I can't afford to ask why."

Marwan's wife was a good cook. No doubt about it. The highlight of every day was returning home to a good meal, playing with the kids, downing a glass of arak after they turned in, and then stumbling off to bed. Marwan was a simple man. And simple pleasures were enough for him. But something changed one day.

As Marwan pulled rhythmically on a socket wrench tightening the bolts on an oil pan underneath a 1990 Toyota

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*Matt Keene, a Foreign Service consular officer since 1999, is currently a special assistant in the Bureau of Human Resources. In addition to overseas assignments in Jerusalem, Dubai and Sofia, he was deputy director of the Office of Maghreb Affairs in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs from 2009 to 2011.*

Corolla, Ahmed ran into the garage excitedly and out of breath.

“Did you hear what happened in Tunisia?” he said.

“What the hell do I care about what’s going on in Tunisia?” Marwan retorted, continuing to rock back and forth in time with the sound of the wrench.

“Couldn’t you once in a while humor me by at least feigning interest about what’s going on outside your garage?” Ahmed snapped. “Ben Ali’s gone. He’s gone! That thieving bastard and his family ran off like roaches when you flip the light switch in the kitchen.”

“Great,” responded Marwan. “Now what? Who else is going to run the damn country?”

“The people will run it, you donkey. They’re going to have a democracy.”

“Ahmed, if the people in Tunisia are anything like us, what do they

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*Ahmed always had an opinion about everything, and spoke a little too loudly about things better left undiscussed for Marwan’s taste.*

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know about running a country?”

“Don’t you get it?” Ahmed was irritated. “Our leaders aren’t any better than us. They aren’t any smarter than us. They don’t have any more right to rule us than we have to rule them.”

“Wait a sec. I thought we were talking about Tunisia.”

“Exactly — we’ve been *talking*,” Ahmed responded, lowering his voice. “Maybe it’s time to get rid of the thieves who run this country.”

Marwan stopped pulling on the socket wrench. “What do you mean, ‘we’?”

“Mohamed, Yousef and a few of the other guys have been talking,” Ahmed said. “And we’re not the only ones. We’re talking about maybe doing something.”

“Really?” spat Marwan. “What the hell are you guys going to do? I’ll tell you: you’re going to get yourselves killed.”

“Maybe,” retorted Ahmed. “But we’ve had enough.” And he left.



A couple of weeks went by. Marwan didn’t see as much of Ahmed as he did before. In fact, there were some days when Ahmed’s shop didn’t open at all. It worried him. True, he used to give Ahmed a hard time about all that nonsense he used to spew in

between drags on his cigarette. But Ahmed was a good man. And Marwan was starting to worry about what he was up to.

A few days later, while Marwan’s head was buried under the hood of a Honda Civic that was hopelessly beyond repair, he heard noise from up the street. It sounded like chanting, and it grew stronger as the seconds went by.

The street that ran past his shop led to the city square, and that’s where the crowd beginning to pass was headed. The slogans they sang and those painted on the banners were not going to be received well. Hell, Marwan couldn’t remember a demonstration of any sort in his lifetime — and he was 30.

As the demonstrators passed, Marwan saw Ahmed among them, pumping his fist in the air.

Marwan disappeared once again under the hood of the Honda. And he was deeply troubled.

The next morning, Marwan went to his garage. As he began to turn the key in the door, he suddenly stopped and turned to look at Ahmed’s shop. He pulled the key out of the door and walked over. The light inside was on. He pulled on the door. Locked. Marwan looked at his watch: it was 8:55, just five minutes before the store should open. He tapped on the glass. He tapped again, harder this time.

Ahmed suddenly appeared from behind the counter. He was limping. He turned the deadbolt on the door and opened it.

“Good morning,” he greeted Marwan.

“What the hell is wrong with your leg?” Marwan asked.

“I fell on the steps at my house,” lied Ahmed.

“Right. I saw you yesterday, Ahmed. Marching with those lunatics. Are you trying to get yourself killed?”

“Marwan,” Ahmed sighed, “Do you even know what happened in



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town yesterday?”

“I was minding my own business. And so should you.”

Marwan turned and walked back across the street and disappeared into his shop.

Ahmed’s eyes followed him. He shook his head and turned back into his store.

Marches started to become a regular occurrence, and they steadily grew in size. That made Marwan uncomfortable. Sometimes they went past without Ahmed. But most of the time, Marwan would spot him in the crowd.

Marwan had never been one to watch the news. But he started doing so, and it concerned him. He heard a lot more worrying talk on the street, too. People were getting bolder in their complaints about the regime, it seemed to Marwan. And that couldn’t end well.

He also noticed more policemen on the streets. And he heard more ru-

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*“They don’t have any  
more right to rule us than  
we have to rule them,”*

*Ahmed exclaimed.*

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mors about arrests and interrogations. But none of that seemed to quell the unrest. There weren’t enough jobs, and people were sick of suffering quietly. On his way home from work, Marwan sometimes saw policemen manhandling groups of young men, handcuffing them and throwing them into Fords. Marwan wasn’t sure what for, but it bothered him.

Marwan never missed Friday prayers. He wasn’t particularly reli-

gious, but he was a man who honored his obligations. The sermons were becoming more alarming, he thought. The prayers were growing more fervent. The general atmosphere was becoming more electric — and not in a good way, in Marwan’s estimation.



On a subsequent Wednesday, three men entered Marwan’s garage. “Get up!” they demanded, as Marwan worked in the pit. Marwan slowly climbed out.

“Can I help you?”

“Your friend, Ahmed,” they charged. “What do you know about what he’s been doing?”

“Well,” answered Marwan, “He runs the shop across the street between 9 and 5. What he does on his own time isn’t my business.”

One of the men approached Marwan, grabbed him by the throat and shoved him against the wall.

“That’s not what I’m talking



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about,” he growled. “What has Ahmed been saying to you? He’s a traitor, a subversive, and we know he talks to you. We’ve seen him.”

With a quaver in his voice, Marwan replied: “Oh, we play backgammon once in a while on the slow days. We talk about the weather and smoke. That’s it.”

“I don’t believe you, grease monkey,” snarled the man as he released Marwan. “Let me make something very clear. We have our eye on your friend. And if we get any indication that you are involved with him, it will be very bad for you, habibi.”

The man then turned his back, motioned to his companions, and made his way out of the garage, kicking an oil pan and slamming the door behind him, leaving Marwan shaking.

The following day, he returned to his garage. As he opened the door, he looked over his shoulder. He was worried. There were rumors of a large demonstration today. Marwan was determined to keep the garage door closed today. He was not interested in getting in the middle of anything.

Around 10 a.m., as Marwan worked, he began to hear shouting in the distance. It grew steadily louder. The front edge of a raucous crowd began to pass his shop. He spotted Ahmed toward the front of it.

“Ahmed!” he shouted. Ahmed did not hear him. Marwan ran to Ahmed.

“Ahmed, you fool!” he yelled. “What are you doing? You’re going to get yourself killed!”

Ahmed continued marching. Marwan scurried to keep up.

“Marwan, friend,” he responded. “We are taking our country back. The Leader has to go.”

“Go back to your shop,” pleaded Marwan.

“It’s too late for that.”

Ahmed walked on, leaving Marwan standing on the side of the road staring after him. Marwan watched him disappear in the throng and shuffled back

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*Watching the crowd,  
Marwan couldn’t  
remember ever seeing  
such a demonstration —  
and he was 30.*

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to his garage.

The morning wore on, and Marwan couldn’t focus. What was happening to the country? No one had ever really complained about things before. Why now?

His thoughts were interrupted by the snap of firecrackers. Or at least they sounded like firecrackers. Pop! Pop! Pop-a-pop-pop! Marwan heard screaming. He looked through the glass window of his garage door. He saw people running up the street away from the center. As the popping continued, Marwan backed away from the door.

After five minutes that seemed like an eternity, the popping stopped. The screaming was replaced by a more subdued wailing. Marwan edged toward the door and opened it. He took a few cautious steps toward the street. A young man jogged toward him and away from the center of town. Marwan grabbed his arm as he went past.

“What is it?”

“The police! We gathered in the square, and they shot at us! Tear gas and bullets! They fired at us! Several people were hit!”

Marwan turned pale. He released the man’s arm and retreated into his shop, then called it a day.

It was a long walk home.

When he arrived and walked through the door, his wife, Leyla, ran to him and threw her arms around

him. “Thank God you’re home,” she repeated over and over as she fought back tears. “I was so worried.”

“About me?” said Marwan incredulously. “Why?”

“Didn’t you hear?” Leyla asked. “The police opened fire on the protesters today in the city. Your shop is so close, and you walk home. I was so worried.”

“I’m fine. I’m home. I’m fine,” Marwan reassured her.

Leyla stepped back from Marwan and took his face in her hands.

“Marwan,” she said quietly.

“Yes?”

“They killed Ahmed.”

Marwan felt his legs go limp, and he grabbed for the arm of the chair they kept at the entrance, a chair purely decorative placed without the slightest intent that anyone would ever sit in it. Marwan slumped heavily into it in stunned silence. Leyla put her arm on his shoulder. He flinched, placed his elbows on his knees, and let his face drop heavily into his cracked, oil-stained hands.

After a minute, Leyla went into the kitchen. Marwan sat in the good chair that was never meant to be used for quite some time. Ahmed was a dreamer. But he didn’t deserve to die. He wasn’t violent. He was opinionated. Was that a crime?



Marwan couldn’t eat. He couldn’t play with the kids. They teased him, pulled on his sleeves. But he couldn’t help looking at them and wondering what the future held for them. Was this all there was? They gained no advantage by being born to him. He thought back to what Ahmed had told him: “They don’t have any more right to rule us than we have to rule them.”

Marwan needed to sleep.

He woke up the next morning and readied himself for work. He usually managed to do so without waking Leyla. Not so today. Leyla raised herself on her right elbow as he buttoned

his shirt.

“Marwan,” she said sleepily.

“Yes, dear,” he answered.

“Be careful today, please. Stay out of trouble and don’t do anything stupid. You have a wife and four kids at home.”

“I know, I know,” he whispered as he kissed her forehead.

Marwan opened the garage and began to work. As his fingers fumbled through the toolbox for a socket, he raised his eyes and looked through the window at Ahmed’s shuttered shop. What had happened to Ahmed wasn’t fair, he thought.

Predictably, as had become the pattern in recent weeks, a demonstration once again made its way toward the city center. And nearly as soon as the tail end had passed his shop, protesters began retreating, running back with looks of sheer terror. Soon policemen followed, swinging batons

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*There weren’t enough  
jobs, and people  
were getting sick of  
suffering quietly.*

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and firing pistols. Bodies fell to the ground as red streams of blood puddled in the gutter.

Right in front of Marwan’s shop, the police grabbed a young man who began to yell. The two policemen who held him began to beat him mercilessly — on the head, about the shoulders, in the stomach. His wails grew weaker and weaker. Marwan couldn’t look away. He thought of

Ahmed. He thought of his kids. He remembered Leyla’s admonition that morning.

The beating continued. Marwan’s weight shifted from one foot to the other as he swayed back and forth in front of the window of his garage. He put his hand on the handle of the door.

He pulled it off.

The boy slumped to his knees, and the police continued to beat him.

Marwan was sweating. He seized the doorknob, then paused and dropped his head. His eyes settled on his badly-worn black leather shoes. A few of the stitches on the left one had already broken, and the sole was starting to separate. “Gotta get that fixed,” Marwan thought to himself, then nodded sideways once and smiled weakly.

Lifting his head again, Marwan took a deep breath, turned the knob, and pushed the door open. ■



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# AFSANews

American Foreign Service Association • April 2012

## Discrepancies in Benefits, Entry-Level Hiring Top USAID FSOs' Concerns

BY USAID VP FRANCISCO ZAMORA

This marks the sixth year we have surveyed our membership on their experiences working at USAID. Conducted electronically from mid-December 2011 to mid-January 2012, the survey consisted of 36 questions. More than 600 members — a third of the approximately 1,800 USAID FSOs currently serving — responded. We present a summary of the main findings, with selected graphs, here. Full results and analysis are available at [www.afsa.org/USAID](http://www.afsa.org/USAID) under *The Vanguard* section.

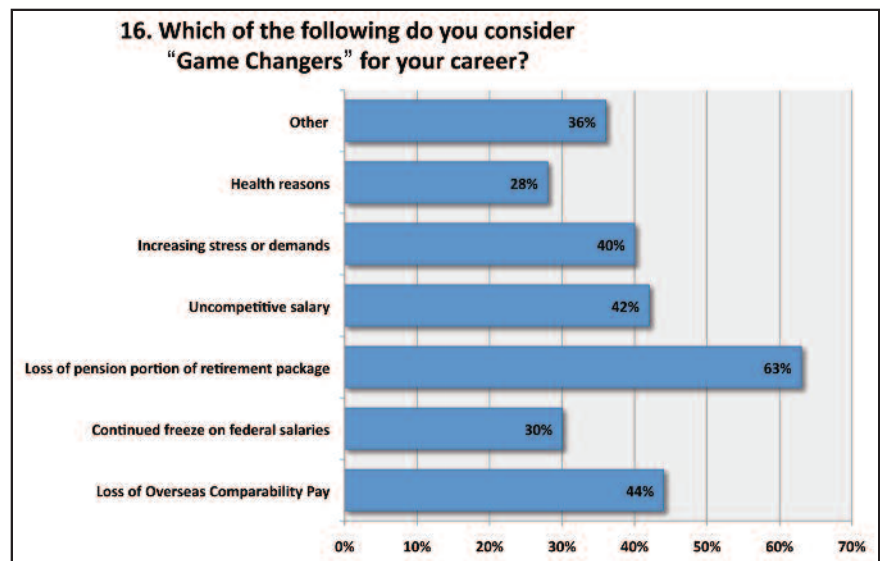
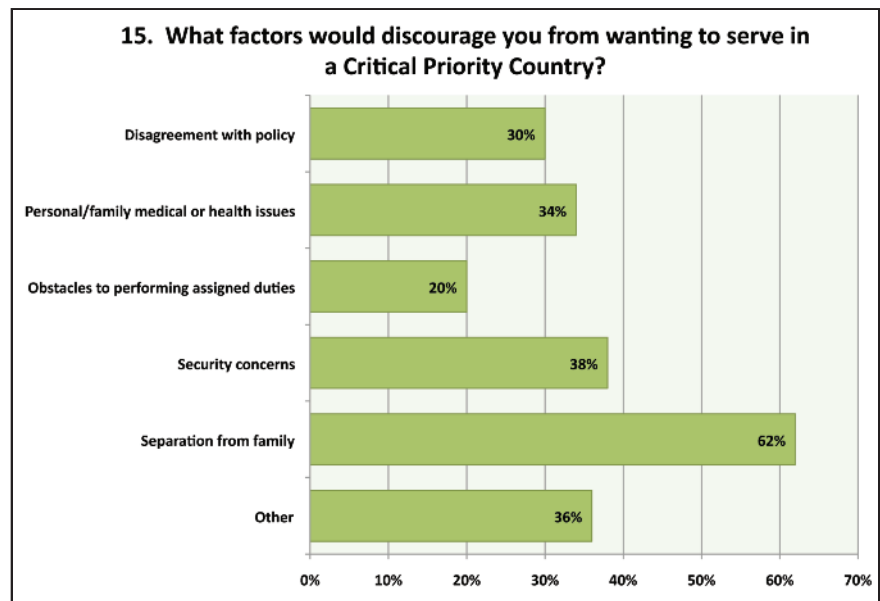
### Profile of USAID Respondents

Approximately 81 percent of respondents are currently posted overseas and 51 percent are male and 49 percent female. As a result of intensive hiring during the previous four years under the Development Leadership Initiative, approximately 58 percent of employees are 45 years old or younger.

Almost 30 percent are unmarried, and 43 percent have no children. Significantly, 44 percent of married members have a foreign-born spouse. Eight percent reported having a special-needs dependent, while 2 percent of employees have a physical disability.

With regard to diversity in the Foreign Service, 79 percent are Caucasian, 9 percent are Asian-American, 8 percent are African-American and 5 percent are Hispanic-American.

**Critical Priority Country Service:** When FSOs were asked about service in CPCs (Questions 14 and 15), 31 percent said their main motivation for having



served was a sense of duty, challenge, adventure or patriotism. Neither financial incentives (8 percent), nor other career factors (advancement, bidding priority),

placed very high on the scale of importance for serving in CPCs. Sixty-two percent reported that their greatest concern was sep-

Continued on page 52

# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



## Update on the AFSA Scholarship Program

AFSA recently debuted a new online submission and judging process for the AFSA Academic and Art Merit Awards, which are open to high school seniors of Foreign Service members in the United States and abroad. The new system allows students to easily track the six components of their application, while allowing judges to easily access each submission.

This year, 70 students submitted academic merit applications and another 10 students applied for an art merit award. A total of \$40,500 in prizes will be bestowed on approximately 25 students. In addition, AFSA received 109 need-based financial aid applications for undergraduate college study in the 2012-2013 school year and, with \$183,000 in the coffers, AFSA is poised to help 70 students. Our scholarship program is run under the oversight of the AFSA Scholarship Committee. The Merit Award winners will be announced at a ceremony during Foreign Affairs Day, on Friday, May 4. Please visit [www.afsa.org/scholar](http://www.afsa.org/scholar) for details.

## Have You Heard About Balancing Act?

Balancing Act at State: Achieving Work-Life Balance is a new employee organization focused on a range of work-life balance issues, including teleworking, alternative work schedules, child care, elder care, job sharing and other policies and programs critical for the recruitment, retention and morale of the department's diverse work force. For more information on upcoming Balancing Act events, and how you can get involved, or to be added to our distribution list, please e-mail Anne Coleman-Honn at [colemanas@state.gov](mailto:colemanas@state.gov).

## Third Culture Kids

On Monday, April 2, at 11:30 a.m., AFSA is proud to present a panel discussion on Third Culture Kids, highlighting the Foreign Service experience. Panelists Rebecca Grappo, Ruth Van Reken, Julia Simens and Rebecca Oden, all experts who have studied TCKs from discrete viewpoints, will devote particular attention to the question of emotional resilience, asking what enables some kids to adapt well to Foreign Service life while others struggle. The discussion will take place at AFSA headquarters, 2101 E Street NW, Washington, D.C., and is open to the public. Space is limited, so please RSVP to [events@afsa.org](mailto:events@afsa.org).

## Give to the AFSA Scholarship Fund

This month, the AFSA Scholarship Fund's annual appeal for donations will be arriving in your mailbox. Please consider making a donation to support the Academic and Art Merit Awards program for Foreign Service high school seniors and need-based financial aid scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$4,000 for college study. There are very few programs available that reward academic and artistic excellence at the high school level, and that is what makes AFSA's program so special. Our goal is to disburse more than \$220,000 in aid to almost 100 Foreign Service children. Your donation is tax deductible. For online donations and more information, please go to [www.afsa.org/scholar](http://www.afsa.org/scholar).

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## Defining, Not Defending, Our Future



The federal work force is under attack. For the past two years, certain elements in Congress have waged a deliberate war against federal employees — freezing our salaries, attacking our pensions, calling us names and seeking to make government service less attractive.

At first, they claimed it was about including us in the shared sacrifices asked of all Americans to balance the budget. Now many of them admit they want to shrink the government, reduce our ranks and eliminate certain government functions altogether. We are pawns in two political battles: one about money and the other about the very nature of government. It is a pretty unpleasant place to be.

Defending ourselves, we are forced to justify our very existence. We do this from both a personal and professional perspective. Professionally, we try to explain (shocked that it is even necessary to do so) what the Foreign Service is, what it does for the American people and why it is needed. Personally, we express our love of country, desire to make a difference, interest in the world around us and, increasingly, describe the sacrifices we have made as individuals and family members to serve our country.

It is very easy, in this environment, to feel defensive, and to react to any attempt to question our purpose, or change our status quo, as a threat. This natural reaction could put us in a very difficult place with regard to the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review.

The QDDR is not a threat. Were it not unfortunately timed to coincide with the worst attacks on our livelihood in recent history, most of us would see it, conceptually, as a very good thing. It is an effort to improve efficiency and coordinate, across various lines, our efforts to achieve our mission. But it is also an effort to reach deep into our organization, question every assumption, seek justification for why things are the way they are, and change things in some very dramatic and, to some degree, experimental ways.

We must make the effort to separate genuine attacks on our Service from those which are simply artifacts of an ever-changing, ever-evolving world. It is extremely important for us to help shape, rather than oppose, State's efforts — or run the risk that they will be shaped primarily by others.

As part of the QDDR, over the past few months, the department has undertaken a number of initiatives, including a small pilot program enabling a small number of Civil Service employees to serve one tour in overseas positions selected to enhance their knowledge base — with a reciprocal aspect allowing Foreign

Service members to serve a tour in the Civil Service positions temporarily vacated.

There is a dramatic increase in demand for certain “niche” skills in specific countries and at specific grade levels that the department cannot address by simply hiring more FS members. In response, there will be a significant increase in the number and type of Limited Non-Career Appointments, colleagues who serve at specific grade levels in narrowly defined positions on non-career, time-limited appointments. Nearly all LNAs will be in just a few countries, and some will actually free up career entry level officers for longer-term language training.

*It is very easy, in this environment, to feel defensive, and to react to any attempt to question our purpose, or change our status quo, as a threat.*

Such initiatives challenge our assumptions about our institution, and could play into the hands of those who question the requirement for a dedicated Foreign Service. But properly managed, they are essential to enable the State Department to meet its mission more effectively.

AFSA's role in such cases must therefore be to collaborate in shaping the terms of such initiatives, defining numbers and limitations, and building in safeguards to ensure that they do not harm our career paths or legitimacy. We also have an important role to play as a reality check, sharing field-tested expertise to keep abstract ideas focused on realities.

Recognizing the purpose and value of the QDDR, our role must be to ensure a strong FS voice is at the table as ideas are transformed into programs and procedures. Ideally, we can use this process to achieve, as well, things we ourselves have wanted — such as better career paths for specialists, and greater and more promotable opportunities for mid-level generalists to serve in developmental tours.

To do this, we need your help. We need to hear from more of you, and we need more of you to weigh in with management through your own chains of command. We need to do this to make sure our voice is heard — not to defend ourselves against implementation of the QDDR, but to help shape its outcome, by sharing our skills and expertise to help our agency better perform its mission. □

V.P. VOICE: USAID ■ BY FRANCISCO ZAMORA

*Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA USAID VP.*

## Reinventing the Annual Evaluation Form Wheel



An AFSA member recently asked me whether the U.S. Agency for International Development might reform its performance evaluation process. This person felt that an extraordinary amount of time was wasted preparing employee evaluations instead of carrying out our work.

My familiarity with USAID's evaluation system goes back to the time when it was called the Employee Evaluation Report, which ultimately became the Annual Evaluation Form we have today. Since then, I have seen evaluation forms take many different shapes, sizes and media (paper vs. electronic). Some forms consisted of mainly checked boxes, while others required a thermometer-style graph. Vast written narratives were in vogue for a while, only to be replaced by short missives.

It didn't stop there. The review process has also gone through its own permutations, with some systems requiring "360 degree" input from colleagues or substantive involvement by the Appraisal Committee. This was followed by the AC being responsible merely for checking to see if the rules had been followed: written recommendations for promotions, then prohibitions against recommending promotion; a requirement to list areas for improvement, then no such requirement; etc. You get my point. Regardless of the evaluation system in place, it has always taken time to evaluate an employee; for some, it may require the entire month of April to complete the process.

Personally, I have come to believe that the AEF process is as developed as it can be, although I believe there will always be room for improvement. I think the real problem lies in the fact that many employees do not pay attention to instructions. Instead of developing work objectives and performance measures early in the cycle, the rater and ratee wait too long and fail to draft solid documents, even though instructions are readily available.

Many work objectives and performance measures are deficient because they are not specific; easily measurable, significant or challenging; related to mission or agency goals; attributable to the employee's work; or timely. Performance boards look for all these elements in the AEF and, above all, concentrate on the "so what?" of the employee's work. Any AEF that just repeats the continuing responsibility of the employee will not lead to that employee being ranked for promotion.

This brings me back to the officer who wrote to me about improving the AEF process. My answer is that we must continue to look for better ways to streamline the evaluation process. But until we come up with something new, evaluations will be easier to draft if meaningful and measurable work objectives and performance measurements have been established and raters meet the established benchmarks, thereby avoiding the rush to complete evaluations by the deadline.

AEF preparation help is available at [www.afsa.org/usaid](http://www.afsa.org/usaid) under Information for Members. □

Survey • Continued from page 49

aration from their family.

There was a consensus that the agency can do more to ensure that families are well cared for—financially and emotionally—while officers are serving in CPCs. That includes access to counseling, information on support resources, adequate separate maintenance allowance, keeping families at current post and ensuring fair assignment procedures. The recently established USAID Staff Care Unit in Washington, D.C., can play a big role in meeting those needs.

*FSOs are keenly aware of the recent national federal budget discussions in Congress that have put at risk federal salaries and retirement benefits. We have expanded our legislative outreach staff and increased funding for efforts to protect FS benefits.*

**What FSOs Consider Important:** Sixty-three percent of USAID FSOs value their retirement package (Question 16) above many other factors, and 85 percent want AFSA to actively lobby Congress to protect it (Question 17). Close behind is concern about maintaining Overseas Comparability Pay. FSOs are keenly aware of the recent national federal budget discussions in Congress that have put at risk federal salaries and retirement benefits. We have expanded our legislative outreach staff and increased funding for efforts to protect FS benefits. AFSA has redoubled its efforts to coordinate with other federal unions to counter such threats.

**Labor Management Issues:** Question 18 elicited the strongest response, with 83 percent of USAID FSOs expressing concern over discrepancies in benefits between State and USAID, including: access to spousal language training at the Foreign Service Institute; lower Washington, D.C.,

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## V.P. VOICE: FAS ■ BY DAVID MERGEN

Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA FAS VP.

## Linking U.S. Agriculture to the World

The Foreign Agricultural Service is not unique in facing the growing challenge of operating in an increasingly difficult budget environment, but it has the added challenge of struggling to define, or redefine, its role and mission. For most of our existence, FAS's fairly straightforward mission was to "expand exports." However, over the last decade we greatly increased our efforts in international agricultural development and adopted a broader vision statement: "FAS links U.S. agriculture to the world."

Traditionally, the agency has had responsibilities that go well beyond solely promoting exports, particularly since the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of International Cooperation and Development was merged into FAS in 1994. FAS, which typically focused on agricultural market development, then added international agricultural development to its portfolio. Although agricultural development work is important, a relatively low profile was maintained until USDA became heavily involved in reconstruction work in Afghanistan and Iraq. To many, it appeared that FAS was competing to become a mini-USAID.

The Foreign Agricultural Service of the near future will con-

tinue to serve an agricultural development role. But the central question many of us ask (and hope) is this: Are we truly returning to our roots as an agricultural trade agency? The appointment of a career Foreign Service officer as acting administrator with a mandate from the Secretary of Agriculture to focus on trade is a good sign, but there is still a lot of work to do. Clearly, our industry partners are looking to us to focus on expanding agricultural exports.

In the meantime, the lack of a clear mission has made it hard to focus on the work needed to promote the interests of U.S. agriculture, particularly in a time of limited budgets. Agency reorganizations only added to the uncertainty. Many of us think that the lack of focus is a primary reason why FAS leadership ranked 217 out of 218 agencies in the latest Best Places to Work survey.

If our mission is to link U.S. agriculture to the world, then promoting community gardens is just as laudable as growing U.S. exports. However, if our mission is to promote exports, then it is much clearer where the priority lies. Here's hoping we get back on track! □



### 4 Rules for Packout

Foreign Service Funnies

Genevieve

**Do:** Take off your badge before you use strapping tape.



**Don't:** wrap stuff in newspapers you can read.



**Do:** Get enough sleep.



**Don't:** keep your passport in your sock drawer.



GENEVIEVE SHAPIRO



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# Presenting American Culture to the World

BY CAROL MACK

Anyone who has worked in a U.S. embassy will tell you that the building is much more than a place of work. Through its layered sense of purpose, it is a place that communicates American culture, values and ideals. Thus, the art displayed at an embassy is not simply decorative, but laden with potential for cross-cultural connections and dialogue.

When my husband, Earle I. Mack, and I moved to Helsinki in 2004 for his appointment as the U.S. ambassador to Finland, we brought with us a contemporary art collection that I had curated at home in New York City. The focal point of our collection was a 15-foot-long Alex Katz painting of flowers floating against a green background. Needless to say, it dominated the living room. The bold, colorful images in our collection made an impression on everyone who saw them.

When I chose the collection, we never knew how important it would be to our subsequent diplomatic work. Yet during those initial months when our surroundings constituted unfamiliar terrain, we cast a wide net into the community in an effort to meet as many people as we could. Our art collection was a conversation starter. It provoked strong reactions and ultimately led to our inclusion in all of Helsinki's art and cultural events.

It also sparked associations with the

Finnish American Society and the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce, where I was invited to give lectures on contemporary art. Our acceptance into the arts community helped us greatly to broaden our reach and connections throughout the country.

## Joining FAPE

Having seen firsthand the difference art can make in cultural diplomacy, I joined the board of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, an organization that promotes the role that art can play in a diplomatic context. Like many other spouses of ambassadors, I found a family in FAPE and what it offered during our stay abroad.

My friend and fellow FAPE Board member, Vera Blinken, had a similar experience. When her husband, Donald M. Blinken, became the U.S. ambassador to Hungary in 1994, it was just three years after the last Soviet soldiers had left Budapest and 45 years after the start of the Soviet occupation. As Hungary emerged from behind the Iron Curtain, the Blinkens realized that cultural diplomacy was an important tool.

When Budapest's Museum of Fine Arts planned a Titian exhibit, they asked the Blinkens for assistance in securing the loan of a painting from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Vera made it happen. Once the painting took its place in the

exhibition, the American embassy organized a welcoming party for the "American Titian," bringing together Americans and Hungarians in a convivial, amicable setting. Even a single painting coming from the United States not only made a stellar contribution to the exhibition but, more importantly, created good will.

Our experiences, of course, are part of a larger legacy. Throughout our history, the arts have served as a meaningful and effective way for the United States to assert her diplomatic dexterity. Nowhere was this better seen than during the Cold War, when American painters, poets, musicians and authors all helped connect the hearts and minds of citizens around the world, by sharing a slice of everyday American life.

## FAPE's Work

I see FAPE's work as a way to further the role that art can play in our country's diplomacy. From Elyn Zimmerman's sculpture at the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, created from indigenous African granite, to Martin Puryear's vision for Embassy Beijing, a sweeping stainless steel arch that will stand more than 30 feet tall and will be visible to the public from outside the embassy, FAPE is bringing American art to our embassies throughout the world as a means of communication and diplomacy.

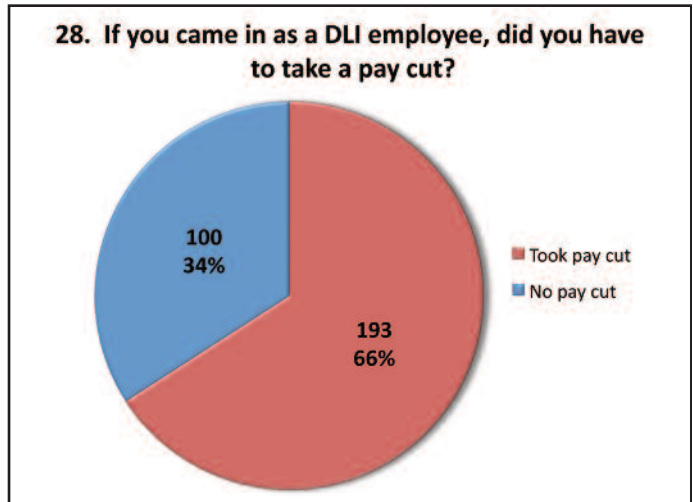
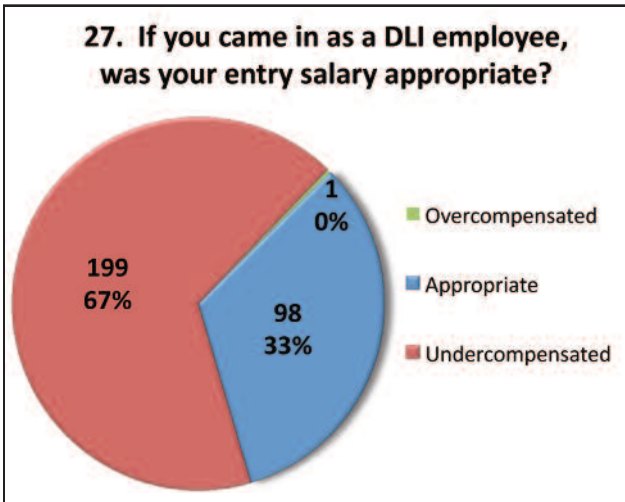
Such works give people from different nations a glimpse into the collective consciousness of our country, while providing an outlet other than politics to connect us all. Art transcends decoration by making a statement about ourselves and our interests. It sparks conversations, becomes a point of commonality and, in many ways, defines us.

To learn more about the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, please visit [www.fapeglobal.org](http://www.fapeglobal.org). □

*Carol Mack is married to the former U.S. ambassador to Finland, Earle I. Mack. Prior to relocating to Helsinki she lived in New York City for 24 years, where she raised her two children. An active participant in American cultural life, Mrs. Mack currently serves on the board of the Foundation for Art and Preservation of Embassies in Washington, D.C., the American Scandinavian Foundation, the New York City Ballet and the American Friends of the Paris Opera and Ballet, among others.*



The Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies and artists Martin Puryear and Brice Marden presented new works of art for U.S. embassies to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during FAPE's 25th Anniversary Dinner on May 19, in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Left to right: Earl A. Powell III, Director of the Gallery; Jo Carole Lauder, FAPE Chairman; Martin Puryear, artist; Secretary Clinton; and Brice Marden, artist.



FSOs rated the support services of three offices:

Human Resources, Financial Management, and Travel and Transportation.

Of the three, the Office of Human Resources scored the worst, with 59 percent rating it poor.

per diem rates; unequal lodging arrangements while training in Washington; ineligibility for FSI day-care services; and the lack of incentives, such as overseas difficult-to-staff differentials.

The most serious problem continues to be low entry-level salaries, which put many new USAID employees at extreme financial hardship during orientation in Washington, D.C., and throughout their careers.

More than 67 percent of DLI officers responded to Questions 27 and 28 by stating they felt they were undercompensated, while 66 percent said they took a pay cut to join the agency. USAID employees with the exact same educational profiles and experience as their State counterparts receive salaries that are tens of thousands of dollars lower.

This has caused serious morale problems for USAID junior officers. It gives the

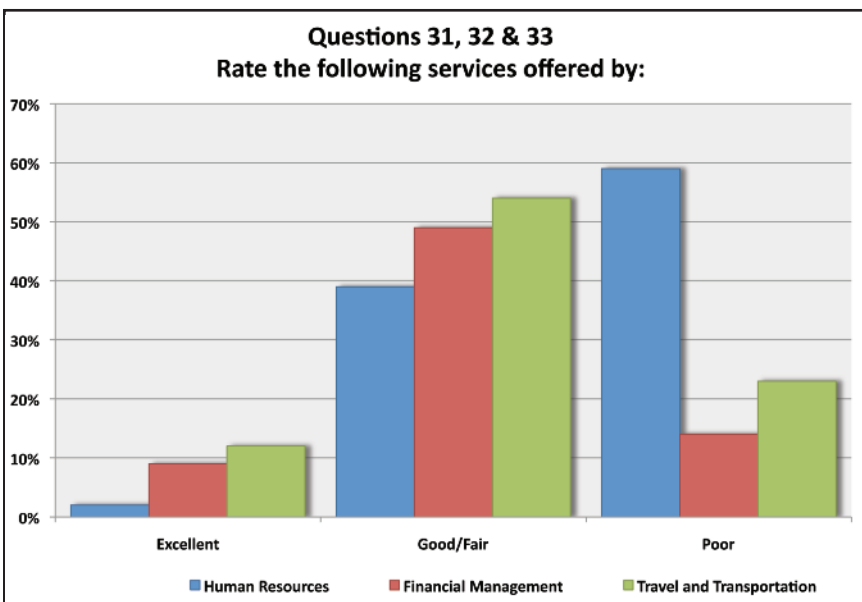
impression that agency leadership has low regard for its employees, even though the Foreign Service Act of 1980 specifically states that there should be maximum compatibility between Foreign Service agencies regarding personnel policies.

**Satisfaction Issues at Post:** Our survey reveals that USAID personnel overwhelmingly continue to believe that the International Cooperative Administration Support Services system has resulted in higher costs and poorer services, making it the main source for dissatisfaction for overseas employees.

Forty-four percent of eligible family members are dissatisfied with employment opportunities at post, and another 42 percent express concern over lack of educational opportunities for students with special needs at many posts.

**USAID Support Offices:** We were especially interested in finding out how FSOs rate the support services of three offices: Human Resources, Financial Management, and Travel and Transportation (Questions 31, 32 and 33). Of the three, the Office of Human Resources scored the worst, with 59 percent rating it poor.

Next, we asked respondents whether they had noticed any improvements in services provided by the Office of Human Resources during the previous six months—a period in which HR initiated an intensive program to improve customer service. If one judges by the decrease in poor ratings and the increase in excellent and



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good/fair ratings, there does seem to have been a modest improvement during the previous six months in six of eight areas. We congratulate HR on its recent efforts and hope they continue.

**Agency Morale:** The data speaks for itself: the agency's poor morale rating has doubled. Morale has worsened from a 22 percent poor rating in the 2010 survey to

a 41 percent poor rating in the current survey. An institution such as USAID cannot continue at this pace of decline if it is going to fulfill its mandate. Top leadership has to address many of the serious problems identified in this and other surveys such as "Best Places to Work," which placed USAID near the bottom of comparable agencies.

#### The USAID Administrator's Perfor-

**mance:** The unfavorable rating for Administrator Rajiv Shah (Question 35) increased from 9 percent Poor in the 2010 survey to 21 percent Poor in the current survey. At the same time, 20 percent of respondents rated his performance as excellent, a rise of four percentage points from the previous survey. From the comments submitted, it seems that many of the initiatives which are now being implemented may have contributed to the poorer scores for the Administrator.

**Overall Working Conditions at USAID:** The 2011 survey shows that 46 percent of employees feel that overall conditions of work are worsening (Question 36). This is an improvement over the previous survey, but still shows that close to half of USAID FSOs are concerned that things are not improving.

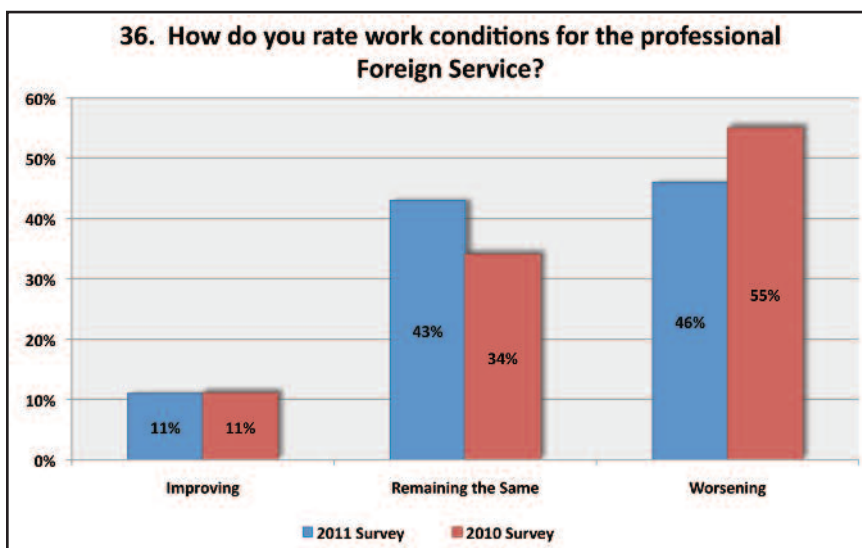
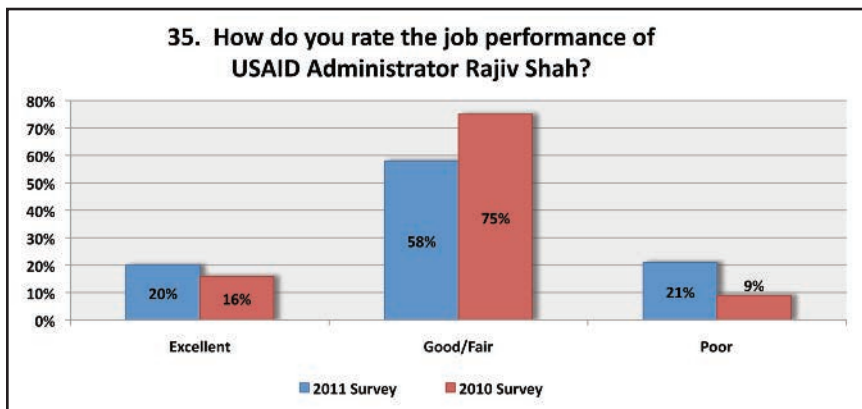
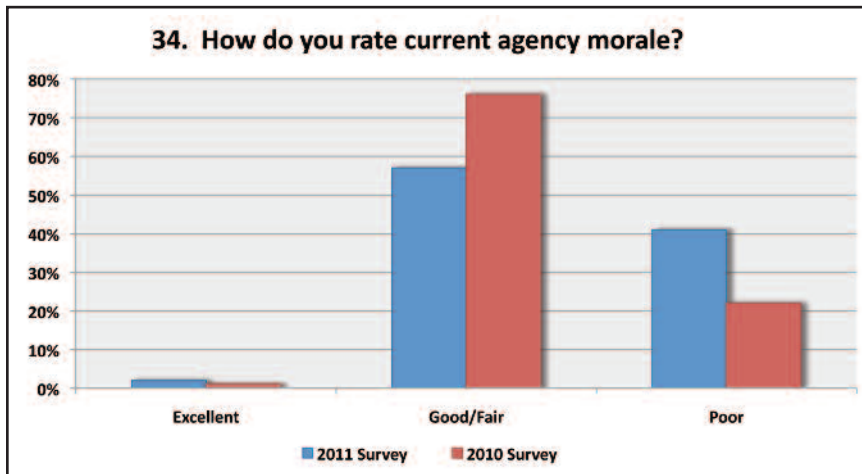
#### Concluding Analysis

The survey has clarified several important issues:

- Our FSO staff is younger and has different needs than the traditional work force.
- USAID still has a way to go to achieve a diverse work force.
- FSOs are very concerned about work-life balance and take it into account when they decide whether to leave the agency.
- Although FSOs are very dedicated and enjoy their work, morale continues to decline.
- The Office of Human Resources is viewed negatively by a majority of employees. However, recent improvements, including the new Staff Care Unit, are encouraging.

The USAID membership, which is mostly pleased with AFSA's work, clearly indicated what they want us to focus on: protecting the retirement package; equalizing benefits with the State Department; preserving Overseas Comparability Pay; achieving fairness in assignments; and establishing an electronic voting system. The most serious inequity continues to be USAID's low entry-level salaries, which have negatively affected many new officers.

We hope the agency will respond to the needs expressed in this survey. □





# AFSA Meets George Shultz and Northern California Retirees

BY TOM SWITZER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

AFSA President Susan R. Johnson and Executive Director Ian Houston met with former Secretary of State George Shultz on Friday, Feb. 3, in Palo Alto, Calif.

Secretary Shultz shared his perspectives on how to strengthen the Foreign Service and ways to promote better governance within AFSA.

Sec. Shultz, who contributed the lead article to the *Foreign Service Journal's* December commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the USSR's dissolution, reiterated his long-held view of the importance of empowering constitutionally mandated officials within State and the Foreign Service, rather than appointing policy "czars" who are not accountable to Congress and the American people.

In response to a question from Pres. Johnson about ways to further strength-



On Feb. 3, former Secretary of State George Shultz and Susan Johnson, AFSA president, meet at his home in Palo Alto to discuss ways to strengthen the Foreign Service.



Left to right: Former Ambassador Ted Elliot, AFSA President Susan Johnson and former Ambassador James Rosenthal, president of the Foreign Service Association of Northern California, at a luncheon for FS retirees in Berkeley on Feb. 4.

en the Foreign Service Institute, Sec. Shultz drew on his experience teaching at the U.S. Naval Academy to enhance diplomatic training and education.

Johnson and Houston conveyed the deep appreciation of the Foreign Service for Sec. Shultz's many contributions to diplomacy and for his support for AFSA.

On Saturday, Feb. 4, Johnson spoke to more than 40 members of the Foreign Service Association of Northern California and their guests at a luncheon in Berkeley. She presented an overview of AFSA's efforts in a variety of areas, including governance, professionalism, core advocacy, image and outreach, and membership and development.

Johnson emphasized AFSA's support for the international affairs budget request, detailed its hard work to protect Foreign Service pensions and benefits, and

explained where the State Department and USAID are in terms of implementing recommendations of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review.

A lively Q&A session followed, after which FSANC President James Rosenthal thanked Johnson for the comprehensive discussion. □

## Helping Those Who Help Animals

BY ELIZABETH HASKETT

While working as a contractor in the U.S. Agency for International Development's Latin America and Caribbean Bureau, and later living in Africa and Jamaica with her husband, Ron Stryker, a USAID Foreign Service officer, Karen Menczer noticed that animal welfare organizations in poor countries have the drive and knowledge to help animals, but lack resources. Consequently, time spent on fundraising activities equates to less time actually helping the animals.

Acting on that realization, in July 2007 Menczer created Animal-Kind International, a nonprofit organization whose goal is to link donors in wealthier countries with needy animal welfare organizations worldwide. AKI raises money and collects supplies for partner organizations; tracks the



With funding from Animal Kind International, the Uganda Society for the Protection and Care of Animals provided sterilization for the dogs living at Sister Gemma's orphanage in Entebbe.

use of donor funds; and when donors are interested, connects them directly with partner organizations so they can find out firsthand how their support is helping animals.

AKI follows a due diligence process to ensure partner organizations have adequate

and transparent accounting measures, and are able to track AKI funds and report back to AKI on their use. The organization sends 100 percent of donations to partner organizations.

AKI's core support comes from individuals and student groups who have visited countries where it has partner organizations or from those who just want to help "the neediest of the needy." For example, support has come from a group of kids at Camp Doglando in Orlando, Fla.; the Stop Injustice and Cruelty Club at Ward Melville High School in Long Island, N.Y.; and a tourist group that contacted AKI after witnessing the torturous journey of livestock

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## More Europe Is the Answer

BY CLINT LOHSE, AFSA LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS ASSISTANT



PATRICK BRADLEY

Left to right: Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Europe and Eurasia Jeffrey K. Baker, Danish Ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen, AFSA Executive Director Ian Houston and retired Ambassador Edward M. Rowell after a lively panel discussion on the state of the European Union and the euro on Feb. 16 at AFSA headquarters.

On Thursday, Feb. 16, AFSA hosted a panel discussion on the state of the European Union and the current euro crisis. Retired Ambassador Edward M. Rowell moderated the panel, which featured Danish Ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Europe and Eurasia Jeffrey K. Baker.

Baker and Amb. Rowell, both experts on European fiscal and economic issues, have been deeply involved in the most severe fiscal crisis to hit Europe in the 20 years since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, and a decade after the introduction of the euro.

Amb. Taksøe-Jensen shared the perspective of E.U. nations as they grapple with the ongoing crisis. Noting that Denmark currently holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union, he described the process, and complications, of getting 17 member-states to agree on how to respond. Despite some opposition to various proposals, all concur that failure to address the problem would harm the entire E.U., he said

“Look at Germany. They benefit every day from the euro because they have a much lower interest rate, which has a very positive impact on their exports and so forth. And so it’s not so difficult to explain to the German worker that it’s also in his interest that Germany takes steps to solve the crisis,” he remarked.

While acknowledging that solutions to the crisis must come from E.U. members, Mr. Baker emphasized how critical the success of the euro is to the rest of the world. “Our first, best strategy is to have Europe do what it needs to preserve its own currency union,” he said. The euro zone has the capacity and resources to succeed, he continued, but “the politics are difficult.”

The event was inspired by a pair of focus articles in the February edition of the *Foreign Service Journal* on the euro debt crisis. In his commentary, Alan Larson, a retired career ambassador who has served as under secretary for economic affairs and assistant secretary for economic and business affairs, makes a case for a greater focus on economic issues in American diplomacy. And Bruce Stokes, a senior trans-Atlantic fellow

at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, warns that the euro crisis threatens the strength and stability of the U.S.-E.U. strategic partnership.

More than 80 people attended the event, which concluded with a lively Q&A session that made clear the great interest in this timely subject. Both Amb. Taksøe-Jensen and Mr. Baker expressed optimism that the difficult choices to preserve the European Union’s common currency could be made.

“More Europe is the answer,” said Mr. Baker. Amb. Taksøe-Jensen agreed, telling the audience, “There is support to go down this road to more Europe, and we will have the strength to bring ourselves out of this crisis.” □

### Animals • Continued from page 57

on their way to slaughter in Kampala.

FSOs and other U.S. government employees overseas have also contributed to AKI’s efforts. Some help by ensuring donated funds and supplies, such as tick and flea medicines and sutures, reach in-country partner organizations.

Sometimes the most valued support isn’t financial but emotional. Pilar Thorn, founder of Helping Hands for Hounds of Honduras, had this to say: “For me, it is a great help and lifts my spirits to know I can count on AKI to help in my efforts to educate people about the humane treatment of domestic animals. Just knowing there is someone out there who understands the kinds of problems one encounters in less developed countries makes my work a lot easier.”

AKI also supports a network of small but determined animal welfare groups whose work spans the globe, with partner organizations in Uganda, Namibia, Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, South Sudan, Jamaica, Honduras, Bosnia and Armenia. To learn more about AKI and its partner organizations, please visit [www.animal-kind.org](http://www.animal-kind.org). To contact AKI, please e-mail [karen@animal-kind.org](mailto:karen@animal-kind.org). □

*Elizabeth Haskett serves on the board of AKI. She is an animal welfare advocate living in Anchorage, Alaska, with her husband, Geoff, and their dog, Stella.*

# I Work for Uncle Sam, and I'm Proud of It

BY JASON ULLNER

I am a federal bureaucrat. A professional government employee. And guess what? I'm damn proud of it.

It seems that all I hear these days are the once and future leaders of our country tripping over themselves to denigrate the work we do. I'm tired of it, and I'm fed up. I don't claim to represent anyone other than myself, but I would bet that a fair number of federal employees feel as I do. We are lawyers, doctors, Ph.D. students, economists, writers, electricians, construction workers, security officers and technology specialists. We are not a drain on the national economy; rather, we are a primary reason why the United States remains as great as it is.

Like many federal workers, I have sacrificed: a high-paying job in the private sector; a year of my life (and the first six months of my daughter's life) spent in Iraq; long hours; high stress; pay freezes. I'm not complaining; in fact, I quite enjoy my career and my life in the Foreign Service.

Yet when I hear our politicians talking about "fixing" Washington, I often wonder to myself: whom would they like to "fix?" Is it the guy I see on the Metro every day, heading to work at the Food and Drug Administration to ensure that our food is safe? Is it the woman going into

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Commerce Department headquarters to support U.S. companies abroad? Or do they mean the thousands of people who support our troops overseas? How about my fellow Foreign Service officers, who put themselves in harm's way in Baghdad, Kabul, Damascus and hundreds of other places around the world?

I have no doubt that some within the federal bureaucracy simply show up each day to collect a paycheck. I also have no doubt that this happens within any number of multinational corporations, small businesses and law firms. But I know for a fact that most of us do this job not because we want to make a lot of money but because, simply put, we want to serve our country.

There was a time, not long ago, when government service was seen as a higher

calling. That's the reason I decided to join the State Department in 2005 — not because I wanted job security or good health benefits, but because I wanted to devote my life to making this country stronger, making the world a better, safer place and pursuing a career I was proud of.

Seven years later, I still get excited to come to work every morning. I still get a thrill when I enter the State Department and see the flags of every nation with which we have diplomatic relations. And I certainly get chills each and every time I see the U.S. flag on one of our embassies. I'm fairly sure I am not the only federal employee who feels this way.

So to all our politicians, I implore you: stop using the government work force as a political football. Just stop. It demeans you, it demoralizes us, and it is counterproductive to drive away the best and brightest from working for the betterment of this country.

We don't do our jobs for glory, or money or power. We do them — and do them well — because we take pride in our work and pride in representing the United States of America. □

*This commentary originally appeared on the Washington Post's Opinion page on Feb. 26 and is reprinted with the author's permission.*

## AFSA Announces 2011 Sinclair Award Winners

BY PERRI GREEN, AFSA SPECIAL AWARDS AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR

In 1982, retired Foreign Service officer Mathilda W. Sinclair provided AFSA with a generous bequest to honor Foreign Service employees who excel in the study of hard languages and their associated cultures. Since then, AFSA has honored more than 100 individuals for their language-learning abilities.

AFSA is pleased to announce the eight winners of the 2011 Mathilda W. Sinclair

Language Award. They are: Nancy Abella — Dari; Eric Collings — Uzbek; Sarah Grow — Persian/Farsi; James Hallock — Mandarin; Rebecca Hunter — Albanian; Theresa Mangione — Vietnamese; E. Jerome Ryan Jr. — Japanese; David Vincent Salvo — Serbian/Croatian.

Each winner receives a \$1,000 prize and certificate. AFSA thanks the Foreign Service Institute's School of Language Studies

and its many language instructors for their dedication and assistance in identifying candidates for the award. Nominations are also received from teachers at regional language schools.

For more information on the award, guidelines and nominating procedures, please visit [www.afsa.org/sinclair\\_language\\_awards.aspx](http://www.afsa.org/sinclair_language_awards.aspx), or contact Perri Green at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9700. □

## The University of (fill in the blank)

**M**oving every two to three years in the Foreign Service is a rather nontraditional way of life, unless you are a nomad. However, recently it occurred to me that this life is very similar to something a little more prosaic — going to college. The main difference is that in the transient expat life, instead of going to university once, we do it over and over again.

There are many similarities, both social and academic, between the Foreign Service life and university. When we went off to college, we often didn't know a soul. The same can be said for almost every post. There may be a few people we encountered earlier in our careers; but most likely, we arrive not knowing anyone.

Despite having done our homework, we arrive without much of a clue. Although we may have read about the place and what it has to offer, it is only when our boots hit the ground that we are able to figure out how everything fits together.

As the years at post pass, just as they do at university, we move from being clueless, disconnected freshmen into the ranks of upperclassmen, where we generally have the situation down pat and are woven into a tapestry of community and social life.

Being at post is comparable to university academically, as well. Just as we had to select a major at school, something on which to focus our intellectual attention, many of us do something similar at post. For Foreign Service members, their major is proscribed for them by their jobs. But many family members actually get to choose their majors.

For example, here in Brussels, Robbin Zeff Warner is well on her way to graduating magna cum



TERRIE VERHELLEN

Peter Barbarich, a family member in Brussels, finds his true calling chiseling sculpture from local wood.



GENE WARNER

Robbin Zeff Warner creates chocolates molded into a variety of shapes when she isn't teaching others the joy of Belgian chocolate-making.

laude in chocolate. Belgium is the perfect place for such a major, as it boasts three of the world's largest chocolate manufacturers, and is home to more than 10,000 artisan chocolate shops dotted around the country.

Warner spent her first couple of years exploring Brussels before settling on learning all she could about making chocolates. Now she has moved on to offering courses teaching others how to take raw chocolate, temper it and mold it into a variety of shapes.

"Finding out I loved working with chocolate was a process of discovery," says Robbin. "I'd been dabbling in this, sampling a little of that, until I took a professional chocolate-making course at the Chocolate Academy at Callebaut and was officially hooked. When we go back to the States, I am seri-

ously considering doing this for a living.”

Another member of the Brussels community, Peter Barbarich, has decided to major in sculpture. When he first arrived, he spent a lot of time being a househusband when he wasn't exercising and getting into shape. After a while, however, he wanted something more. So, pursuing a lifelong passion, he signed up for a few art courses at the Rhok Academy of 3D Arts. He now focuses on learning as much as he can about the art and science of sculpture.

“I've been working with stone, wood and metal, and found this amazing

Pursuing a lifelong passion, Peter signed up for a few art courses at the Rhok Academy of 3D Arts. He now focuses on learning as much as he can about the art and science of sculpture.

teacher,” Peter says. “In real life I am a scientist, but sculpture is my true calling.”

Whether we commit ourselves to a major, or continue to dabble in electives, every new post is akin to going to the University of Belgium, Italy, or Uganda, or wherever it is we are located, then on to the next one.

What a wonderful opportunity this is. Spending one's life learning about new and interesting people and places, over and over again. Though rather nontraditional, I can think of no better way to spend my brief time on this planet.

So, what's your major? □

*Douglas E. Morris is the partner of a Foreign Service officer assigned to Brussels. He serves as the editor of the tri-mission newsletter and has published eight travel guides, including the latest revision to his book, Open Road's Best of Italy, to be released this month.*

## This Month in Diplomatic History: Thomas Jefferson

BY GREG NAARDEN

Thomas Jefferson, born on April 13, 1743, was the third U.S. president, the second U.S. minister plenipotentiary to France and the first U.S. Secretary of State. Yet while Jefferson was the first of six future presidents who would hold the nation's highest diplomatic office, he did not regard his work in foreign affairs as among his seminal achievements. His epitaph, which he authored, reads: “Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and father of the University of Virginia.”

While giving the country its founding document and today's Atlantic Coast Conference a solid performer in a variety of sports, are certainly historic achievements, what was his legacy to the Department of State?

In 1790, when Jefferson reluctantly became Secretary of State, the department had a skeleton staff of just four clerks, one translator and a messenger. Together with President George Washington, they lobbied Congress to fund the department's operations and increase the number of diplomatic posts abroad. As a result, by 1792 the U.S. had 16 diplomatic and consular outposts, mostly in Europe.

Jefferson requested that diplomatic representatives write regular dispatches about “such political and commercial intelligence as you may think interesting to the United States,” and any information about “military preparations and other indications of war.” He divided the department into a diplomatic service, which was responsible for political work; and the consular service, which handled commercial and American citizen services. This division remained in effect until 1924, when the Rogers Act merged the two services.

Despite his years in Paris, and his affinity for the French, Jefferson did not like the formality that typified European diplomatic services. He did not adhere to rigid standards of protocol, and he promoted the tra-

When Jefferson reluctantly assumed his position as Secretary of State, the department had a skeleton staff of just four clerks, one translator and a messenger.

dition of American representatives wearing unpretentious clothing. While khakis and a blue Oxford shirt may not have been available at the time, the fact that Americans were outdressed by their European counterparts was appropriate, given the ethic of the country.

Funding consular operations from user fees began under Jefferson. Consuls at 18th-century American diplomatic outposts did not receive salaries. They supported themselves through the fees they charged or through business ventures. When Congress finally began paying them salaries in 1856, consuls were no longer permitted to engage in outside business activities, but they continued to finance operations through user fees.

In 1790, the department had a substantial number of domestic duties, including communicating federal legislation to the states. Jefferson's tenure as Secretary of State was marked by internal political battles, particularly with Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton. He was unable to conclude treaties to resolve conflicts with England or Spain and finally, in 1793, stepped down from his position.

At the same time, he increased the country's diplomatic representation abroad, implemented a system of reporting that remains a core Foreign Service function and established diplomatic traditions that represented the new country's proletarian ethic. □

*Greg Naarden, an FSO since 2004, is a member of the FSJ Editorial Board and Friends of the USDC, a support group for the U.S. Diplomacy Center ([diplomacy.state.gov](http://diplomacy.state.gov)).*

# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

## Foreign Affairs Day and the AFSA Plaque Ceremony

On Friday, May 4, the Department of State and AFSA will honor members of the Foreign Service during Foreign Affairs Day. AFSA's Plaque Ceremony honors Foreign Service personnel who have lost their lives while serving their country in the line of duty or under other inspirational circumstances. This year, the ceremony will honor Sharon S. Clark, who died on Dec. 26, 2010, in Abuja at the age of 57, of cerebral malaria.

The plaque ceremony will take place at 10 a.m., in the C St. lobby of the State Department in front of the west plaque. Susan R. Johnson, AFSA president, will make brief remarks and read a message from President Barack Obama. This will bring the total number of names on AFSA's Memorial Plaques to 236. Members of Sharon's family and friends will be present at the ceremony and we welcome all members of the Foreign Service community to join us for this solemn occasion.

Later that day, AFSA will hold a reception at our headquarters at 2101 E Street NW, Washington, D.C., from 3 to 5 p.m. to honor AFSA's 2012 scholarship winners and welcome all retirees.

For more information, please contact AFSA's Coordinator for Special Awards and Outreach, Perri Green, at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org).

## Managing Your Health Benefits

On Monday, April 23, AFSA will host a program on a common problem facing seniors and retirees: coordinating Federal Employee Health Benefits with individual Medicare benefits. The American Foreign Service Protective Association's Paula Jakub will be the featured speaker, and she will be on hand to answer all of your questions. The event will take place at AFSA headquarters at 2101 E Street NW, Washington, D.C., and begins at 2 p.m. Please RSVP to [events@afsa.org](mailto:events@afsa.org). □

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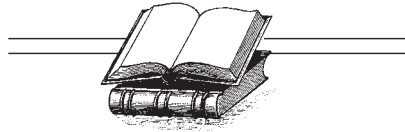
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# BOOKS

## An Eventful Half-Century

**Fifty Years of U.S. Africa Policy (Reflections of Assistant Secretaries for African Affairs and U.S. Embassy Officials)**

*Claudia E. Anyaso, editor; XLibris, 2011; \$19.95, paperback, 270 pages; \$3.03, Kindle Edition.*

REVIEWED BY TIBOR P. NAGY JR.

In *Fifty Years of U.S. Africa Policy*, retired U.S. Information Agency FSO Claudia Anyaso has given us an insightful compendium spanning the period 1958 to 2009. Notably, all 16 assistant secretaries who have headed the Bureau of African Affairs since its inception are represented in its pages. (Current AF Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson wrote the foreword.)

Other contributors include five U.S. ambassadors who have played (and are still playing, in some cases) key roles in shaping U.S. policy toward the continent: Frank Carlucci, Art Tienken, Art Lewis, Princeton Lyman and Prudence Bushnell.

This compilation will be most useful to those readers who are not only interested in Africa, but already have some sense of the continent's history since independence and understand the issues these diverse countries have been grappling with. But while it is not

*Anyaso has given us a highly readable, fact-filled chronology that truly brings the past half-century of African history alive.*



meant as an introduction or general historical survey, it will benefit anyone interested in Africa.

Though some of the 21 chapters were written specifically for the book, others are taken from policy speeches or the highly personal Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training ([www.adst.org](http://www.adst.org)), under whose imprint the volume appears. The mix of viewpoints and perspectives works very well, resulting in a highly readable, fact-filled chronology that truly brings the past half-century of African history alive. As a bonus, it offers revealing glimpses into the lives and careers of figures ranging from Patrick Lumumba to Nelson Mandela.

The contributors deftly draw on their personal experiences to spotlight the major forces that have shaped American policy toward the continent over the period. These include the struggle for decolonization and independence; Africa as a chessboard in

U.S.-Soviet global competition; the continent's accelerating political and economic free fall; the end of apartheid in South Africa; the economic crunch following the end of the Cold War and the resulting shift to a focus on democratization and economic development; the management of crises and conflicts; and the challenges of the post-9/11 world.

With few exceptions, these reflections are objective and balanced, acknowledging the failures — both personal and policy-related — along with the accomplishments. There are two overarching themes: Africa has consistently represented the lowest U.S. foreign policy priority, both for the White House and the State Department; and much of what we did (or did not do) there has been in the service of other objectives.

For example, several writers cite Henry Kissinger's lack of interest in, and misunderstanding of, African issues. They note that he only paid lip service to challenging apartheid and supported arming Angolan rebel groups opposed to the Marxist-oriented government that took control in Luanda after Portugal's departure.

As for sins of omission, Assistant Secretary Herman J. Cohen was blocked from actively intervening in the Liberian civil war. And, in perhaps our most shameful lapse (eloquently described by Ambassador Bushnell), the

White House, National Security Council and Secretary of State Warren Christopher all sat passively by as the horrendous genocide in Rwanda unfolded in 1994.

While these policy mistakes, and others, were merely awkward for U.S. interests, they led indirectly to millions of deaths throughout the continent. They also left an enduring legacy of massive violence that continues today in places like Sudan, Somalia and the Congo.

More than anywhere else in the world, personal efforts can accomplish much in Africa. Indeed, Foreign Service officers were conducting “transformational diplomacy” there decades before it became part of our jargon. Yet Washington continues to respond to disasters on the continent after the fact,

even though timely prevention would be much less costly for all concerned.

The concluding chapter, by Jendayi Frazer, is the most upbeat, suffused with optimism about Africa’s prospects. But for the next 50 years to be characterized by the continent’s genuine transformation to good governance, economic prosperity and true development, as she predicts, there must be a shift in the continent’s place within overall U.S. foreign policy — from the margins to the core. ■

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*Tibor P. Nagy Jr. was a Foreign Service officer from 1979 to 2003, serving as ambassador to Guinea and Ethiopia. An Africa hand, his other overseas postings include Lusaka, Victoria, Lome, Yaounde and Lagos. Since re-*

*tiring from the Foreign Service, he has served as vice provost for international affairs at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. He also lectures widely on Africa and global issues.*

## The Value of Tradecraft

**21st-Century Diplomacy: A Practitioner’s Guide**  
*Kishan S. Rana, Continuum, 2011, \$27.07, paperback, 392 pages; \$15.37, Kindle Edition*

REVIEWED BY EDWARD MARKS

Though modern diplomacy emerged after the signing of the Treaties of



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## BOOKS



Westphalia in 1648, its practitioners considered it an art rather than a profession until around the turn of the 20th century.

Starting then, the diplomatic services of most countries began to professionalize themselves. Entry examinations became common and a formal Civil Service with ranks and organizational structures emerged. Along similar lines, in 1924 the United States combined its consular and diplomatic services into a single career Foreign Service.

Ever since Sir Ernest Mason Satow published his landmark manual, *Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, in 1917, numerous authors have focused on the conduct of foreign policy from a variety of perspectives. In contrast, tradecraft

has not received much attention, even though most diplomatic services of any size have created training facilities like our own Foreign Service Institute.

This relative neglect largely stems from the fact that apprenticeship has always been the primary method by which new diplomats acquire expertise, facilitated by a tradition of mentorship by senior colleagues. In other words, diplomats grew; they were not produced.

Still, over the years formal education and training for diplomats have become increasingly widespread and comprehensive. In that tradition, retired Indian Ambassador Kishan S. Rana's *21st-Century Diplomacy: A Practitioner's Guide* is a thorough, useful introduction to the profession.

It not only explains the theory of diplomacy, but shows new members how to practice their craft from the first day they walk into the foreign ministry or chancery.

Even as he makes an eloquent case for the continuing relevance of bilateral diplomacy in the 21st century, Ambassador Rana acknowledges the impact of the changing world environment and, especially, the technological revolution in communications. But he contends that those developments call for adjustments to diplomatic approaches and practices, not wholesale change.

That said, he emphasizes the reality that the Department of State and its counterparts in other capitals are no longer the sole custodians of

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foreign affairs expertise. Instead, the process of formulating and implementing foreign policy now encompasses domestic agencies and non-state actors, as well.

No longer the doorkeepers to the inner sanctum of policymaking, Rana explains, foreign ministries now mainly play the role of coordinator. In that capacity, they earn respect through the contributions they make to promoting the interests of their governments, not for any “notional primacy” in foreign affairs. And just as foreign affairs agencies must now become proficient at networking, so, too, must individual diplomats. (This view fits nicely with the “whole of government” approach, incidentally.)

*21st-Century Diplomacy* is a de-

*As its title suggests, the book not only explains the theory of diplomacy, but shows new diplomats how to practice their craft.*

tailed guide to tradecraft, not merely a hortatory plea for doing better, somehow. In just 20 chapters, Rana methodically outlines the entire pro-

fession. After describing the distinctive characteristics of the various types of diplomacy (including such new types as diaspora diplomacy), he explains how today’s ministry of foreign affairs functions as a distinctive bureaucratic institution, using examples of and reports about various reform efforts around the world. A chapter on the “reinvented embassy” is particular enlightening — and comforting to those who believe that the era of the resident embassy is not yet over.

Throughout his book, Rana defines terms and practices, summarizes organizations, explains attitudes and debunks myths about the diplomatic career. One especially innovative chapter presents four training exercises or simulations, each designed to illustrate practical aspects of diplomacy and serve as a realistic guide to the daily work of the profession.

Rana goes on to discuss foreign affairs decision-making, offering suggestions for enhancing performance and examining the role of new information and communications technologies. Along the way, he dispenses sensible advice about consular diplomacy, administration and management, recruitment and promotion, protocol and the spoken and written arts, to name just a few facets of the profession.

This book will appeal to experienced diplomats, as well, through its sensible discussion of many career-long professional concerns. Among them: How does a modern foreign ministry transform itself from a “gatekeeper” to the “coordinator” of numerous other agencies, many of them domestic departments. What is the future of multilateral diplomacy? How do governments integrate diaspora communities into foreign policy? And how do diplomatic services deal with



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## BOOKS

the growing importance of increasingly technical matters?

Amb. Rana discusses all of these questions from a refreshingly cosmopolitan perspective. He brings his own Indian experience into play, of course, and frequently references U.S. practices.

But he also cites examples from many other sources: Botswana's use of performance management methods; Canada's creation of a "Team Canada, Inc.," network of federal departments; Thailand's introduction of a corporate method; the United Kingdom's strict selection method for junior-level promotions; and the concept of the "hub" (regional) embassy that a number of countries are pursuing.

Learning on the job will always be vital to the developing officer, but as this book shows, well-designed training and education can do a good deal to help. I urge the Foreign Service Institute to adopt *21st-Century Diplomacy* for its tradecraft courses at all levels. In addition, State and the other foreign affairs agencies should issue this book to all new Foreign Service employees as soon as they are hired.

I am quite sure that each officer's copy will become well-thumbed as the years pass. ■

---

*Edward Marks spent 40 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, including an assignment as ambassador to Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. A senior mentor at various military institutions, Ambassador Marks currently serves as a retiree representative on the AFSA Governing Board, a member of the American Diplomacy board and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at George Mason University.*

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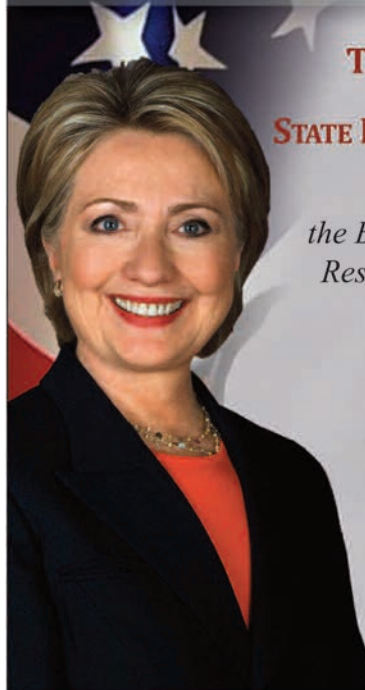
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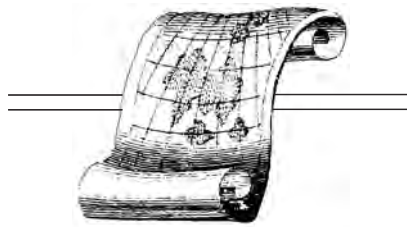
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# REFLECTIONS

## *An Independent Woman in Taipei*

BY LISA WILKINSON

Over the course of some three decades as a Foreign Service spouse, I held a variety of jobs overseas. But the one I thought *Foreign Service Journal* readers might find most noteworthy came relatively early in my career.

First, though, a little background. Shortly after I met and wed my husband in 1969, we were transferred from Mazatlán to San José. There I stumbled into a position teaching third-graders at an American school. I taught for one semester until our son was born, followed by a daughter a year later.

Six weeks after she was born, we were assigned to Buenos Aires. The quality of life there was pretty high, but the security situation was difficult for the expatriate community. And in any case, with two infants at home working was not an option for me.

By the time we arrived in Taipei, in 1975, I was eager to go back to work during the day while the kids (now 4 and 5) were in school. I focused on jobs at private companies because of a frustrating experience working at a United Nations agency before my marriage.

One day, while reading the local English-language newspaper, I noticed a large ad Northwest Orient Airlines had placed. They were looking for an English-speaking sales representative for the large expatriate community, including the huge contingent of U.S. military personnel, based there. (This was before United States recognition

*It was a relief to feel  
so independent and  
not be referred to as  
“the spouse of.”*

of the People’s Republic of China in late 1978 changed the bilateral relationship.)

Having worked for Scandinavian Airlines System for several years, and later for Civil Air Transport of Taiwan in Manila, I felt this was a job just waiting for me! And just a few weeks after applying, I was hired. I still have my business card:

*Lisa Wilkinson  
International Sales Representative  
Northwest Orient Airlines  
Taipei, Taiwan*

The scope of my responsibilities was limited to American and European businesses based in Taiwan, as well as the U.S. embassy and military contingent. In other words, I dealt only with contacts who did not need a visa to travel to the States. That was important, because it ruled out any potential for a conflict of interest with my husband’s work in the consular section.

Apparently I was the first spouse to work outside Embassy Taipei. I found out later that the embassy had done its own sleuthing soon after I was employed, and confirmed my under-

standing that there was no conflict of interest. Nor was I breaking the local law, because I was paying income taxes to the Republic of China.

Even so, upon my husband’s transfer to another diplomatic post in 1978, the ROC informed me that it would refund all the money the airline had withheld from my salary for taxes during my years with NWA. However, I declined reimbursement, for I felt it was only proper that the money remain with the host government.

During my three years with the airline, I met many local, American and international contacts and officials. They were often surprised to see my husband and me together at functions, for they had no idea we were connected!

It was a relief to feel so independent and not be referred to as “the spouse of” or be identified on embassy documents as a “dependent wife,” which is how the embassy classified female spouses then.

As I mentioned, I would have many other jobs over the following decades. But I still think back very fondly on my time as an independent woman in Taipei, a place where I also found long-lasting friendships. ■

*Lisa Wilkinson, a Foreign Service spouse since 1969, has lived in Mazatlán, San José, Buenos Aires, Taipei, Guayaquil, Manila, Seoul, Bangkok, Bonn, Guadalajara and New York City. Now in Washington, D.C., she is the second vice president of AAFSW.*



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