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JOURNAL

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THE MAGAZINE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS



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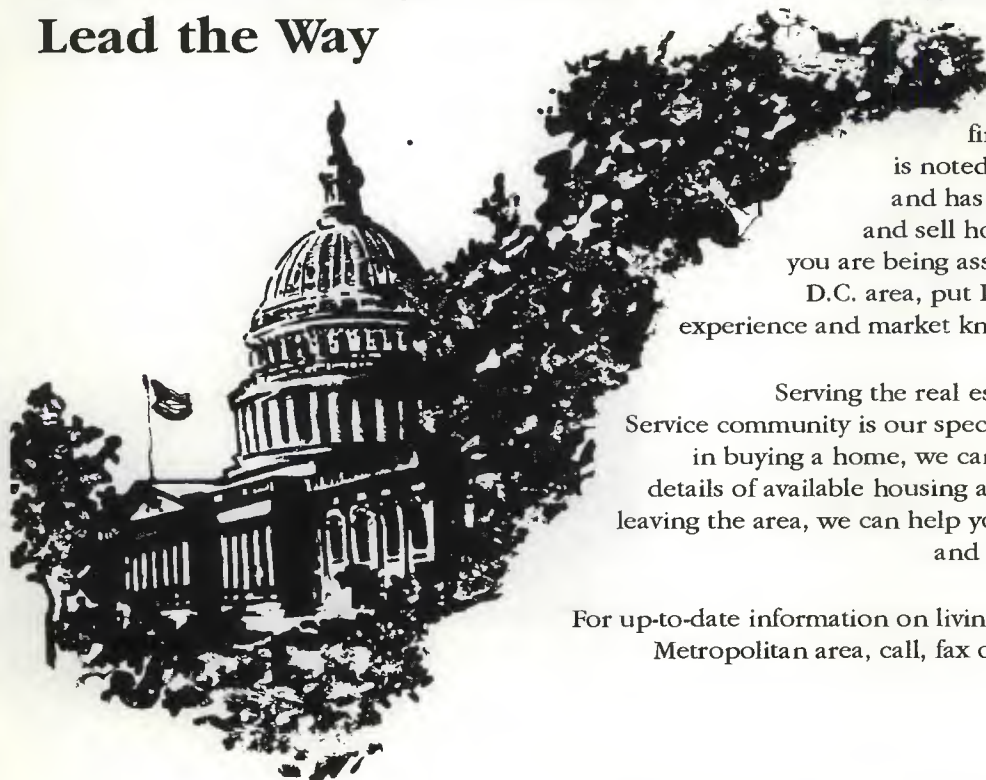
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# PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

## *Turning Failure into Success*

By F. A. "TEX" HARRIS

**I**t takes knowledge, experience and judgment to make and implement policies to advance U.S. interests in an increasingly unfriendly, complex and competitive world. The Foreign Service was created to recruit, train and dispatch the best people to the worst places and ensure their effectiveness upon arrival. The goal was always clear: Provide America with the world's best diplomatic service. That is now failing.

The first reason for America's failure to have the best diplomatic service is the political decision of both Congress and the Executive Branch to transfer funds from the minuscule diplomatic budget to domestic programs. U.S. diplomatic funding today is at 49 percent of its highest Cold War levels — and still dropping. Meanwhile, funding for U.S. military and intelligence operations today is at 80 percent of Cold War highs — and rising. Americans are gearing up to win wars, not prevent them. We are providing less leadership and have less influence on key international issues such as fair trade, peacekeeping, arms control, drug trafficking, environmental degradation, migration and disease transmission.

The second reason for failing is that political leadership has not developed a clear vision of America's interests and role in the world. Policy to govern America's international relations is becoming as politicized, divi-

*The latest blow to the Foreign Service is the failure of the new RIF system to meet fundamental merit principles.*

sive and fragmented as domestic policy. With increasing success, groups and political action committees have pushed their single-issue agendas into the foreign-policy arena.

The third reason for failure belongs to the Foreign Service alone. Three key building blocks of the Service have been allowed to erode — merit, service discipline and service unity. Our values are increasingly of self, cone or speciality, bureau, agency, and then the service. One former member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently remarked that he had never known an organization with so many outstanding performers as the Foreign Service. He also said he had never seen an organization where the whole was so much less than the sum of its parts.

The latest blow to the Foreign Service is the failure of the new reduction-in-force (RIF) system at the U.S. Agency for International

Development (USAID) to meet fundamental merit principles. Its computerized RIF pushed out 6 percent of its Foreign Service professionals, some of the agency's best, because the new RIF system often penalizes those who have been promoted quickly.

We must fight for both more resources and a better way to trim our numbers, a way grounded in merit. For example, selection boards could rank order people in those grades and specialties that management had pinpointed for cuts. The managements of the five foreign-affairs agencies rejected that merit idea as too cumbersome and labor-intensive. Instead each agency has developed individual computerized formulas that produce results like the one recently cabled to USAID Administrator Brian Atwood by a frustrated ambassador in the field:

"If you were to poll USAID, the government of [XYZ], the donors and [FS nationals], to see who is the most effective development professional here, the clear choice would be the person who has just been notified he has no job after September. I join virtually all Americans and others here who believe that while the proprieties [of the RIF] may have been met, the results of this exercise — whom it has affected and whom it has spared — are grotesque. It's too late for a better outcome, but nobody here will believe this outcome is other than a bureaucratic contrivance and further damaging to our profession."

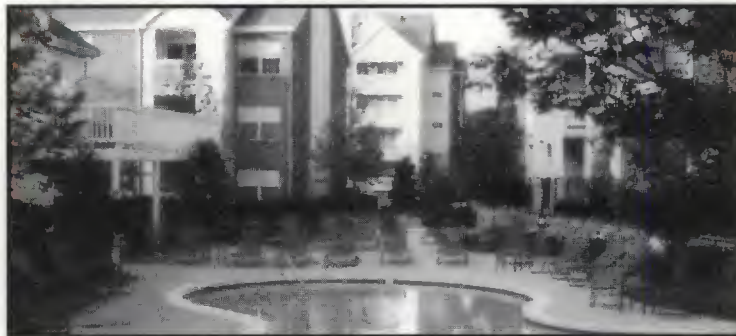
Let's find a better way. ■

F. A. "Tex" Harris is president of the American Foreign Service Association.

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# DESPATCH

## *Fear and Loathing in FS Fiction*

BY KAREN KREBSBACH

The *Foreign Service Journal's* annual call for fiction drew a record number of 89 stories from retired, active and former FSOs and Foreign Service specialists, and their spouses and children. Not only were this year's submissions notable for the highest quality of writing since the annual fiction issue was launched in June 1993, but the collection may speak to a record level of pessimism and poor morale in the Foreign Service.

"In reading through the entries, I was struck by the large percentage which focused on the danger and hardship of life in the Foreign Service," observed outgoing Editorial Board Chairman Sheldon Krys. "There were repeated themes dealing with death, suicide and terrorism. If these thoughts — even in fantasy — are a reflection of what people overseas are dwelling upon, then they now may be a far greater factor in their lives than in the past."

Board member Terrence Brown, the board's active-duty representative from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), said he was "shocked by the pervasiveness of extramarital affairs" and other behaviors that he found "contributed to the breakdown of the American family."

But despite the pervasive tone of doom and gloom among the authors' contributions, the collection yielded

*Karen Krebsbach is the editor of the Journal.*

*Do pessimism  
and poor morale  
reflect the  
mentality of  
today's FSO?*

very few sad endings. For obvious reasons, readers won't be treated to the endings of the five stories chosen for this year's fiction issue.

In "Cold War Blues," former FSO Diana Deverell tells the story of the accidental relationship that grows between a State Department budget officer and a U.S. Marine, both stationed in Poland. And Antonia Stearns, a freelance writer and the spouse of a retired FSO, spins a charming tale of a strange meeting on a Mediterranean ferry between an American tourist and a handsome, real-life Greek Adonis, in "Like a Rock."

The other four stories are set on the African continent. FSO David W. Hess unravels an interesting yarn about a USAID worker's lesson in cultural sensitivity in "The Last TDY," which will be of interest to those who have made development work or temporary duty (TDY) assignments their life.

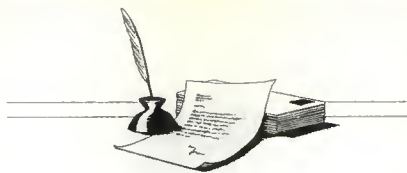
Retired FSO Jerry Lujan spins a brief but touching tale of a vagrant in Nigeria, who finds he owns more than he needs, in "The Metal Man." FSO Mark Toner pens a frightening story of an unlucky Peace Corps volunteer stuck in Liberia in "At the Checkpoint." And lastly, four-time ambassador Hume Horan profiles a Marine security guard with FSO ambitions and an itch for the boss's wife in "The Lament of Staff Sgt. Alger."

Just a note to next year's authors: Though the *Journal's* call for fiction this summer drew a record 89 stories, 11 were deemed ineligible. Eight were disqualified after arriving past the June 1 deadline, and another author's three manuscripts were so badly water-damaged upon arrival they were illegible for xeroxing — and he unfortunately had not been able to remail, fax or e-mail duplicates by the deadline.

Therefore, the Editorial Board considered 78 qualifying pieces — its heftiest reading assignment of the year — and chose its top 10 favorites, which every member agreed was a difficult task. Of those top 10, the top six vote-receiving pieces found their way into this issue.

Authors are urged to circle June 1, 1997, on their calendars as a reminder to meet the *Journal's* next deadline for the August 1997 fiction issue.

Until then, readers can begin perusing this year's winning pieces by turning to the first story on page 32. ■



# LETTERS

## To the Editor:

Smith Hempstone's article on Africa was a disappointment ("Democracy in Africa," May *Journal*). He finds it arguable that a longer stretch of colonialism could have lifted Africa from the Bronze Age to a "culture of democracy." That notion certainly needs scrutiny.

Experience notwithstanding, the paternalistic U.S. attitude toward Africa is as persistent as in colonial days. An Eritrean once told me that Americans should stop fussing over his countrymen's shortcomings: "We were here

long before you came and will be here long after you go." One may judge by current U.S. stance in Africa how right he was. I also recall the notion bandied about in the State Department that countries like Somalia might not be economically "viable," as if Somalians would dry up and blow away. They didn't, as far as we know. Finally, I recall that Liberia represents the American contribution to African colonialism. Who brags about that?

Africa, huge and multifarious, will continue as every other continent has, in its own way and at its own pace.

Colonialism was essentially a negative influence on this process. For whatever reason, colonial powers dismantled indigenous political structures or distorted them beyond repair. Perhaps no colonial power enriched itself in Africa, but we know that plenty of individuals did.

No one need minimize the problems caused by home-grown African charlatans, opportunists, autocrats or military dictators. But new African governments must speak to Africans' needs. The governments could come to resemble the U.S. democratic model, but Americans may be forgiven

## Test Your Wit

The *Journal* is planning an issue on the role of wit and humor in diplomacy. Diplomats interested in testing their own wit and humor are invited to respond to the challenge below. The best answers will be published in an upcoming *Journal*.

As FSOs know, U.S. embassies often receive inappropriate demarche instructions. As the political officer in a small, poor country bordering the Sahara, you receive a State Department cable instructing you to deliver a demarche to the Foreign Ministry, announcing U.S. concern about high tariff restrictions on imported sand from U.S. companies. Although this country has plenty of its own sand, you are required to make the case for several Nevada sand exporters.

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## LETTERS

for thinking that not even modern Western governance is the ultimate invention of the political mind.

*Hugh Kemp Campbell  
Retired FSO  
Alexandria, Va.*

### *To the Editor:*

Kudos to Andrew Erickson for a refreshingly sane proposal on coning ("Call All FSOs as 'Interfunctional,' 'Speaking Out,' June *Journal*). However, he overlooked that junior officers who now seek to escape the consular and administrative cones would be just as likely to run from consular and administration jobs later in their careers. An interfunctional system would thus leave the Foreign Service with the same situation it now faces, where officers who take these jobs often do so grudgingly. An alternative would be to hire people specifically for consular and administrative work, whether through a system of coning-on-entry or direct hire. Wouldn't it be sensible to make consular and administrative officers out of those who had the desire and background for such careers?

*Joe Young  
Political Officer  
U.S. Embassy Nairobi*

### *To the Editor:*

I fully concur with Andrew Erickson's view that the 1989 suspension of conal recruitment was a horrible mistake. The current personnel problems to which he refers confirm the lesson that conal recruitment is essential for an effective FS personnel system.

Conal recruitment was established at the end of the 1960s to address an unavoidable consequence of generalized recruitment. The proportion of successful Foreign Service applicants

seeking appointments as political officers greatly exceeds the proportion of political positions available at mid-levels. Generalized recruitment, therefore, always resulted in the hiring of an excess of would-be political officers and shortages of would-be political, economic and administrative officers at mid-levels. While the staffing of mid-level consular positions under generalized recruitment did not constitute a significant problem, would-be political officers frequently viewed their assignment to otherwise vacant mid-level economic and administrative positions as personal failures. The morale dimension of such assignments was often further aggravated by aptitude problems.

The establishment of conal recruitment produced noteworthy improvement in the availability and quality of economic and administrative officers by the end of the 1970s. There were some transitional problems. As a personnel counselor and later, as deputy director in the Office of Foreign Service Career Development and Assignments, I became aware of the necessity, under conal recruitment, to ensure correct conal allocation of interfunctional positions for recruitment and to provide for separate recruitment of administrative specialists.

In my view, the opposition to conal recruitment came from very talented, but self-serving, would-be political officers. They accepted appointment to another cone and then sought the support of department principals to undermine the system on the basis of its alleged inflexibility to permit their re-coning. I remain convinced that conal recruitment not only avoids hiring in excess of service need, but also permits any desirable degree of career development flexibility in the Foreign Service personnel system.

*Robert B. Duncan  
Retired FSO  
Rehoboth Beach, Del.*

### *To The Editor:*

I am writing regarding "The Case for Racial Diversity in the Foreign Service" by Kenneth Longmyer ("Speaking Out," May *Journal*).

He asserts that "diverse values and opinions would benefit the foreign policy process" and that the only way "to obtain these varied views ... is by appointing more black Americans, Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans as FSOs, advisers and congressional staffers."

Wrong. Diverse values and opinions are in abundance throughout the foreign-policy process. They are represented by people we normally identify by means other than race. For instance, Democrats and Republicans, free-traders and protectionists, human-rights idealists and hard-nosed realists. If we, as Americans, want those diverse opinions represented in foreign policy, then we should find those people who proclaim them — not appoint a black or an Hispanic on the insulting assumption that they think like all other blacks and Hispanics.

Even if it were true that there are separate and distinct "black" or "Hispanic" viewpoints about foreign-policy issues, when and how are these diverse views now vetted in the hiring and promotion process? A black or Hispanic applying to a foreign-affairs agency need not articulate his personal views on trade, weapons proliferation, democracy or development. Quota mongers like Longmyer need only look at an applicant's face to happily tick the appropriate box in the name of "diversity," passing judgment not on his idea but on the color of his skin.

That's an idea whose time has come and gone. It's strange that Longmyer makes no mention of recent Supreme Court decisions, State Department initiatives or opinion polls that show Americans moving away from the 1970s-style affirmative action plans that

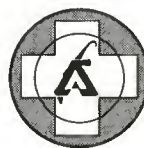


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## LETTERS

Longmyer favors. Rather than spend our energies trying to obtain a Foreign Service that looks like America, why don't we do something more noble — and work for — a Foreign Service that thinks like America?

*Richard G. Miles*

*FSO*

*U.S. Embassy Bridgetown*

### To the Editor:

The *Journal* has published another article on diversity, or the lack of diversity, in the Foreign Service. When I read these sorts of statements, I try to relate them to my own experience.

I grew up as a barefoot boy on tenant farms in central Arkansas. I did not realize that I was an example of FS diversification. When I was in the Service, I maintained my voting residence in Arkansas, and, until it was outlawed, I paid an annual poll tax for the privilege of voting there.

This town had a population of about 650. The Foreign Service never did represent the views of most people in that town. There were no hyphenated Americans, no recent immigrants, and it was known that blacks would not be welcome. Those were not, and are not, my views.

The purpose of the Foreign Service should be to protect and promote U.S. interests. It is possible that a Foreign Service could be constructed to adequately reflect various groups in this country, and still accomplish that goal. However, to the extent this requires quotas or choosing officers on qualities other than ability, the quality of the Foreign Service is decreased and its ability to promote and protect the interests of the United States are lessened.

As President Woodrow Wilson said in 1915, "You cannot become true Americans if you think of yourselves as

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## LETTERS

groups. America does not consist of groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group has not yet become an American, and the man who goes among you to trade upon his nationality is not worthy to live under the Stars and Stripes."

Hoyt Price  
Retired FSO  
Benton, Ark.

To the Editor:

I enjoyed reading the excellent articles, "Historic Dynasties" by Ellen Rafshoon and "Modern Dynasties" by Richard Gilbert in the May *Journal*.

Another family that I believe deserves mention is the Byingtons. The Byington family had four generations in the Foreign Service, with three members reaching senior positions, and with those three serving as principal officers in Naples, their careers totalling 29 years of service in Naples.

Homer Byington was a Civil War correspondent, Connecticut newspaper publisher and Republican Party activist. He began serving in Naples as of 1898. His grandson, Homer M. Byington, started out working for his grandfather in Naples in the first decade of the 20th century. After the career consular service was established, he became one of the first career consular assistants appointed, and he returned as consul general from 1920-29. After leaving Naples, he became the first chief of Foreign Service personnel in the newly united Consular and Diplomatic Services.

I worked for Homer's son, Homer M. Byington Jr., who served as consul general in Naples from 1962-73. The Byington family is still remembered here.

Clarke N. Ellis  
Consul General  
Naples, Italy ■

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—Sol Schindler, *The Washington Times*

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# CLIPPINGS



*"The United States should get an agreement with the United Nations to reform its processes, to downsize its bureaucracy [and cut its] costs."*

—HOUSE SPEAKER  
NEWT GINGRICH,  
SPEAKING AT THE  
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC  
AND INTERNATIONAL  
STUDIES,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.,  
APRIL 17

## SO, WHEN'S A KISS STILL JUST A KISS?

After a year of relaxed U.S. regulations regarding the "kiss and tell" policy at U.S. Embassy Moscow, American personnel were notified in June that they must report early and often about romance with Russians, Lee Hockstader reported in the June 26 edition of *The Washington Post*. For the last year, diplomats have been required to report relationships with local citizens only if they became serious, but now they must report even a one-night stand or a "continuing relationship." Quipped Hockstader, "Now a hot date might have to be followed by a cool memo the morning after."

One U.S. diplomat in Moscow told the *Post* that the new rules indicated Russian spies were becoming more active, but the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security noted that its cable was simply "a reminder of current guidelines." And exactly what is a continuing relationship? That depends on the person, said a Diplomatic Security spokesperson, but allowed that it could range from "the next day to three weeks," according to the *Post*.

## ESTATE OF EMPLOYEE OF USIA WINS \$200,000

The estate of a McCarthy-era employee from the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) who was blacklisted and fired in 1953 has won a \$200,000 U.S. government settlement ordered by the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. Beatrice "Bibi" Braude, who died nine years ago, sought legal remedies during her lifetime. After her death in 1987, Braude's friends and relatives enlisted the aid of Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-

N.Y.) and Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-N.Y.), who sponsored legislation that allowed the case to be kept alive, according to the June 17 issue of *The Washington Post*.

Justice Department attorneys had argued that Braude was denied re-employment after her firing because she was a middle-aged woman. Judge Roger B. Andewelt disagreed with the argument, but agreed Braude had been discriminated against because she was thought to be a communist loyalist, calling her "a loyal American who was persecuted" in the McCarthy era.

Braude's niece told the *Post*, "It's unbelievable, and it's about time."

## U.S. EMBASSIES WIN GEORGE MAG AWARDS

President Harry Truman once suggested that all American embassies should be mini-White Houses, reports John Solomon, writing in the June issue of *George* magazine. Today not all 260 U.S. diplomatic posts meet Truman's criteria. So, as a service to help what Solomon calls "cookie pushers and corpse eustodians" to lobby for their next best assignments, Solomon picked the "best" and "worst" embassies from Dublin to Dushanbe.

Winner of the "most historic" embassy was in Rome, where the U.S. embassy sits on the site where Julius Caesar once housed his lover, Cleopatra. The "least historic" is a prefab New Jersey-made trailer in Ashgabat. The "most glamorous" title goes to the 35-room Georgian mansion, Winfield House, the ambassador's residence in London. "Least glamorous" is the embassy on the fourth floor of Dushanbe's Hotel October. The U.S. ambassador to Ireland's residence sprawls on 70 acres of park land in Dublin, winning it the title of "most spa-



## CLIPPINGS

cious," while the entire U.S. delegation in Algiers lives in either the ambassador's residence or the so-called "American school." Two embassies earned awards for least and most salacious former tenants: U.S. Embassy Lisbon, once a Catholic monastery, and U.S. Embassy Baku, previously a brothel and gambling casino.

### CAUTION! STATE SEES BUDGET ZONE AHEAD

Congress is reducing the State Department to "competing in a budgetary free-fire zone" by bunching its appropriations budget with those for the departments of Commerce and Justice and the judiciary, along with small business, law enforcement, prisons, the court system, the drug war and other areas separate from national security, according to retired ambassadors William C. Harrop and Robert J. McCloskey, who penned a joint op-ed piece in the June 18 edition of *The Washington Post*.

State's natural partners are the Defense Department and the foreign intelligence community, say Harrop and McCloskey, but Congress considers the department a poor cousin.

"Our diplomatic arm is not recognized as a national security system as defense and intelligence are when it comes to appropriating money," the pair wrote. In June the House Appropriations Committee allocated \$11.1 billion more for defense than requested by the Clinton administration. Today, the international relations budget is 49 percent of its Cold War high, while defense and intelligence spending is at 80 percent, the two wrote.

"The men and women in diplomatic service are our true front line of defense,"

write Harrop and McCloskey, who predict that "conducting diplomacy on the cheap will weaken our capacity to advance the international interests vital to the country's security and well-being."

### BEFORE TRAVEL ABROAD, CONSIDER FINAL EXIT

Each year 2,000 American tourists, students and professionals die while traveling overseas. But, unlike taxes, few travelers expect it, and even fewer plan for it.

"When an American dies abroad, the vast machinery of the U.S. government is available to help," reports Evelyn Tan Powers in the June 6 edition of *USA Today*. The State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs will help find the deceased's next-of-kin, prepare his body for shipment back to the United States and make sure all legal papers are in order. Still, the cost of shipping remains back to America can range from \$6,000 from Jamaica to \$20,000 from China.

For that reason, writes Powers, State recommends that all foreign residents and travelers buy insurance to cover potential costs — ahem — before embarking on that trip abroad.

### STATE ACCEPTS 35 JOS MOVED FROM USIA

The Department of State has agreed to accept transfers of junior officers at the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), in an effort to make sure they don't lose their jobs during current layoffs in that agency.

"Contrary to the usual tendencies of the bureaucracy, USIA and the State Department overrode procedural differences and worked together to ensure the

## 50 YEARS AGO

The British Foreign Office classifies the U.S. cities of St. Louis, New Orleans, Jacksonville and Savannah, along with more exotic, tropical posts such as French Guiana, Madagascar and Djibouti, as "unhealthy," according to an article in the July 1946 *New York Herald Tribune*, which was reprinted in the *Journal*. The designation entitles diplomats serving at any of these posts to an extra month of leave a year. A British embassy official speculated that the American posts had been classified as "unhealthy" years ago, and no one had since thought to review their status.

"And of course, you would hardly expect the chaps stationed there to complain about the extra leave, would you?" noted the official, who of course requested anonymity.

## CLIPPINGS

*"Diplomacy  
has become a  
philanthropic  
pursuit."*

— FINLEY PETER

DUNNE

FORMER CHICAGO

TRIBUNE COLUMNIST

AND AUTHOR OF

OBSERVATIONS BY MR.

DOOLEY, 1902

junior officers were not laid off," Stephen Barr reported in the June 4 *Washington Post*.

This is the first deal of its kind between two Foreign Service agencies, Barr reported, which was negotiated by USIA Director Joseph Duffey and State Under Secretary Richard Moose. State had planned to hire about 90 Foreign Service applicants this year, but adjusted its hiring numbers to account for the 35 USIA transfers.

Still, many USIA junior officers told Barr they preferred to remain at USIA and take their chances with further layoffs rather than change career paths.

### WATCHING THE CAREER OF DISSENTING EX-FSO

In August 1992 George Kenney, a 35-year-old FSO working on State's Yugoslavia desk, resigned in protest over U.S. policy in

Bosnia. Since then, Kenney has gone from darling of the Washington foreign policy community with an office at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to a basement office at his parents' Chevy Chase home, from which he lobs the occasional opinion piece, Mary Battiata reported in the June 30 *Washington Post Magazine*.

"Four years after the Bosnian war began, Kenney is still speaking out, still writing, still opining — he's had nearly 50 op-eds and articles published so far," she reported. "But the speaking engagements and invitations are fewer." Noted one unidentified foreign-affairs specialist, "Now he's a guy roaming around Washington without perspective or prospects, revising his positions [on Bosnia] every five minutes."

Kenney's latest project is for the *New York Times Magazine* in which he's expected to claim there was no genocide in Bosnia after all, according to Battiata. ■



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# SPEAKING OUT

## *Management Advice From a Master*

By RICHARD FUNKHOUSER

As a young FSO in 1970, I was transferred to Military Region III, Bien Hoa, Vietnam, as deputy director of CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support). Since the job carried the assimilated rank of major general and I had to oversee a staff of 3,300 Americans and Vietnamese, I was a little nervous. Never having been in charge of more than a dozen staff, I wrote for advice to Idar Rimestad, then U.S. ambassador in Switzerland for International Organizations. We had met in Paris, where we had served together from 1965-67.

From his Geneva home, Rimestad wrote me back, saying:

"You ask that I jot down a few thoughts on how to run an operation of more than 3,300 Americans and others in a program involving over \$25 million. This is a tall order and I suppose one could write volumes on the subject, but ... I am reminded of what Kipling once said:

I keep six honest serving men.  
They taught me all I knew.  
Their names are where and what  
and when.  
And why and how and who.

*Richard Funkhouser retired from the Foreign Service in 1976, after a 33-year career, also serving in Paris, Cairo, Bucharest, Damascus, Moscow, Paris, Edinburgh and Libreville, where he was ambassador from 1969-70.*

*Many FSOs believe  
management and  
administration  
issues are to  
be delegated to  
simpletons, while  
they concentrate  
on the  
Bosnia crisis.*

"This, I think, will be quite relevant where your success as a manager will depend on your knowing where your organization is going, what it has to do and when, why it must be done and how, and above all, who is going to do it. As simple as this sounds and reads, its application will be perhaps one of the most difficult tasks you will face.

"I now give you a few generalizations or principles I found useful in my time. The trick, however, is to know when to apply the principle, in what dosage and for what purpose.

■ "Learn to decentralize and delegate. You cannot run or master all the details of an organization of the size you describe. You must depend

on others to do it for you. You have to put your eggs in their basket, but you had better watch the basket. You should encourage decisions to be made at the lowest level in the organization possible. You should give the people under you the authority and responsibility to make these decisions and, above all, having done that, you should give them the power to do it. Until this time, you have been able to participate in action matters yourself and knew pretty well all the many details and ins and outs of the things for which you were responsible. Now, however, for the first time, you will not be able to be on top of everything and this becomes a frightening experience. You may feel you've lost control. Don't let this bother you too much, because you will soon find ways and means of knowing what's going on and of keeping control.

■ "Maintain good human relations. People are the most important aspect of management and your success will depend on the people under you. Do not forget that a pat on the head and a lump of sugar can get you as far as you want to go. Napoleon was right about the need to honor hard-working officers when he said, 'Give me three miles of ribbon and I will conquer the world.' How you handle mixed nationalities and cultures is another matter. The most important thing, however, is to remember the principle that you must cultivate, develop and enhance your relationships with your staff

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## SPEAKING OUT



right down to the guy in the boondocks. You should see and be seen. You should spend as much time as you can travelling and visiting your field of operations. Your time at your desk should be the rare occasion. Your time away from it should be the norm.

■ "Design your organization around the goal. Although you cultivate and spur on your organization's people, you should remember that it's not the end in itself. The end is to accomplish your mission — and your organization should be developed around this central but simple thought. Thus you form an organization designed to get the work done rather than an organization that fits the people with whom you work. In other words, you should find the people to do the work that has to be done, and not find work for the people you have around to do it. The execution of this principle is not easy.

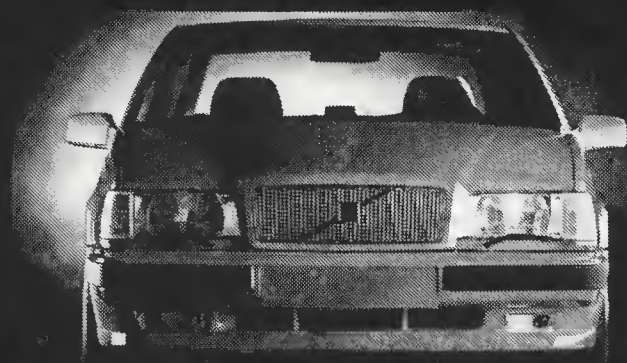
■ "Keep it simple. This principle is self-explanatory. You can be assured that when you issue instructions, if there are two possible interpretations, the wrong one will be used. In issuing instructions, either in writing or verbally, take the time to be sure they are simple and clear. Literary form is out; clarity, brevity and simplicity is in.

■ "Be courageous. To a large degree your success will depend on how well and quickly you can assemble all the relevant facts needed to make a decision. You will have to separate fact from fancy, fact from self-serving declarations and fact from wishes. But once you clarify the facts, you will also need the guts to accept them, unpleasant as some may be. Once you have as many facts as possible in a given period, a decision generally becomes apparent. However, gathering relevant facts is sometimes nearly impossible. When

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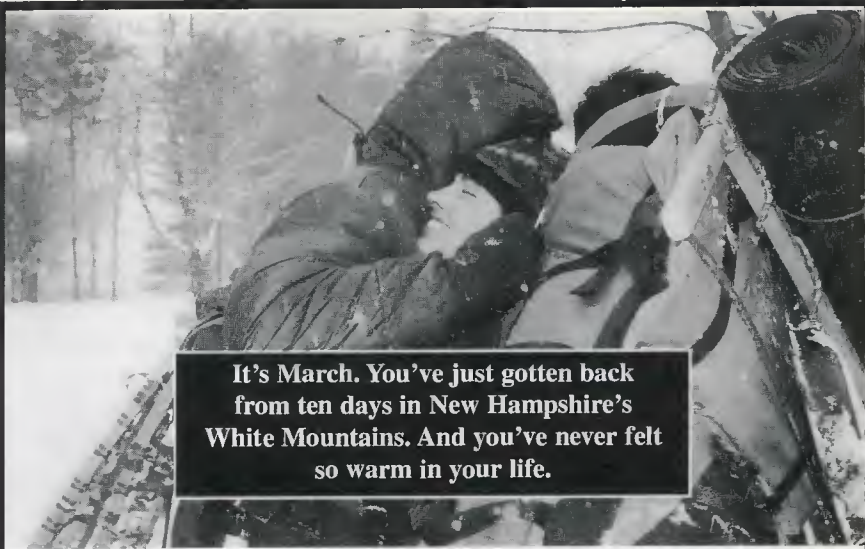
## SPEAKING OUT

the time comes to act, you will need all your courage and strength to follow through on whatever action you decide. Remember also that, in most cases, you cannot wait for all the facts to be assembled before a decision is required. Making decisions in developing situations or on the run is tricky, dangerous and requires guts.

■ "Supervise well those below you. I have a few do's that have stood me in good stead and I pass them on for what they are worth: Be a good listener. Remember that when someone comes to you with a problem, he needs either a pat on the head and a lump of sugar or he needs help. Don't argue with subordinates and don't let personal grudges affect your relations. Express an interest in employees' work and don't make promises not intended to be kept.

■ "Accept supervision from above. Supervision isn't a one-way street. You say you will supervise more than 3,300 people. But you should also expect to receive supervision yourself. This is part of the job and how you will be measured. I give you only one simple suggestion for getting along with your boss: You do the getting along. This will be delicate, but it works. Also, don't take your problems to your supervisor. You can be assured they have enough of their own and once you get the reputation that you can handle your own problems and that you don't knock at the door frequently, you will also achieve a reputation as a manager who runs a good shop. To put it briefly, don't call them, wait for them to call you.

■ "Boil your own water. This principle is the last, but it's probably the most important. You must preserve your health and take care of yourself. If you become sick, you will be no good to yourself, to your mission or to the organization. Thus,



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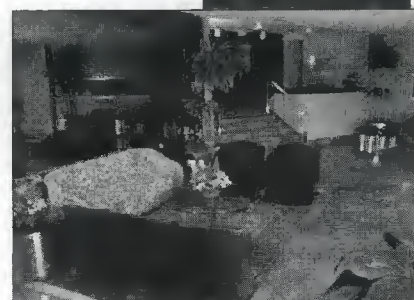
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## SPEAKING OUT



preserving your health should receive your priority attention, and I don't mean only your physical health. I also mean worrying about the job and wondering what will happen if you are gone and can't take care of matters. Take time to relax. When you sense that tired feeling coming on, you should know something is wrong, so take care of it.

"These, then, are some thoughts and notes I have found useful in my years in administration and management. However, after all is said and done, your success will be measured by your good judgment and your sense of balance and reasonableness. I have no doubt you will acquit yourself with distinction."

Good luck,  
Idar Rimestad ■

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# KEEPING EUROPE SAFE

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WITH NATO'S MILITARY ROLE NOW OUTDATED,  
US SHOULD PRESS ECONOMIC SOLUTION WITH EU WANNABES

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BY OSCAR LURIE

**T**he United States has a choice between a confrontational military course and a constructive, economic approach to achieve increased security and stability in Europe. For example, President Clinton could press for expansion of the 16-member North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), though there's no doubt it would create more tension in the U.S.-Russia relationship; delay or scuttle ratification of the START II anti-nuclear proliferation agreement; and require the continued flow of \$10 billion in annual U.S. funds to support NATO.

Or, the United States could choose to encourage expansion of the 15-member EU (European Union), which offers purely economic — not military — benefits. This second choice is much more constructive, since it would improve the standard of living of more European and Russian peoples; hasten reduction of nuclear weapons proliferation; avoid a renewed Cold War; save billions in taxpayer funds on NATO maintenance; and permit the withdrawal of thousands of U.S. troops at NATO sites in Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Bosnia, Greece and Spain.

---

*Oscar Lurie is a senior analyst at the Center for Defense Information, an independent think tank in Washington, D.C.*

As preeminent American economist Kenneth Arrow has observed, "There is considerable evidence that countries that trade [with each other] have less chance of conflicts." So instead of focusing on expanding NATO, the United States should focus on expanding the EU.

Those clamoring for NATO membership are the former Soviet republics and former members of the now defunct Warsaw Pact, a 1955 Soviet creation designed as a response to the forming of NATO. Eager would-be members also include some of the 24 members of Partnership for Peace, a sort of junior NATO devised in 1994 by the United States as a partial answer to requests for NATO expansion. But the Partnership for Peace was not the first attempt to give birth to a junior NATO. NATO members launched NACC (North Atlantic Cooperation Council) in December 1991, shortly after the Berlin Wall fell. The inaugural meeting was attended by all 16 member nations, as well as nine nations from Central and Eastern Europe. Designed to foster "greater openness, understanding and cooperation between NATO nations and the former Warsaw Pact adversaries," NACC fell far short of its goal of making non-NATO members feel better about being excluded from the exclusive NATO club. It would take another two years for President Clinton to formulate his Partnership for Peace idea.

Today, Partnership for Peace members, who have been promised eventual full-fledged NATO membership, include Finland, Sweden, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Albania, Armenia, Hungary, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation.

Once Russia becomes associated with the EU, it's not far-fetched for the United States to consider merging NAFTA with the EU. Such a merger is seen as promising by the EU executive committee and by trade officials in Britain, Germany, France, Canada and Mexico and echoed last year by U.S. Commerce officials.

The issue of NATO expansion is expected to be a key foreign policy conflict in the upcoming presidential election. In June, Republican candidate Robert J. Dole said he believed the United States should take the lead in admitting the three Warsaw Pact members of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (now divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia) to NATO by 1998. President Clinton, who last month promised visiting Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski that NATO would "take additional steps this year" to admit new members, hedged on a deadline. This kind of reluctance has prompted Republicans to accuse Clinton of "dragging his feet" on the issue.

But Clinton told reporters last month that the question of NATO expansion "has already been decided in principle," and that only a final consensus among the 16 members is needed. He also said he expected a meeting on the subject to be set sometime in 1997, after the December biannual conference in Brussels for NATO foreign ministers. And last month, the House International Relations Committee passed legislation out of committee which singles out Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary by providing the three a total of \$60 million in military and monetary aid in 1997, presumably a first step toward full NATO membership because it allows them to meet NATO-required development levels. Similar provisions are contained in the Senate's version of the 1997 foreign policy appropriations bill.

In an effort to avoid jeopardizing the re-election campaign of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, governments of the West have delayed taking a stand this year on the issue, which has been hotly debated among NATO members since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Following Yeltsin's re-election victory in July, one of his top aides, Dmitri B. Ryurikov, said Yeltsin's opposition to NATO expansion is "an even more contentious issue than ever."

The United States devised NATO 45 years ago to protect Western Europe from an aggressive Soviet Union after World War II, but today it's still clinging to the alliance as the only instrument to preserve European peace. NATO's 16 members include Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, the U.K., Canada and the United States.

Although U.S. officials deny NATO still has hostile intent toward Russia, members of the House National Security Committee continue to cite the potential Russian threat to justify funding for new series of powerful weapons. Indeed, if NATO does have no intent to fight Russia, it's hard to find any logical reason for continuing its present form at all.

But security is exactly the reason many countries want NATO membership. For example, the former Warsaw Pact countries of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have long been eager to join an anti-Russian alliance. And the Russians naturally object to an historic anti-Soviet extension to their borders or to their former states. Yegor Gaidar, a pro-Western Russian legislator, has lamented that "NATO expansion creates the best possible argument for our opponents [Russian militarists] that there is a world plot against Russia."

Indeed, the perception of NATO by many Russians is quite different from the Western

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*The United States has a choice between a military course and a constructive non-military approach to achieve increased security and stability in Europe. Which should it be?*

---

one. For 45 years, Russia considered NATO the foremost threat to Russian security. During the Cold War, official Soviet literature referred to NATO as "a military bloc of capitalist countries under American leadership, directed against the U.S.S.R. and other peaceful countries."

Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), ranking minority member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, warned recently that NATO enlargement is certain to anger Russia. "If NATO's enlargement stays on its current course, reaction in Russia is almost inevitably going to be a sense of isolation by those that are committed to democracy and democratic reform with varying degrees of paranoia, nationalism and demagoguery emerging from across the current political spectrum."

"Because a conventional military response from Russia in answer to

NATO enlargement is not feasible economically, a nuclear response in the form of a higher alert status for Russia's remaining strategic nuclear weapons and conceivably renewed deployment of tactical nuclear weapons is more likely.

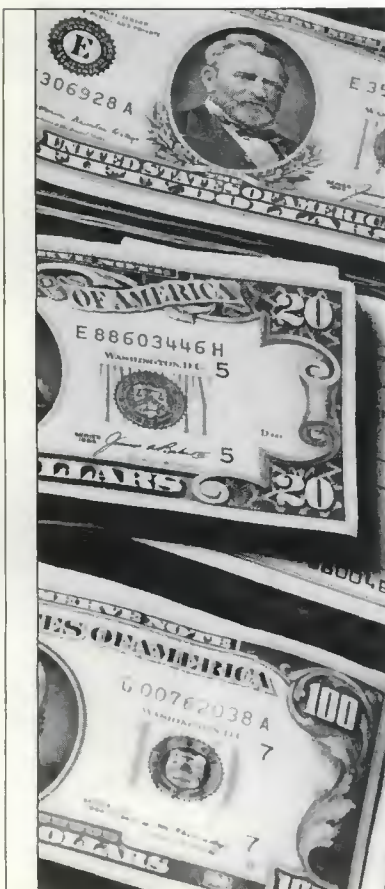
"The security of NATO, Russia's neighbors and the countries of Eastern Europe will not be enhanced if the Russian military finger moves closer to the nuclear trigger."

Thus an expanded NATO could aggravate East-West tensions and risk the tragedy its apologists claim they want to avoid: another war in Europe. Meanwhile, to prevent NATO expansion, Russian Federation conservatives are blocking ratification of the START II nuclear weapons reduction treaty and urging other retaliatory actions if the Western bloc adds any former Soviet states.

But the most significant threat from the Russian Federation on NATO expansion is a deadly one.

Conservative and military minded Russian officials have vowed to block joint cooperation on warehoused nuclear material if NATO is extended toward their borders, arguing they have a right to preserve their nuclear assets against a hostile alliance. Although several former Soviet states have accepted U.S. help in solving the problem, so far the Russians have been unwilling to do so.

Hundreds of tons of highly enriched uranium [HEU] and plutonium — raw materials to build nuclear bombs — are aging in scores of Russian facilities. Security for these holdings was adequate under police state conditions, but in today's more open and free society, additional sophisticated safe-



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guards are needed. Indeed, Russian officials don't even know the quantity of each kind of material stored in these facilities. Since 1992, at least five thefts of HEU and plutonium believed to have originated in the former Soviet Union were confiscated in Prague and Germany. And who knows how much more has escaped without detection? It's no more difficult for international terrorists to smuggle nuclear material than for traffickers to transport drugs across borders.

It requires only 18 pounds of fissile material to make a nuclear bomb 50 times stronger than the one used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and bomb-building techniques are widely known. The chief barrier to the casual manufacture of nuclear weapons is the extremely complex and expensive technology needed to make fissile components. Already, Iraq has tried

to acquire the manufacturing know-how, as did North Korea; Iran appears to be trying to do so now.

Under the 1991 Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programs, the United States so far has helped the former Soviet states of Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus reduce the danger of rogue groups obtaining material for nuclear bomb-making by aiding the countries to destroy weapons of mass destruction and to transport dangerous materials to safe, secure facilities. But the risk of smuggling or purchasing nuclear material in the former Soviet Union persists, and many U.S. law enforcement authorities, academics and legislators believe it's steadily increasing.

Unquestionably, the United States needs more assistance abroad in reducing the worldwide risk of terrorist bomb-building. Few countries can afford the

expense of converting warehoused bomb-grade materials into commercial reactor fuel or of building secure storage facilities, which would be supervised by the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency.

To neutralize NATO, many in the Russian Federation would like to have the Cold War alliance accept its request for membership. This would be a logical development, since allies rarely fight each other. The major military powers on the European continent would be on the same side, ready to control troublemakers but lacking a superpower enemy.

If that happens, America's role in the alliance could be reduced, thus alleviating Russia's primary fear. This move would also help reduce the resentment of Western European nations over American domination of their foreign affairs

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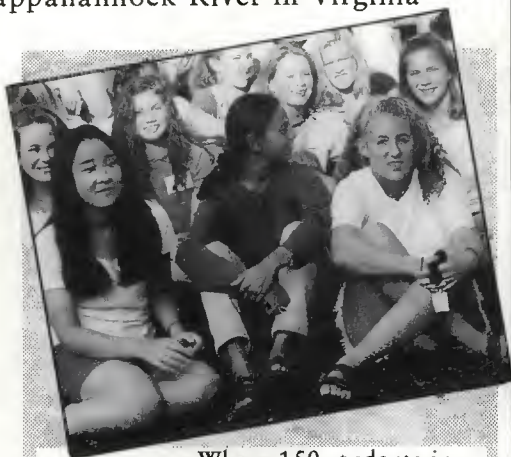




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and military policies. The U.N. inability to create a unified military establishment might be rectified by proposing a powerful peace-keeping force for European and out-of-area contingencies.

To some extent the push for NATO expansion really may be motivated by an honest desire to support democracy in central and eastern Europe, as expansionists claim. This benign goal could be more fully achieved if Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were included in the alliance rather than only Poland and the three other fledgling democracies of the former Warsaw Pact.

But current NATO members have intensely fought the notion of Russian Federation membership, arguing it would confound NATO's historical mission of protecting states from Moscow's aggression. In addition, America's politicians would be reluctant to diminish its dominant influence in Europe. Hence the United States devised the Partnership For Peace Program, devised as an intermediary step toward full membership in NATO, which would recognize a comprehensive European organization with a military flavor, while keeping NATO free of Russian influence.

However, a different, more powerful route to peace and stability in Europe is evolving independently of U.S. influence: the continent's economic unification in the European Union (EU), which now includes 15 West European countries. Initially created in 1952 as the European Coal and Steel Community, the group merged with European organizations concerned about economics and nuclear power, and was renamed the EU in 1965. The EU

has evolved so quickly and so successfully that it has achieved status as a single economic entity.

As of the end of 1992, the then-12 EU members ended virtually all barriers to free movement of goods, services and people among member states. Austria, Sweden and Finland — the latter on Russia's northwestern border — joined in early 1995.

Between 1991-93, the EU signed association agreements with all five former members of the Warsaw Pact: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania. By 1997 association members will have free access to European markets of most industrial products. By 2003, these six association members are expected to be part of a single free-trade area, with the promise of eventual equal membership.

Strengthening economic ties between the EU and countries in transition from communism is an effort to promote free markets and foster political reform and stability; the standard of living of association member countries is expected to rise after the incorporation of competition, higher investment, technological progress and faster "human capital" accumulation.

Exports from EU associates have already grown rapidly — registering a 76 percent increase between 1989-93, compared to the previous four-year period. Significantly, the EU countries continue the same annual level of U.S. imports as in 1992, the year internal European border barriers fell.

It's quite clear that, with a choice between military and economic expansion, President Clinton should choose the latter, a clear win-win proposition for all involved. ■



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# THE WORK OF DIPLOMAT WEBSTER

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TWO-TIME SECRETARY OF STATE HELPED NEGOTIATE  
US-CANADA BOUNDARY TREATY, OPEN FAR EAST TRADE

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BY PAUL MILLER

**T**housands of mourners gathered at an estate near Plymouth, Mass. on Oct. 24, 1852 to pay their last respects to Secretary of State Daniel Webster. Author Ralph Waldo Emerson walked to a nearby beach and later confided in his journal: "The sea, the rocks, the woods, gave no sign that America and the world had lost the completest man. Nature had not in our days, or not since Napoleon, cut out such a masterpiece." The country had lost an important statesman — a secretary of State who served under three presidents, from 1841 to 1843 and again from 1850 until his death in 1852.

Webster was born to a farming family in central New Hampshire at the end of the Revolutionary War. He entered Dartmouth College at age 15 and graduated in 1801, Phi Beta Kappa. He took up teaching but then switched to law, studying in law offices in both New Hampshire and Boston and passing the bar exam in March 1805. In the competitive give and take of the New Hampshire courts, Webster gained skill and confidence and was soon drawn into politics as a member of the Federalist party, winning a seat in the State legislature in 1812.

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*Paul Miller is a professor of history at Dartmouth College. Before retiring from the Foreign Service in 1979, he served in London, Geneva, Belfast, Hong Kong, Manila, Tokyo, Taipei, Santo Domingo, La Paz, Mexico and Teheran.*

After moving to Massachusetts, he served as a representative from that state from 1822-27, and then was elected to the U.S. Senate. He became known as "the expounder and defender of the Constitution" from the arguments and pleas he made before the Supreme Court on behalf of the Constitution and for the union of the states.

Webster was an unsuccessful presidential candidate for the Whig Party in 1836, 1848 and 1852. Ironically, he could have become president in 1850 when Zachary Taylor died in office, had he not refused the vice-presidential nomination offered by the Whig Party.

After campaigning effectively for William Henry Harrison for president in 1840, he was rewarded with the position of secretary of State and stayed on to serve under President John Tyler when Harrison died in 1841. He again served under President Millard Fillmore from 1850-52.

**D**uring his first term, Webster's principal task was to resolve several outstanding problems with Great Britain, which is one of the reasons why he remained in office after Harrison died and the other Whig leaders had left the president's Cabinet. In 1839 Webster had taken an extended vacation trip to England and France where he met many key leaders, including Alexander Baring (Lord Ashburton), who was distinguished in both the political and financial worlds. He was selected in 1842 to go to Washington as a special envoy to clear up several thorny problems. The main dispute lay in determining a boundary

between the state of Maine and the Canadian province of New Brunswick. In 1831 the matter had been referred to the king of the Netherlands under an 1827 Treaty, which called on him to settle the "points of difference." He did this by dividing the territory in half. However, the people in Maine were not satisfied with the possible loss of territory and the suggested settlement was voted down in the U.S. Senate in June 1832 on the grounds that the king had made a political — not a judicial — decision.

The resulting tension led to a near war in 1838-39 between the two adjoining areas. Maine and New Brunswick called out their military forces who faced each other across a stream, while the U.S. Congress and the Nova Scotia legislature voted funds for war, and the U.S. president received authorization to call up 50,000 volunteers. But President Martin Van Buren kept the "Aroostook War" bloodless by sending Gen. Winfield Scott, in March 1839, to arrange a truce during which both sides agreed to not give up their claims. When Webster became secretary of State in 1841, he began a campaign to convince U.S. residents that a compromise boundary was preferable to another war with Great Britain. To this end he authorized the preparation of a series of editorials for the local newspapers of Maine and Massachusetts.

Boundary negotiations during the hot, humid summer of 1842 hinged on several old maps — some of them favored the American position, others the British, but none could definitely establish either claim to the disputed territory. Both Ashburton and Webster realized the need for a compromise boundary and both engaged in secret talks with local leaders to win their agreement. The Maine authorities soon realized that further delay would make their position untenable, and agreed in principle to accept a compromise line. They sent delegates in June 1842 to work out the details, but negotiations dragged on for two more months before the commissioners would agree to a specific compromise boundary. Maine came off well, winning 7,000 of the 12,000 square miles of disputed territory.

Final agreement came as a result of the close personal relationship of the two principals and the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was signed on Aug. 9,

1842. Both Maine and Massachusetts (the latter of which had also laid claim to the disputed territory) were compensated \$150,000 for their losses during the controversy, which was written into the treaty. The treaty also included provisions that settled the northern borders of New York and Vermont. The Senate approved it on Aug. 20 by a vote of 39-9, and the treaty ratifications were exchanged the following October in London.

The two envoys also negotiated the boundary that divided Canada and the United States, with a line from Lake Superior to the Lake of the Woods in upper Minnesota, giving the United States 6,500 square miles of territory that included valuable iron ore deposits.

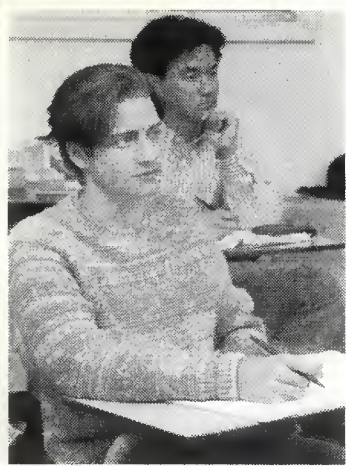
Webster's work on the negotiating team was described by the British as "astute and resolute." He had helped bring the negotiations to conclusion by renting a house on Louisiana Avenue in downtown Washington, where he entertained Canadians lavishly. Four years later, the Democratic chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Charles Ingersoll, brought charges against Webster of improper use of government funds to secure the treaty. These charges included illegal drafts from the president's secret service fund and embezzlement of more than \$2,000 from the State Department. Former President Tyler and the disbursing clerk of the State Department came to the defense of the ex-secretary and he was exonerated on all counts by the House Committee.

Several maritime concerns were included during the pair's deliberation of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. One involved a small American steamship called the *Caroline*, which in 1837 was ferrying supplies, which had been plundered from American ammunition supplies by an exiled leader of a Canadian rebellion, across the Niagara River to other

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*His personal style of  
diplomacy; his emphasis  
on compromise and  
respect for international  
law underscored his  
greatest achievements:  
negotiating the  
Webster-Ashburton  
Treaty and opening  
trade with the Far East.*

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Canadian rebels. A party of Canadian militia descended on the ship in December, set it afire drifting toward Niagara Falls, during a melee that killed one American crew member. News of the loss of life and ship caused such turmoil on the American side that Gen. Winfield Scott was sent to quiet the border.

Three years later the Canadian deputy sheriff, Alexander McLeod, boasted in Buffalo that he had killed the American. He was arrested by New York authorities who would not release him despite the assertion that McLeod was acting under British government orders in the original attack. It turned out that it was McLeod's brother who was actually involved in the raid and McLeod was quickly acquitted by a New York jury. Webster used the incident to urge Congress to pass an 1842 law that provided for the removal from the state to federal courts of any person accused of an unlawful act proved to have been committed under the orders of a foreign sovereign.

Another maritime problem involved the American coastal vessel, *Creole*, which, in November 1841, was carrying 135 black slaves from Virginia to New Orleans. En route the slaves overpowered the white officers and killed a white passenger. They then took the ship to Nassau in the Bahamas where the local authorities freed the slaves, detaining only 19 on charges of mutiny and murder. The ensuing southern outcry over the loss of their "property" caused Webster to vainly invoke the international law of hospitality, which calls for the protection of persons and property in distress. Ashburton claimed that he had no instructions to cover this problem, so no clause was inserted in the joint treaty to cover slave mutineers. Eleven years later, an Anglo-American Mixed Claims Commission awarded \$110,330 to the United States for the value of the lost "property" in the *Creole* incident.

During his first term as secretary of State, Webster also composed the Tyler Doctrine that preserved the national interest in the Hawaiian Islands, which were important to the New England whalers who called there for fresh provisions and for Hawaiian seaman to fill out their crews. Likewise, American ships bound for China stopped for cargoes of sandalwood. While not recognizing the independence of the islands, Webster advised several European capitals to respect the integrity of Hawaii. In his 1842 message to Congress, President Tyler quoted Webster in noting that the United States would be "dissatisfied" to see another power threaten to take over the islands, colonize them, or subvert the local government. This doctrine was subsequently invoked against Great Britain in 1843 and in 1844 in France, when both powers were persuaded to refrain from further efforts to gain a foothold in the islands.

From a modern point of view, Webster's most important action came at the end of his first term as secretary of State. In 1843 he drew up instructions for a diplomatic mission to China as a first step toward promoting commercial expansion with East Asia. To carry out the China mission he chose Caleb Cushing, who accepted the post of special envoy on May 8, 1843 — the day that Webster resigned from the government to recoup his personal finances, regain favor with the Whig Party and distance himself from the expansionist policies of President Tyler.

Massachusetts traders had played a leading role in developing the profitable China trade, which at that time was limited to the southeast coast port of Canton. During this same period British merchants had a growing trade in opium, which led to the first Opium War and the signing of the Treaty of

Nanking in 1842, which opened up four more Chinese ports for trade — Amoy, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai.

American traders in Canton petitioned their government to protect their interests. Congress responded with an appropriation of \$40,000 to pay for a special mission to China, and Webster drafted the special instructions to Cushing, as well as a letter to the Chinese Emperor. He cautioned Cushing to respect Chinese institutions, to make clear to the Chinese the absolute equality and independence of the United States, underscoring the need to secure for American ships safe entry into Chinese ports on the same terms as the British merchants. Cushing's mission was so successful that he secured by the Treaty of Wanghsia, signed in Macau on July 3, 1844, not only the expanded trade but also the right of extraterritoriality for American nationals accused of crimes in China. This privilege, quickly gained by the British and other foreign powers as well, meant that the accused foreigners could be tried by a consular court of the foreign country and not in a Chinese court. This treaty provision disrupted Chinese-American relations for a century and only ended during World War II.

During Webster's second term as secretary of State, he was not only older but unwell. Nevertheless, he handled problems involving Austria, Hungary, Spain, Cuba and Peru, though he showed less diplomatic skill.

The United States was also troubled with the South's desire for a Caribbean empire and a growing American interest in commercial and territorial expansion in Latin America. Some Americans supported Narciso Lopez, an adventurous Venezuelan, who sought to free Cuba from Spain. In 1850 he and 700 men left New York for Cuba, but the Cubans did not rise up as he had hoped. Lopez was fortu-

nate to make it back to Key West ahead of a pursuing Spanish vessel. He was arrested in Savannah for violating American neutrality laws and again in New Orleans, but sympathetic juries let him off for lack of compelling evidence. Lopez returned to Cuba in 1851 with a band of 500 men, mostly Americans, where they were defeated and rounded up for arrest. Lopez and 50 associates were executed while 150 of the group were condemned to servitude in Spanish mines, actions that sparked riots in Key West and New Orleans where Spanish property was damaged. At Spain's request, England and France patrolled Cuban waters until 1852, when Webster succeeded in getting them to stop, considering it an infringement of American sovereignty at sea. He then worked out a solution with Spain whereby the American prisoners in Spain were released and Spain was paid \$25,000 for the damages incurred at New Orleans. In 1852 Queen Isabella pardoned the American survivors of the expedition.

The problem with Peru involved deposits of guano on the Lobos Islands, 20 miles off the coast. Americans had claimed the islands for the United States in 1852 — an action favored by Webster since the islands lay so far off Peru's coast — but President Fillmore soon acknowledged Peruvian ownership, and Webster accepted blame for the fiasco of making an idle claim on another country's territory.

Despite the difficulties of the second term, Webster deserves credit and praise for his accomplishments, as well as his personal style of diplomacy and his emphasis on compromise. His respect for the law in international relations underscored his greatest achievements: negotiating the Webster-Ashburton Treaty and opening trading relations with the Far East. ■

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# OF ELEPHANTS AND INSECTS

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## FSO REFUGEE CAMP WORKER RECALLS 'PAMPERED' TRAVEL IN THAILAND

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By JOHN M. UNDERRINER

**T**he recent infamous quip by an aide to Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas) that reducing government might force U.S. diplomats to "turn in their Cadillacs for Fords" implied that diplomats lead a pampered life with first-class travel and luxury accommodations. But the senator should have been with me on a recent three-year assignment crisscrossing Thailand to visit refugee camps.

My most luxurious conveyance was a Toyota LandCruiser, though we traveled other ways, such as trekking up steep mountain trails and hunkering down in dugout canoes down the Thai River between two shores of unfriendly locals. On a few lucky occasions, when U.S. congressional delegations visited the camps with me, I was able to hitch rides on military airplanes. But the first-class traveling accommodations were not for me — only for Sen. Gramm's colleagues.

As one of several FSOs responsible for refugee programs at U.S. Embassy Bangkok from 1993-95, I shared responsibility for U.S. efforts to protect, assist and settle refugees and asylum seekers living in Thailand. Specifically, I followed the lives of 100,000 Burmese living in roughly two dozen camps along 1,500 kilometers of the Thai-Burma border.

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*FSO John M. Underriner, who joined the Foreign Service in 1987, is a political officer at U.S. Embassy Pretoria. His two previous posts have been in East Asia.*

Thailand is no stranger to these camps, having hosted more than 1 million Vietnamese, Cambodians, Lao and Burmese refugees and asylum seekers since 1975. When the camps were jammed in 1992, more than a half-million displaced people lived there.

In more than 50 trips to these camps, the conditions I lived and traveled in could never be described as pampered. My destination was often the rugged, jungle-covered mountains, home to lethal strains of malaria and roaming bands of armed insurgents. The camps, many small, are usually tucked away on redoubts inaccessible by road and constantly relocating, due to nearby fighting or Thai government attempts to maintain their safety. Monsoon rains wash out most of the jungle tracks during the annual rainy season, from May to September, leaving some camps inaccessible for several months. Still, it was my job to stay in touch.

Standard equipment on these trips included many things considered useless if I were on the embassy cocktail-party circuit. We brought spare vehicle parts, such as axles, brake pads and tires. But we also carried remote-controlled electronic winches and tire chains, in case the trucks needed traction in mud; hip waders for high-water trekking; and machetes to hack through the thick jungle. We also took sleeping bags, a cellular phone to contact the U.S. embassy, and our own food and water so as not to tax the already scarce camp supplies.

One trip I took would have taken six hours during the dry season. But during the rainy season, it turned

into a 17-hour marathon as we winched through fender-deep bogs and traversed once-placid streams transformed by monsoon rains into rushing torrents. On another trip, we got stuck in mud so deep that even the winch was useless — and only the fortuitous passing of a Thai riding a large park elephant saved us. The elephant, outfitted with a harness and chains, was being used to clear logs from the jungle. With the aid of the beast's owner, we hooked our LandCruiser behind the elephant, which towed the vehicle out.

Others were not so lucky. Five relief workers from the American Refugee Committee and Medecins Sans Frontières were stranded in a camp during the rainy season when their three vehicles were blocked by a caved-in road. The relief workers walked out of the jungle, but were forced to leave behind their vehicles for three months until the roads were repaired.

Terrain and traction problems were not the only menaces to be conquered in Thailand. The leading cause of death for refugees and asylum seekers is a deadly strain of mosquito-borne cerebral malaria, and most of the camps are infested with the insects. I familiarized myself with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on malaria prevention and travelled with a deodorant-sized bottle of insecticide. The embassy's CDC representative cheerfully reminded me that cerebral malaria can kill four days after contact. "That's plenty of time to get treatment after you return," he said, though he was obviously assuming I wouldn't need my car towed out by an elephant.

But malarial mosquitoes are just one type of creature that make the Thai-Burma border an etymologist's fantasyland. One night, before I bunked down on the floor of a camp leader's bamboo hut, I joined him for rice and greens grilled over an open fire. We were soon surrounded by what seemed like millions of crawling, flying and slithering insects that reminded me of a Dr. Seuss book, and I found myself repeating one of his familiar lines: "Some had two legs, some had four, some had six legs and some had more." I was thankful that night for the mosquito netting over my body and for the knowledge that the creatures were only attracted to flames. Once the fire died, they left the campsite.

Other potential hazards included poisonous green mamba snakes and people-eating tigers. Just 10 days before I visited a remote camp 100 kilometers from Sangkhlaburi on the central border, nearby villagers had killed two tigers. Unfortunately, the tigers' scorecard was still one ahead of the villagers: Earlier the big cats had killed three villagers.

In addition to natural hazards, our trips were subject to human threats. Sporadic fighting in 1993-95 between Burmese military and several different rebel groups seeking autonomy from Rangoon regularly sent thousands of new asylum seekers back across the border to Thailand. The deputy chief of mission at U.S. Embassy Bangkok used to joke that we should consider packing flak jackets with our travel equipment. I seriously considered the suggestion after a handful of teenage Burmese rebel soldiers stuck their rifles in our faces and asked for a ride. Fortunately, a Burmese-speaking representative from the American Refugee Committee was with us, convincing them that our refugee work required us to remain politically neutral.

In my travels, I developed a deep respect for the refugees and asylum seekers from all over Asia who had made their way to Thailand, often overcoming hardship enroute, and for the dedicated relief workers in the field who performed the difficult, dangerous work of providing food and medical care. As the vanguard of U.S. efforts, refugee officers in Thailand — as well as in Mozambique, Pakistan, the former Yugoslavia and other hot spots around the world — labored under conditions unusual even by Foreign Service standards. Most would agree that we were well-rewarded with job satisfaction.

Just don't look for us in Cadillaces, Sen. Gramm. We'll be navigating mine fields in armored vehicles, trudging up mountains on foot, or thanking our lucky stars for passing pachyderms. ■

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*Terrain and traction  
problems were not the  
only menaces to be  
conquered in  
Thailand. In addition  
to natural hazards,  
our trips were subject  
to human threats.*

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# THE LAST TDY

BY DAVID W. HESS

Cupping his hands into the fetid water of the permanently stained sink in the Bamako airport men's room, Ambler splashed his face. He peered in the streaked mirror at his mid-40ish face, lined with wrinkles from dusty road trips and long nights of work. His red-rimmed eyes still had a blue sparkle and his brown hair didn't have too much gray yet, even in his ponytail. Lurching out of the john, he grabbed a table at the snack bar and ordered the best of Malian brews. He needed to forget the miserable Malinke beggar who had just confronted him outside the airport. With no compunction, he had handed over most of his remaining Malian francs to the astonished legless man. He only needed enough for a few beers, then he'd leave Mali for the last time. But God, he felt bad about how low those noble people could drop when they moved into the city.

Five and a half years ago, Ambler had begun his assignment in Abidjan at the regional support office of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and it was finally ending. As a full-time temporary duty (TDY) FSO, he logged 25 to 30 weeks a year on the road, not counting vacations. Sixteen years into his Foreign Service career, TDY assignments had finished his second marriage and may as well have fin-

ished his liver as well, between two rounds with hepatitis and way too many hotel bars, dusty dives, Marine house happy hours, palm wine stands and Hash House Harriers post-jogging debauches. He knew every accommodation between five stars and starless from Nouakchott to Yaounde and from Ndjamena to Freetown. But Bamako had been his home base even more than Abidjan and the Malinke farming people had been his first love. He had been the design officer for three projects with Malinke people, the first on farming systems research and the second on village health clinics. And this was the third; the last project design documents had received their tortuous gauntlet of approvals and he was headed home.

This last project had been a real bitch. Imagine trying to take on the resettlement of 14,000 incredulous Malinke farming families facing inundation of their communities, farms, sacred groves, cemeteries and anything else that meant something to them. All of that to "advance control of the river's movements," as the Inter-Sahelian Governmental Commission so

fluidly put it. USAID got stuck with this piece of the rotten pie because all it had to ante up at a donor's conference was a measly \$16 million in U.S. funds. The Middle Eastern banks, anxious to show their solidarity with their Muslim brethren, would front the costs of the dam itself. And the European big



JASON LEVINSON

## F O C U S

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*He had never seen a dust storm the likes of this one.  
But what was worse was the sickening angle of descent  
of the aircraft. This was the last TDY for sure.*

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boy donors, especially the barely former colonial power of France, were happy to chip in big chunks for irrigation projects and the hydroelectric power plant that would end up requiring their countries' equipment and engineering services. And good ol' USAID had come in on the big challenge — how to soften the blow for the losers in this money game. But, what the hell, if it were easy, it wouldn't be development.

And the field trips to figure out how to move the unlucky "beneficiaries" of the damn project! Four weeks camping on the banks of the Bafing, bouncing around on non-existent roads and talking to village group after village group, sipping Masters beer on the riverbank while the hippos played at sunset, and gazing at a star-studded sky over the campfire as lions roared from the jungle. Day after day, three big LandCruisers would arrive in the isolated villages; the researchers may as well have been Martians. He still saw in his mind the nodding heads of the village's wizened elders during a recent meeting with the villagers. What patience and equanimity they showed when the villagers pleaded to not let the rising river cover their sacred groves. He remembered his repeated promises to indigo-clad villagers that they would move the sacred rocks and would not relocate settlers to places inhabited by bad spirits. Now it was up to the pros, that is, the anthropologists, to study and broker the resettlement. At least, they had plenty of money to get the job done.

But forget all that, man, and fortify yourself with your third liter of Masters, the brew that made Bamako famous. Now don't nod off, buddy boy,

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*David W. Hess is the energy officer at USAID New Delhi. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1980, he also has served in Abidjan, Lima, La Paz and Conakry. This is his first piece of published fiction.*

'cause you face your last sprint across the burning tarmac to get that seat on the freedom flight back to the old Cote d' Ivoire. That's right, for West Africa not to win again, Ambler would have to hustle for his unassigned seat.

Bolting upright out of his beery stupor, Ambler saw the gate doors finally flung open by the sullen camouflaged security guard. He flashed his boarding pass and loped out into the outdoor sauna of the Sahelian airport, elbows flying along with all the other would-be passengers.

Target dead ahead: a sagging Air Ivoire 727 of unknown vintage and uncertain condition. Given his long legs, four-mile-a-day jogging habit, hell bent for fuselage outlook and toughened by TDY assignments, he arrived as No. 2 in line, after somebody who must have been on the Ivorian Olympic sprint team. He settled into the emergency-exit aisle seat, which he had long learned was the sole place to be on these antique West African birds of burden.

All strapped in, he brought out his flask of Wild Turkey and toasted his victory. The elixir that had been his helper on most assignments burned his mouth but settled into his gut with a jarring aura of a job well done. In an instant, the plane had filled to overflowing with the inevitable *pagaille* of extra boarding-pass recipients arguing to the point of fisticuffs with the cabin crew. Then the big boys with camouflaged jump suits came on board and escorted the unlucky laggards out of the fuselage onto the burning asphalt and back to the terminal to receive their consolation prize - a boarding pass on the next available flight and a free *sandwich de fromage*.

Takeoff was blessedly unremarkable and the plane climbed towards its cruising level as Ambler slugged enough Turk to be way past his level. His white-knuckled neighbor must have been on his

## F O C U S

first-ever flight, and while Ambler wanted to help him, he knew that the Turkey wouldn't be a particularly suitable gesture for the septuagenarian Muslim trader in his crisply starched, beautifully embroidered boubou.

Then Ambler bent over and looked out the cracked and smeared porthole and saw what was bothering the old gentleman. An angry solid red wall of dust stretched across the plane's horizon from ground zero to as high as he could see and all the way from east to west. In his many sojourns in the Sahel, he had never seen a dust storm the likes of this one. He really became worried when the pilot tersely commanded: Fasten your seat belts, we're approaching an area of severe turbulence.

In all his flights in and around West Africa, Ambler could only remember one communication from the cockpit that had resembled the same menace in the pilot's voice. That was when the drunken Irish pilots who were working as mercenary flyboys for Sekou Toure's bankrupt Air Guinee had inadvertently flipped open their mikes and started reciting Hail Marys when they became lost over the Fouta Djallon mountains in a lightening storm in a vain search for elusive Conakry.

The old 727 hit the red wall like it was made of sun-dried bricks. The overhead bins flew open and detritus from many a *commercant's* ill-gotten gains scattered over the passengers. Screams, epithets, invocations to Allah and pungent odors filled the air. What was worse to a flight-hardened veteran like Ambler was the sickening angle of descent of the aircraft. This was the last TDY for sure.

But somehow, through no fault of the pilot or his poorly maintained ship, they settled in a less precipitous movement and even felt like they were reasonably approximating a normal landing. The next thing the stunned passengers and crew knew, they were apparently on the ground, albeit still engulfed in a red maelstrom of Sahelian dust. Ambler was the first to realize the necessity for escape. Executing the instructions he had heard countless times, he opened the emergency door on his aisle. Panicked cries of the passengers didn't dissuade him from vaulting out the gaping passageway. He slid down the bird's cold dead metal wing. The eight-foot drop through a red blur on to the ground completed the sobering-up

process. He was on terra firma with no intention to leave it ever again.

Ambler rose onto his banged-up knees and creaked and groaned into a semi-upright position. He expected other travelers to come dropping out of the red mist swirling about his head and didn't want to be their personal cushion. Backing off in the direction he reckoned to be out and away from the plane, he paused, listening intently to the howling wind.

Then he realized something strange, so strange that he felt he must have been mistaken. The problem was that, as the plane careened downward and came to a halt, there had been no slamming and banging, no tearing away of metal, no explosion, no death. In short, there had been no crash and he had no idea why. Just then it occurred to him to get back to the plane and see if he could figure anything out. He felt his way along, bent over with his hand reaching out, in the same direction from which he thought he had come. But he found nothing after what must have been 20 feet. He repeated his action in another direction and found nothing. After four or five more fruitless passes, he sat down and pulled his knees to his chest.

"Just what the hell is going on? Is this the Twilight Zone or the goddamn Sahel?" he asked no one in particular. After another couple of groping, blind searches, he found a big boulder and moved around its base until he encountered a crevasse that afforded some shelter from the storm, and sat down. Within minutes exhaustion overcame his efforts to stay focused on his situation, and he was asleep.

His dreams were troubled as he floated on currents of harsh biting sand that grated on him, wearing down his defenses, until his skin burst and his body filled like an hour glass. Nightmare sand filled his throat, his ears, his mouth, finally choking his nostrils. He bolted upright and threw himself out of the sand cocoon which had formed around him as the sand filled the crevasse. He landed on the hard red laterite base of the boulder. Rolling over and over, he saw a blue cloudless sky above him. Ambler recognized noontime Sahelian standard conditions with the temperature well over 95 degrees Fahrenheit.

He found no airplane nor sign of the recent demise of one as he staggered in a spiralling search over what must have been a 500-meter radius. Huge

# AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association



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## Internet Addresses:

[afsa@afsa.org](mailto:afsa@afsa.org) (Association)

[afsatex@aol.com](mailto:afsatex@aol.com) (President)

[journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org) (FSJ)

AFSA Headquarters: (202) 338-4045

FAX: (202) 338-6820

Labar Management: (202) 647-8160

FAX: (202) 647-0265

USIA Headquarters: (202) 401-6405

FAX: (202) 401-6410

## APPEALS COURT UPHOLDS FSGB AUTHORITY

By MICHELLE TATUM

AFSA News Intern

**A**fter a three-year court battle, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit last month upheld the final authority of the Foreign Service Grievance Board (FSGB) in deciding whether the secretary of State can fire Foreign Service employees. The decision reverses the 1993 firing of an FSO, an AFSA member, by Secretary of State Warren Christopher after the FSGB had determined that there was no cause for her firing from the Foreign Service.

"If Secretary Christopher's interpretation were to prevail, the independent authority of the grievance board would be gutted and employees' confidence in its fairness and in the State Department's appeals process would be destroyed," said AFSA General Counsel Sharan Papp, who filed a "friend of the court" brief in support of the officer on behalf of AFSA. "Separation for cause is the most serious form of disciplinary action an employer can take against an employee." Papp said that it is unlikely the government will appeal the court's decision, which upholds a 1995

ruling by the district court.

The three-judge appeals panel relied on the Foreign Service Act in reaching its decision. Any other interpretation of the act would "dramatically decrease Foreign Service officer protections," said Judge Laurence Silberman, writing for the court. "The language of the Foreign Service Act makes clear that a board decision rendered after a ... hearing is final."

During the long court battle, AFSA provided the FSO's lawyers with research and expertise on the grievance process, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 and its predecessor, the 1946 Foreign Service Act. History is important to this case, according to Papp. Before 1980 and the creation of the FSGB, the Board of the Foreign Service, composed of high-level State Department officials, could only make recommendations to the secretary of State about the firing of an FS employee. The secretary was free to reject the board's recommendations, as if the judge and prosecutor were the same person - truly a conflict of interest, Papp said.

"The resolution of the case provides all Foreign Service employees with an important

*Continued on page 2*

## • AFSA Dateline •

• Following what has become known as the "tiff over the riff," AFSA on July 15 filed an unfair labor practices charge against USAID after AFSA President F.A. "Tex" Harris said he was verbally assaulted by USAID Assistant Administrator Larry E. Byrne as he was walking down the third-floor hallway at USAID. Harris has been critical of USAID's new \$60 million computer system being installed at a time when USAID employees are being RIFed to save \$20 million. Byrne told Harris that he was "fed up" with his "lies" and that he was going "to get your g— phony union,"

according to documents filed by AFSA. AFSA is asking the Foreign Service Labor Relations Board to order USAID to stop threatening to cut benefits of the Foreign Service by attacking its legal representative, AFSA.

• The AFSA Governing Board in June appointed Aury Fernandez and Ambassador Tam Bayatt to replace Secretary Dan Narland, who has left to pursue other activities, and Treasurer Gail Lecce, who has been

*Continued on page 4*

# STATE DEPARTMENT V.P. VOICE

• BY ALPHONSE F. LA PORTA •

## Tribalism in the Foreign Service

Dictionary definitions of tribalism are remarkably neutral: a social group based on clan, caste, family or generations; any aggregation of people under chiefly authority; or group having a common character or occupation.

Negative values have taken over the meaning of the word in recent years. We speak of destructive tribalism in Africa and other parts of the world, inferior tribal characteristics such as "backwardness," or internecine warfare within tribal notions.

It is also becoming in vogue to define tribalism in the Foreign Service as a self-defeating value, excessive identification with others in one's group, or inability to get the job done because of splits and schisms.

Caste, class and clan seem to be thriving in today's Foreign Service, with

- interagency rivalries;
- senior versus mid-level officers and both versus junior officers;
- specialists versus generalists;
- Civil Service versus Foreign Service;
- antagonism from officers in other cones toward "elitist" political officers;
- rivalries pitting those who come into the Service via the examination route and those who didn't;
- splits which put allegedly privileged minorities against the majority, or the converse, "reverse discrimination" which pits majority populations - such as white males - against minorities.

And, of course, there is the age-old conflict of management versus employees.

That we are a tribe, even a loose collection of tribes, under a single authority is not disputed. But when

public service is undergoing enormous budgetary, political and management stress, is our cohesiveness as a tribe doomed?

*"Caste, class and clan seem to be thriving in today's Foreign Service...."*

"Scarcity thinking" pervades Foreign Service life. Fighting for advancement, assignments, even benefits, is viewed as a "zero sum" game. Budgets go down and warfare among groups and agencies becomes more intense.

The professional responsibility of staffing the foreign affairs function, when the existence of the Foreign Service is itself under threat, transcends agency and other allegiances. This is not purely rhetoric, nor should it be taken lightly. The good news, if the Foreign Service is to continue as a truly professional and distinct entity, is that there are remedies:

Improve professional standards. Make the examination system more effective by selecting for skills, needs and success factors. Resist politicization. Develop in-service certification through training. Promote management skills and performance criteria.

Value other disciplines. Preserve effective public diplomacy and foreign assistance capabilities, setting aside interagency rivalries.

Promote a single Foreign Service. Strengthen common features and policies; harmonize conditions of service, promotion and separation; strengthen management practices.

Enhance multifunctionality. Encourage cross-career assignments and training to achieve better skills utilization and job satisfaction. Integrate functionality. Meritfully consolidate logistics, generic administrative operations, and employee services within the Department and among foreign affairs agencies.

We must cure our tribalism.

## FSGB UPHOLD IN COURT

Continued from page 1

institutional safeguard," said AFSA President F. A. "Tex" Harris. "It guarantees all FS employees due process and fair treatment and puts them on an equal footing with the rest of the federal work force." Civil Service employees who are fired have the right to review by an independent body, the Merit System Protection Board.

The case first came to the attention of AFSA in 1990 when the FSO, who requested anonymity, asked for legal help when the department proposed firing her. In 1989 the FSO had pled guilty to charges that she falsified claims for reimbursement to the U.S. government. She received a three-year suspended sentence, four years probation, a \$5,000 fine and was ordered to return government funds. Following the guilty plea, the acting director general of the Foreign Service wanted to fire her from the Service. She requested a grievance board hearing. The board decided that discharging her would violate the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which protects federal employees from discrimination based on handicap, since her conduct was due to alcoholism, a disability under the act. By firing her after the board found no cause for separation, Secretary Christopher challenged the authority of the FSGB and contended that he had the authority to overrule board "recommendations," as he had under the 1946 Act.

In a telephone interview, the FSO said she does not want the court's decision to be seen as a victory for improper behavior. "The only reason I was involved in the case was my own wrongdoing," she said. "Even though it was a serious wrong, I was a good Foreign Service officer, and I decided to do all I could to salvage my job. I am grateful that there was a provision in the law that allowed me compassion and mercy." During the nine years it took for the entire case to work its way up through the Court of Appeals, she participated in a 12-step program that meets daily at the State Department. "I did the best I could with the help of my attorney, AFSA, the Department of State's medical office and my 12-step group," she said. "The experience has made me extremely humble and taught me that there are wonderful people in the State Department."

## LETTERS

To the Editor:

I was disappointed with AFSA's decision to memorialize Commerce Secretary Ron Brown et al with a permanent plaque in the lobby of the Department ("AFSA News" June). It would have been more appropriate to have made that gesture in Mr. Brown's own headquarters building.

Will AFSA now also consider taking steps to similarly memorialize the Foreign Service nationals who have lost their lives while serving the U. S. government?

Bernard J. Woerz

FSO retired

Miller Place, NY

To the Editor:

AFSA's decision to honor Mr. Collohan and Mr. Treacy with its annual awards is commendable (AFSA News July), and undoubtedly appreciated by a membership that looks to its union for support under these circumstances. But your membership might ask where its union was in 1994 and 1995 when this public statement on behalf of two embattled employees would have been more resonant. Today it is laudatory, but it comes on the heels of a formal probe and a public reprimand by the secretary of state.

Allegra M. Sensenig

Arlington, Va.

Tex Harris replies:

AFSA spoke out twice. First, internally and then, publicly. The circumstances dictate the method of defending members' rights and due process, but not whether we act. That is a given.

## It Pays To Study

The 1996 winners of the Matildo W. Sinclaire Awards for distinction in the study of a hard language, who will receive checks for \$1,000, are:

John C. Bradshaw, Burmese  
Richard Brown (USIA), Azeri  
Louise Gould (USIA), Burmese  
Lisa Helling (USIA), Lithuanian  
Jeffrey Hovenier, Croatian  
Richard Huff, Hebrew  
Jonathon Moore, Lithuanian  
Joan Marie Richards, Hindi  
Monish Nondy, Nepali  
Kurt D. Volker, Hungarian

# AID V.P. VOICE • BY FRANK MILLER •

## AID Tackles Life After RIFs

As we enter the second month of RIFs, AFSA's priorities are helping RIFed employees find new jobs and assisting employees who believe they were RIFed improperly. We have helped create a promising transition and support program, but we are still grappling with many questions arising from the conduct of RIFs.

RIFed employees who completed an initial one-week session of the Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) report that the program is off to a good start. Moreover, they say that peer counseling has helped with the pain and shock of RIF notices. Still, as our RIFed colleagues spend the next weeks fine-tuning their resumes and brushing up on interviewing skills, AFSA members should be thinking of ways to help them. We can start by identifying private sector companies and non-governmental organizations with job openings now or in the future. AFSA has encouraged management to contact other agencies and international organizations, but we must be even more active.

We need contacts. Please help us by sending names, addresses and contact persons who can give us background information on firms and the kinds of positions they may have now or in the future. If you send me this information by e-mail or fax, I'll get it to the right people in human resources.

AFSA has also been negotiating with AID to establish a re-employment priority list to give first consideration to former FS employees in filling regular, limited career and

personal services contract positions that cannot be filled from within USAID. RIFed employees will be able to use their primary as well as secondary skill codes on the list.

While management has been responsive in creating a promising CTAP program that should get results, we are now working with them to resolve issues that surfaced after the RIF. For example, I and the AFSA labor-management staff have met with many RIFed employees who believe that they were

improperly placed in primary skill codes, and were therefore RIFed by mistake. Others want to know why most RIFs took place in the FS-02, FS-01, and FE-OC grades. AFSA has requested that management provide us with the statistical data and criteria it used to determine RIFs so that we can answer those questions.

Finally, AFSA is concerned about protection of International Development Interns at the cost of seasoned officers. We sent a letter to AID in which we voiced our concerns and said that this, along with public statements by Agency officials, could present a case of age discrimination. Since management has not responded, we are consulting with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) legal department.

While many of these issues will not be resolved easily, we are working with management to ensure the quick correction of technical errors and to resolve RIF cases so that employees will be spared a lengthy and draining grievance process.

*"AFSA is concerned about protection of International Development Interns in RIFs at the cost of seasoned officers."*

# USIA V.P. VOICE

• BY BRUCE BYERS •

## The Year of RIFs

For more than a year since being elected AFSA USIA vice president, I have grappled with unprecedented issues challenging the Foreign Service, including AFSA's response to USIA RIF regulations, two government shut-downs and an AFSA protest at the State Department. I've also negotiated the first RIF of Foreign Service employees under the 1994 amendment to the 1980 Foreign Service Act and dealt with the realities of downsizing at USIA, especially here in Washington.

Last fall, when USIA proposed RIF regulations, my job was to build a consensus among FSOs about how AFSA should reply to them. Since RIF regulations mean that people will lose their jobs, that was not an easy process. However, AFSA had a constructive dialogue with management. As a result, we were able to propose recommendations, most of which management accepted. There were no surprises when the final RIF regulations came out. Now, as problems arise we will be prepared to look at regulations in light of real experience and apply them to real people's careers. We will also continue to address employees' RIF problems and questions about standing an retention registers. We also want your suggestions.

During the budget uncertainties of the last year and a half, we avoided a RIF of Foreign Service generalists because there were more voluntary and involuntary Foreign Service officer retirements. My personal thanks goes to col-

leagues who chose to retire; you have done much to preserve the Foreign Service at USIA. Regrettably, a number of outstanding FSOs retired involuntarily. We are poorer for their departure.

Last September, in an effort to avoid RIFs, I suggested to Department of State Undersecretary for Management Richard Maase that untenured USIA junior officers who were already cleared and trained could easily be converted to State junior officers. USIA Director Duffey and Counselor Danna Oglesby negotiated an agreement with State for the conversion, saving not only junior officers, but others who would have surely been RIFed. Although this was a tough, unpopular decision, I believe it saved careers.

Foreign Service Overseas Specialists in the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) were not so lucky. For more than two months I devoted my energies to unprecedented negotiations and reached an agreement which saved 40 percent of the positions the IBB had wanted to eliminate. The negotiations demonstrated AFSA's seriousness and determination to reach a fair agreement in accordance with USIA's own RIF regulations and we were able to secure benefits for employees who will lose their jobs at IBB. It was the toughest Washington assignment I have had, but I leave knowing that I saved people's careers.

I now turn the vice presidency over to Jess Bailey, who has already done outstanding work on the AFSA board. He will need our full support.

*"A number of outstanding FSOs retired involuntarily."*

## AFSA DATELINE

Continued from page 1

pasted to Honduras. Fernandez, a USIA retiree, will also chair the Public Affairs Standing Committee. Bayatt, the new Treasurer, is an independent foreign affairs consultant and former AFSA President. Garber Davidsan, a former USAID vice president, became retiree representative to the board, replacing Tam Bayatt.

- In a pre-election push, COLEAD is lobbying the Republican and Democratic parties to adopt platform planks affirming that American engagement abroad is necessary for U.S. interests and security and that American leadership in the world requires adequate resources rather than congressional budget cuts. If you would like to get involved, contact Harry Blaney at AFSA (800) 704-2372, ext. 519.

- Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D.-N.J.) has introduced the "Lame Ducks Can't Fly Act" aimed at curbing junkets by retiring congressional members or members of a lame-duck administration. If the legislation passes, soon-to-be-retired lawmakers and political appointees will not be allowed to travel overseas at taxpayers' expense in the six months before their terms end. Lautenberg credited AFSA's policy statement as "reinventing overseas travel" for giving him the idea for the legislation.

- Congress has still not acted on USAID's request to permit buyouts for non-RIFed employees. If legislation is approved, it is likely that buyouts will only be offered to employees in surplus categories impacted by the RIF. In addition, it would require employees who take buyouts and then return to work for the government to repay the buyout within five years. AFSA conducted a poll of members and found that some 75 USAID employees would be interested in buyouts.

- Grievances related to RIFs are limited by law to cases of reprisal, interference in the conduct of an

Continued on page 5

## AFSA DATELINE

Continued from page 4

employee's official duties or similarly inappropriate use of the RIF authority. AFSA believes employees can file grievances if they can find an error or omission in their performance files. USAID management disagrees, but it is not clear how the FSGB will interpret the law. Still, RIFed employees may file RIF-related grievances only up to their date of separation, Sept. 27, 1996.

- AFSA is advocating for several issues important to Foreign Service families, including temporary work assignments; expansion of the leave donation program for pregnant employees returning to the United States to await childbirth and standardizing policy for granting leave-without-pay status to family members transferring to new posts to maintain employment status.

### And then...

*The prime minister's wife  
whispered to the American  
ambassador ...*

The Journal is seeking embassy or diplomatic jokes for an issue on the role of humor and wit in diplomacy. The editors are seeking new jokes, old jokes and reused jokes – the kind that requires only the jokster to drap in another country's name to revamp it for local use. Contributors' names are welcome, but not required.

For your favorite joke to: Editors at FSJ at (202) 338-8244, or e-mail it to [Journal@AFSA.org](mailto:Journal@AFSA.org).

DEADLINE: Sept. 15

### Did you hear...

*the one about the DCM  
and the geisha girl  
who got stuck in  
the sand storm?*

## RETIREE V.P. VOICE • BY ED ROWELL •

### Foreign Affairs Review Needed

AFSA's dual roles as professional organization and member services organization often tug in different directions. Lately we've been playing catch-up on the professional side of the ledger with the formation of our Committee on Professionalism. Mandated in May, the committee held two meetings in June and has scheduled more for July. The committee's first purpose is to provide arguments and analyses to help AFSA's public affairs, legislative and other committees make their cases before the public and Congress. We are operating on the premise that while vision without action is a daydream, action without vision is a nightmare.

The committee's first products should appear soon. They include the long-awaited U. S. Foreign Service motto and mission statement and a paper on what makes the Foreign Service a profession. Although the content of these documents may seem self-evident to many of you, if that were the case the Foreign Service and the foreign affairs agencies would not be facing budget disasters. We plan to have the ideas to you after the November elections for a major post-election foreign affairs review. If you have thoughts, please send them to us now. The American Academy of Diplomacy, the Coalition for American Leadership Abroad (COLEAD) and many other organizations are pushing for such a national foreign affairs review.

In talks with congressional staffers, I sense the beginnings of

uneasiness over the depth of foreign affairs budget cuts. All this underscores the importance of carrying out the campaign for a review. Your help on the local level next fall with

newly elected members of Congress will be critical.

On the member services side of the ledger you should pay sharp attention to new initiatives to limit retirees' cost of living adjustments (COLAs). An initial effort by Sen. Hank Brown (R-Calif.) to eliminate COLAs on portions of annuities over \$75,000 died in committee. A subsequent amendment which would have set the limit at

\$50,000 was introduced by Sen. Robert Kerrey (D-Neb.) and supported by Sen. Charles Rabb (D-Vt.). It was tabled indefinitely in a 63-36 floor vote. The issue will come back. In the House there has been talk of a cap as low as \$19,000. The clear objective is to eliminate COLAs altogether.

That is why retiree groups, including the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), fought so hard against the Brown and Kerrey amendments even though the vast majority of their members currently receive annuities well below the proposed caps. Eventually everyone will suffer. For those who retired from the Foreign Service before the Thrift Savings Plan and before federal employees could qualify for Social Security, this effort to change our retirement benefits is an effort to change, orbitarily and after the fact, the contracts under which we labored.

*"We plan to  
have the ideas to  
you after the  
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## F O C U S

*Ambler navigated the baking moonscape, thanking all the powers that he always wore his favorite hiking boots, even in his rare ambassadorial or ministerial audiences.*

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boulders, sand, scrubby desert vegetation and wind-blasted laterite were all Ambler saw. Climbing the tallest rock formation, his hands now raw from such exertion, he squinted in all directions. Finally, he noticed a slight movement on the far eastern horizon and he knew he had to go for it. Without water, he wouldn't last until tomorrow; without food he wouldn't make it much beyond that.

Reconnoitering wherever he could climb up to get a fix on the place where he had seen the movement, Ambler navigated the baking moonscape, thanking all the powers that he always wore his favorite hiking boots, even in his rare ambassadorial or ministerial audiences. Finally, he rounded an outcrop of sandstone and saw what had caught his attention.

Some 20 meters up a gentle slope, a boy with shining blue-black skin and a huge smile waved to him. A beautiful baby goat gambled on the rocks above the boy and Ambler realized that it had been the goat that had caught his attention from his first lookout point. The boy's cotton boubou of dyed deep blue indigo was simple but well-made. When he stood up to greet the sweating American, it was clear he was a healthy, strapping lad, showing no signs of malnutrition or ill health.

"What took you so long, Mr. Ambler? I've been waiting since morning when the storm subsided," the boy said in perfect unaccented American English. Ambler's face registered his astonishment, both about what the boy said and the language he used.

"Oh, I see you didn't expect me to speak your tongue. The old ones of my village sent me with this charm, which allows us to communicate with whomever we meet in the way most comprehensible to them." The boy held out a palm-sized mask of simple design, carved in a beautiful deep brown wood.

"My name is Aboubacar and I am the first son of the first wife of our leader, Mamadou Traore. But I forget your situation; please drink this water and eat

this rice and sauce." From behind him, the boy produced a calabasse of clear water and a large banana leaf which he unrolled to reveal steaming rice with a rich sauce on top. The American had no inhibitions as he swilled the sweet water and scooped the rice, handful after handful, until he was satiated. Ambler even found succulent chunks of capitaine, his favorite fish, in the sauce.

"My God, Aboubacar, I am so grateful for your generosity," Ambler babbled as soon as he had enough strength and his throat was no longer constricted by suffocating thirst. "I would have died without it, for sure. Who are you and why are you here, and, for that matter, where is the airplane that brought me here?"

"The elders were correct as always, they knew you would have many questions. Please accept my company, but wait until we are with them before you have answers. Now we should be off. As it is, we'll barely reach home before nightfall." With that, the boy started off at a brisk pace over the crest of the rise, the goat prancing and dashing ahead, only to return every so often to nuzzle the boy's hand.

Ambler, thinking he might have trouble keeping up, found that, to the contrary, he felt years younger and had no problem striding alongside the youth. He kept wondering where he actually was and how in creation he had gotten here, but he felt so good and the day seemed so beautiful, that he easily kept his silence and walked with this wonderful child.

From the angle of the sun, Ambler figured it was about an hour before sunset as they mounted the tallest rock-strewn laterite ridge. He couldn't believe what he saw below: a lush valley with green fields surrounded by carefully built irrigation bunds. To the north was a classic Malinke village with absolutely pristine mud-brick walls filled with rounded turrets of what he guessed were mens' and womens' houses and smaller granaries.

## F O C U S

"Yes, Mr. Ambler, our village is beautiful. I would even say there are none more so. Please come with me to greet the elders. We only have a short distance to go." They descended the worn but well-maintained path into the verdant oasis. Once on the valley floor, they walked single file over the bunds through bountiful fields of millet and sorghum and rice. Beautiful and healthy women enthusiastically greeted Ambler and the boy. Aboubacar cried out over and over that he was with their good friend, Mr. Ambler. The American swore he heard Malinke greetings from the villagers, but that he had no difficulty understanding the language with which he had only rudimentary familiarity.

As they passed through the wooden gates of the village, the boy veered sharply to his left and led the way to the largest structure. Ambler gazed around at the tidiest village he had ever seen anywhere in the world. A large, handsome, middle-aged man emerged,

dressed in the most incredible indigo boubou embroidered with what appeared to be pure golden filigree.

"Welcome, Mr. Ambler. It is a rare pleasure for us to greet outsiders. We live a rather isolated existence for reasons we shall soon explain. Come, let me not delay further in offering the comfort of the shade of our baobab." The elder took the American by the elbow and guided him to a solid wooden bench carved out of one of the flying buttresses of the oddly welcoming tree. The chief introduced Ambler to six elders, equally robust and well-dressed. As he greeted them, they passed him a calabasse of a frothy drink slightly alcoholic and completely satisfying. Under the spreading branches of the baobab, they all smiled and sipped in turn after the guest. Ambler had never felt more at peace with himself, or with the world for that matter.

Then the chief spoke: "Mr. Ambler, we will not keep you long and will explain our purpose in delay-

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## F O C U S

ing your homeward journey. My son has told you that I am Mamadou Traore and the leader of this village. We are what you would probably call spirits and inhabit a world with which very few mortals have contact. Our function, as you Americans might analytically put it, is to maintain the essence of our people. When our people enter their sacred groves, it is us to whom they speak and proffer their sacrifices. When they don their masks and dance and sing, our spirits fill them and exalt with them in their happiness. And we console them in their despair. You are a total outsider to our people, but we have observed your progress in understanding our ways.

"Our message to you is simple thanks. We know you have strived mightily to keep the material existence of the Malinke from deteriorating, even trying to improve it through what you call 'development.' Because of who and what we are, the outcome of that process, as you call it, has no meaning. Do not

despair of that as you are a mortal and must take actions and accept consequences in ways irrelevant to us. We have called you here to recognize the wealth of your spirit and those of your ancestors who formed you. We also want to offer you our help in attaining peace and in valuing yourself. Go now from us and know that there are those who see the good man you are and who recognize what you have contributed."

A red mist poured down from the baobab tree, covering the elders and the village, as Ambler, suddenly exultant, started to get to his feet to acknowledge how much the chief's words had meant to him. But instead, he found himself rising from his seat on the airplane, as it shook and bucked from the powerful red storm that covered all the portholes. As suddenly as it had appeared, the dust receded and the plane returned to the semblance of a normal trajectory. Tears of joy, pent up by years of cynicism and self-denigration, flooded Ambler's eyes. ■

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# COLD WAR BLUES

By DIANA DEVERELL

A low-slung black shadow smashed against the front left fender with a thump and shatter of glass. The headlight beam shot up at a crazy angle and my seat belt snapped hard against the bone between my breasts. I fought the steering wheel while Marine Cpl. Matt Barnes braced himself, one hand on the dash, the other on his door. The ear lured to a halt, still upright. The engine choked and died. It was a bitter January night and we were somewhere in western Poland returning home from U.S. Consulate Poznan to U.S. Embassy Warsaw.

Matt pulled off his glove, ran a hand across the blond stubble on his head. "Casey, you okay?"

I managed a nod. "You?"

"Banged my shin a little." He unclasped his seat belt, pulled the glove back onto his hand and shouldered open his door. "Better see what we hit."

I fumbled in the glove box for a flashlight and tried to open my door. It was wedged shut by a snowdrift. I climbed over the gear shift and out the passenger-side door.

We'd ended up 10 feet from the road in a drainage ditch, separated from the tarmac by a frozen snowbank. I scrambled up it after Matt and crossed to where he knelt. The flashlight batteries were weak but the illumination was enough.

"A pig," I said. "I hit a damn pig."

"Funny looking pig."

I moved the dim circle of light over the bristly back, the elongated snout, the erect and pointed ears. "Wild boar. Lived in the woods." I shoved the flashlight under my arm and grabbed a rear trotter. "We better get him off the road."

Matt elbowed me aside and took a leg in each hand. He grunted and heaved the carcass onto the snowbank. Then we both turned to study my ear.

Matt was a couple of inches taller than my 5-foot 9, built thick and solid like an Olympic wrestler. He'd tossed that 150-pound pig like a sack of potatoes. But not even a muscular 22-year-old Marine was going to get my car back on the road. The damage wasn't bad — a few dents and a smashed headlight — and the engine started right up again when I turned the ignition. But the ear was stuck in a drifted-over ditch with a snowbank between it and the road. I'd need a powerful tow to get out of there.

I slapped my hands against my arms, then slid back my parka sleeve to check my watch. Nine o'clock. We both stared into the chill emptiness. I remembered

passing Kutno which meant we were at least two hours from our destination, apparently smack dab in the middle of nowhere. If there were any farms nearby, the inhabitants had blown out their candles, banked their stoves and gone to sleep. My toes were starting to ache. The temperature was already in the teens.



JASON LEVINSON

## F O C U S

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*After a few seconds, he said, "You don't think I'm crazy?"  
I reached back and patted his hard thigh. "No crazier  
than the rest of us. Promise you'll call me?"*

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No traffic had passed on the E-8 during the 10 minutes we'd been stuck. The Milicja's blue-and-white police cars had been on our tail in each of the larger towns we'd gone through. They might send someone looking for us. Not because they feared for our safety. But to discover if we were passing cash to the Solidarity underground. Or maybe detouring north to Torun to photograph the well-fenced and heavily guarded excavation reputed to be the future underground headquarters for a Soviet western front.

I stomped around to the rear of the car and opened the back window. I didn't have the required emergency triangles that might have drawn the Milicja to us. Only a worn double sleeping bag, a relic from the days before I followed my new career path to the loveless Antarctica of the Warsaw embassy, this self-styled family post where the security officer's admonition to "Sleep NATO" meant women officers over 30 slept alone. I had about as much chance of meeting my soul mate in Warsaw as the average Pole had of getting a visa to Disney World.

I touched the rough canvas cover of my sleeping bag. It was guaranteed to -20 Fahrenheit. I reached through the back opening to unhook the rear seatback and fold it forward to enlarge the cargo area. "Guess we're stuck here 'till morning," I said to Matt.

"What, you planning to run the heater all night?"

"Not enough gas. But if we both get in there and pile our coats over us, we won't freeze."

I urged Matt in first, then climbed in after him and pulled the window shut. We spooned ourselves into the bag, our upper bodies partly draped over the front

seat backs, our lower halves snaked around in the rear. I watched the steam on the windows turn to frost, a curtain of lacy ice flowers dropping between us and the outside world.

Matt said, "Do you think they'll come looking for us?"

His chest vibrated against my back and his breath tickled my ear. "Nobody's expecting me to bring the pouch in tonight," I said. "But don't you have bed check or something?"

"Not so Mickey Mouse as that. A guy's not on duty, he just has to leave a number where they can reach him. One of my buddies sees my name with no number beside it, he'll figure I got lucky. Put down your number beside my name."

"My number?" My voice squeaked, I was so upset. I was lonely, sure, but I wasn't interested in a one-night stand with a horny Marine a whole lot younger than me. And I didn't want anyone to think I was.

Hurriedly, Matt said, "I'll set 'em straight in the morning."

I made a disgusted noise. "Not such a great system. I'd rather have someone worry about me when I don't come home."

"Yeah, well tonight I would too." He paused. "Truth is, I mostly stick around the Marine House."

"Plenty of company there," I said, thinking of the stream of Western nannies and secretaries that ebbed and flowed through the Marines' living room.

"I'm not really into the party scene. I'd rather watch videos. Lift weights. Sleep a lot. Ride shotgun for a good-looking budget officer doing a pouch run."

"That didn't turn out to be your best move."

He laughed. "Maybe not. So what do you do in your spare time?"

"About the same as you. Read novels instead of pumping iron. Though you could probably tell that."

"You're in pretty good shape."

---

*Diana Deverell is a former FSO now living in Eugene, Ore., with her husband, Mogens Pederson, and their three children. She served in San Salvador, Warsaw and Washington, D.C. This is her fifth piece of published fiction.*

## F O C U S

He was so close I could smell his aftershave. Brut — my favorite. I needed to put at least some kind of distance between us, fast. I opted for changing the subject. "How do you like your job?"

He was quiet for a minute. "Not what I expected."

"What do you mean?"

"Thought it'd be more ceremonial stuff."

"You guys look pretty ceremonial to me, out front in your dress uniforms."

"That's only the guys who work days. One shift out of three. The other two aren't like that."

"What's the problem?"

"Mids," he said. "Mids is the problem."

"What's so bad about mids?"

He didn't answer right way. "Nothing. Forget I said anything."

There was so much strain in his voice, I couldn't let it go. "Something's bothering you."

When he finally spoke again, his voice was softer, almost conspiratorial. "Promise you won't tell anyone."

Curious, I promised.

In that hushed voice, he told me about mids. From midnight until four, Matt sat in the embassy lobby behind floor-to-ceiling glass, the pale gleam of Warsaw's street lights competing with the embassy's brighter security lights to cast warped and misleading shadows on the lawn outside. The dark hulk of the Bulgarian embassy loomed next door, topped with the long-distance microphones of the Sluzba Bezpieczenstwa, the SB, Poland's KGB clone.

While Matt sat on display at his post, his buddy Shawn roved the embassy, ferreting out mischief, checking in via walkie-talkie. That was the rover's job, but Shawn avoided the eerie walk through the deserted building whenever he could get away with it. He holed up in an empty office behind a closed door to catch a nap, disappear for two and three hours at a time.

"I feel like I'm the only one there," Matt whispered. "The only living person in the whole world. And I keep thinking of my .45." His voice was almost inaudible. "It's like my hand wants to take out that gun, click off the safety, and stick the barrel in my mouth. I don't want to kill myself. I just don't know if I can stop my hand."

My chest felt tight, as though I couldn't get enough air. At Annapolis and West Point and Colorado Springs, there's always someone eager to show you the spots where boys have blown their brains out. Alone in the dark with a weapon and no one to stop them. Solitary guard duty can be lethal for adolescents. And Matt was barely 22.

"You right-handed?" I asked.

"Yeah, but —"

"Next time you feel like that, you pick up the phone with your right hand and you call me."

"Call you?"

"Dial my number. My phone's next to my bed. I'll answer."

"But what'll I say?"

"Hello, how are you? This is what I did today. Anything you don't mind the SB catching on tape. Anything at all. Just pick up that phone and call me."

"You want me to —"

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## F O C U S

"Call me. And remember. Phone in the right hand."

Air came out of him in a sigh. We both knew I couldn't stop him from eating his gun. But at least I'd given him one little thing to do first. I felt some of the tension go out of him and his body relaxed behind mine.

After a few seconds, he said, "You don't think I'm crazy?"

"No crazier than the rest of us." I reached back and patted his hard thigh. "Promise you'll call me?"

He promised, but I wasn't sure he meant it. Then we both said good night and gave up on conversation. His breathing evened out almost at once, as though unburdening himself had worked as a barbiturate. The warmth of his body and the steady rise and fall of his chest at my back was soothing and I must have dropped off a few minutes later. I didn't wake until just before dawn. When it was finally light enough to see, I discovered that we were fewer than a hundred yards

from a squat cinderblock farmhouse. After another 15 minutes, we saw smoke rising from the chimney.

We crunched across the drifted field toward the house, our breath white in the air before us, the air so cold it had no smell at all. When I knocked at the splintery wooden door, a gnarled man cracked it open a few inches. His weathered face would have looked right on an 80-year-old, but his hair was thick and dark, without a strand of gray.

"*Przepraszam*," I began, wineing. I always sounded like Donald Duck when I used the Polish word for "Excuse me." I gestured toward the ear behind me. "*Samochod* ..." I couldn't remember how to say broken. "*Samochod*," I repeated, moving my right hand through the air like a car traveling down the road. I moved my left hand toward it while I said the word I'd seen on restaurant menus for wild boar: "*Dzik*." I crashed my right hand into the left. "Boom," I said, shaking my head. "*Samochod kaput*."

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## F O C U S

The man's wrinkled face split into a gap-toothed smile. "*Amerykanka.*" He turned and shouted over his shoulder. "*Amerykanka.*"

"Tak." I nodded along with the affirmative. "*Proszę, Pana. Proszę pomoc.*" Please help.

He jerked on an overall and mobilized his wife, a stubby woman layered in skirts and kerchiefs, with a face as ancient as his. She was so bundled up that I didn't realize at first she was at least six months pregnant. Five or six thin-faced children assembled behind her in the doorway. She thrust an infant into the arms of a lanky dark-haired girl, then cuffed a tow-headed boy in the ear so that he turned and ran. He was soon back with a piece of chain and a canvas bag that he handed to the man. The farmer and his wife hurried outside, waved us toward the car, and scrambled off to the wooden lean-to.

They reappeared with an elderly draft horse wearing a much-mended harness and pulling a piece of metal that looked like the rear bumper of a truck.

"I better make sure he doesn't rip off your undercarriage," Matt said, stepping toward the farmer.

But the man ignored him. He pulled a red-orange clevis out of the bag, threaded one end of the chain onto it and secured the clevis to the bumper with a cotter pin. A matching hook in the same red-orange shade was attached to the other end of the chain. The farmer lay down on the snow, looked under my car, and expertly attached the hook at the depression designed for towing.

"I better get behind the wheel," I said to Matt.

"I'll do it."

But the farmer's wife got there before either of us. She pulled open the passenger's door, dragged herself onto the passenger's seat, depressed the clutch with her left foot and shoved the gearshift into neutral. She released the parking brake and positioned herself to steer the car with her left hand.

"They seem to know what they're doing," Matt said, sounding as surprised as I felt.

Using the horse, the chain and a lot of incomprehensible Polish, the farmer eased the car back onto the road.

"*Dziękuję bardzo,*" I said, waving a \$5 bill at him.

Instead of taking it, he passed me a grimy square of white cardboard. On one side was a hand-drawn

picture of a massive tow truck, depicted to look as large as the front end of a semi, vibrantly colored in electric shades of blue and cerise. On the reverse were sums of money in several different currencies. He pointed at the numbers next to the dollar sign.

"*Dziesięć dolarów,*" he demanded. That was \$10.

It dawned on me then that the clevis and hook were the same color as a popular Russian-built tractor. There were advantages in living next to the major east-west route across central Europe. Especially for someone running a hard-currency business. I pulled out another five and added it to the first. "*Proszę bardzo.*" The farmer bowed elegantly.

I looked in the rearview mirror as we rolled east and saw him hitching the horse to the dead pig, his wife hopping around and waving her arms, obviously instructing him in the best way to save the unrationed meat. Even after more than 40 years of communist government, capitalism was still thriving in Poland.

I pulled up in front of the Marine house at about 8 a.m. and said goodbye.

Matt didn't open his car door. When he spoke, he didn't look at me. "About what I said last night? I didn't mean it. Forget it, okay?"

"No way," I said. "You call me." I intended the words to have the force of a command. But my voice came out too soft, too feminine. I wish I could say I sounded maternal. But there was a huskiness there that wasn't motherly.

He still didn't look at me, but when he spoke it was in quite a different tone. "So you'd like me to call you?"

Flirting with me. I felt a little zing of pleasure, but I resisted the temptation to flirt back. "And make sure you tell the rest of the guys what really happened last night," I said sternly. "You didn't get lucky with the budget officer."

He faced me then, his smile so sweet I had to look away. "You want me to lie?"

I swallowed. Something was getting started that I hadn't planned on.

Something — if I was honest — that I didn't want to interrupt. I gave in to that pleasurable zing and smiled back. "Maybe we both got lucky," I said, "in the most Polish sense of the word." ■

# THE METAL MAN

BY JERRY LUJAN

The sun hung in the harmattan sky like a plump orange. However, the man could barely feel the warm sun on his skin. His senses, dulled by a damaged brain, only told him he was now more comfortable than he was in the dark period, the period when he slept. His fingers, as bloated as blood sausages, couldn't feel the grit of the Sahara sand moving through the air.

H.P. was tall but thin. He was ageless, neither young nor old. A pair of tattered shorts covered his loins. Nothing on his chest nor feet. His fingers, wrists and arms were tightly wound with copper wires. Bands of metal cut into his calves and his ankles. A discarded movie film reel hung from his neck. His uncut hair was dirty. He was an apparition seen daily by dozens who did not notice him.

His peculiarity as the inhabitant of the stairwell beside U.S. Consulate Kaduna was well-known. The story was that he "owned" the building, given to him by his father or uncle. Of course, the true owner of the building was an Italian and the consulate occupied the offices therein. Both parties considered the man harmless.

The man was as much a part of Kaduna as the Tuaregs in their blue robes and turbans,

swords hanging at their sides and knives strapped to their forearms. He was just a part of the scenery. The donkey carts moved around him and the packs of dogs avoided him. To be sure, he was a harmless apparition.

Instinct told him he must find food. His calloused feet carried him from his building on Ahmadu Bello Way past the Lebanese hardware store, the Indian supermarket and other smaller shops. Continuing up the slight hill, he came to the Kingsway supermarket. He remembered enough to go around the building to the piles of garbage at the rear, away from the busy traffic in front. The east-off vegetables not eaten by the rats or crows would satisfy his hunger temporarily.

Some things change. Seasons change. The harmattan haze gives way to cloudless, hot skies. The man's habits did not change.

One night he must have made a sound, perhaps he rolled over in his sleep and his metal "clothing" made a noise, so the person who had recently moved into an apartment above the consulate filed a complaint.

The first policeman came in the late afternoon. He wasn't confrontative; he spoke quietly, gently, as a father, an uncle, a tribal chief. He spoke convincingly, as he tried to coax the man into his car to take him to the

government agency in Zaria, where he would be cared for.

As the words flowed, he helped the man gather his meager belongings from beneath the stairs. The cardboard pieces for his bed. A bowl and a cup. Bits and pieces of metal. Nothing valuable to anyone but this man. It was his property, just as the building was his. ■



JASON LEVINSON

*Jerry Lujan is a retired FSO who joined the Foreign Service in 1960, serving in Dacca; Lagos; Kaduna, Nigeria; Port-au-Prince; Santiago; Caracas and Santo Domingo. This is his first piece of published fiction.*

# LIKE A ROCK

BY ANTONIA STEARNS

**I**f I hadn't left my tote bag on Mykonos I'd be shopping right now in Istanbul, on that tour I signed up for. Horn's, I think it's called — no, maybe it's Gold & Horn's. But all I'm thinking on the ferry is, how I'm going anywhere without my plastic?

So I start telling this good-looking guy next to me what happened and he turns out to be really helpful, like how I can get off at Tinos, where he's going, and catch a boat back to look for my bag. "No drachs," I explain, patting my hip huggers. Nada. Zip. He pulls out this gold money clip. Nice.

"Be my guest," he says.

Then I'm thinking, what if my tote isn't there? And Petros says that's why he's coming along, in case it isn't. He tells me his name is Petros, which means "Rock," and he tells me a lot of other interesting stuff about Mykonos, before it was spoiled by tourists. I say, "Wait a minute, Rock. I'm a tourist." He says no way. That I look more like the independent type, which is true. How does he know I'm a Sagittarius? He says tourists are old people who go around in groups, with guides. So I decide not to mention the Istanbul part when he asks what places I'm seeing in Greece.

Here's the amazing thing about Rock, I mean Petros: he knows every place like the back of his hand (which has a wedding ring on it, in case you're getting ideas), and I'm like, wow, here's a whole term paper, and me without my power notebook. By the time we dock at

Tinos I'm practically a history major, if I can remember it all. What I do remember is this ancient theater, somewhere, because he gives me a box of matches and says if you strike one on the stage, you can hear it in the top row. Me, I'm skeptical. Besides, you can't prove it without being in two places at the same time. He says I have a very logical mind.

Hold on, that's not a put down. I mean over here, the men are pretty lah-dee-dah about women's rights, sitting around all day while these old ladies wait on them, and dancing by themselves with a glass of water on their

heads. But Petros is different. He carries his own stuff off the boat, plus my suitcase, plus my pelican, which is pretty heavy because it's made of real wood. That's how I forgot my tote in the first place, because I always sling it over my left shoulder. But I was holding Peter instead — that's the name of the real pelican, who's very famous, by the way — and wondering how I was going to lug him around for the rest of the trip. Rock tells me "Peter" is English for "Petros." No kidding, I say. Is this coincidence, or what?

Petros is no slouch in the logic department himself. He installs me at this waterfront cafe, takes out a pen, and says maybe I should write down what's in my bag. Then he offers to telephone Mykonos in advance. He has this friend who can check to see if it's still on the dock, or if it's been turned over to the tourist police, not that I should count on them, he warns me in this serious voice. I write on a



JASON LEVINSON

## FOCUS

*He tells me his name is Petros, which means "Rock,"  
and he tells me a lot of other interesting stuff  
about Mykonos, before it was spoiled by tourists.*

sticky paper table cloth, which is gross if you think too much about germs, but that's what people do here. When in Rome, I always say.

So I put on my thinking cap and make a list: Apple, Visa, Ultramousse. This isn't easy. There's a lot to keep track of. Camcorder, Roloids, Discover, horoscope. I chew on the pen and that reminds me: Pentax, NailFix, passport, organ donor card. "Don't forget money," Petros adds helpfully, and I add pink bills, blue bills, misc. change. That's it — no, I forgot tickets: TWA, Horn & Gold and a discount coupon for the Istanbul bazaar, stall 14. Cindy, this girl in psych class who went last year, she gave it to me. I want to go first thing, because she got this gorgeous stud for her navel.

Petros is gone the longest time, but I guess that's natural since it's a big list and he has to translate and everything. So I order two bottles of mineral water and the waiter gives me a funny look because he thinks the other one is for the pelican.

The bad news, not that I wasn't expecting it, is that the police don't have my tote. "But they're looking for it," Roek says in this reassuring way he has. "And they'll call if they find it."

"Call?" I ask. "I don't have a cellular."

"No," he says, "Athens." It turns out he knows this apartment there, and I'm like suspicious for a minute, until he explains it belongs to his sister. But I'm thinking I'd better go to the U.S. embassy in Athens, which is what the travel agent told me to do if I got stuck anywhere, and we're talking serious stuck here. "They'll take care of you," the agent had told me, "Just tell them it's your taxes."

"Suit yourself," Petros says, kind of disappointed. Then he claps his forehead, and remembers I may have

a problem here, because embassies won't let you in without identification.

Yikes. The only identification on me is this mole — wouldn't you know it, right above my bikini line, but I'm watching it carefully and using 47-strength sunsreen. That reminds me that I forgot to put sunsreen on the list, so I ask Roek to call Mykonos again, only he's not listening because he's getting humongously worried about whether I'll be OK by myself, which is really sweet. He's very knowledgeable about Athens and how all this riff-raff is taking over. It's a shame, because once they were poor and honest, but today you can't trust anybody, not even the police.

I'm hearing so many horror stories I start to hyperventilate until I remember my stress-breathing exercises, and while I'm doing them Petros leans over and tells me to relax, because he's got this nifty idea about how to solve my problems: He's coming with me to Athens.

Well I'm touched, I sincerely am, and maybe a little tempted, but I tell him this might make things complicated, I mean with his wife waiting for him at home, and so on. He sort of turns away and starts elenching his jaw, like Clint Eastwood. I see guys do that all the time in Sensitivity Training and right away I go, uh-oh, hurt feelings.

Well, how am I to know I put my foot in it? He sits there about a zillion seconds, squeezing the tears back and rubbing his ring finger. Then he turns around and says in this choked voice, "She's dead." I feel like two cents. "In the earthquake," he mumbles. He's crying now. "She had gone to the village, to visit her mother." He wipes his eyes and points to this mountain. I see a lot of sugar eube houses along the ridge. They look kind of familiar, so maybe I caught it on CNN.

"Gosh, that's tough," is all I can manage, "You must feel really terrible."

He shakes his head, saying he'll feel better on the boat.

So we sit up all night on the Ajax — what a dumb name for a dirty boat — and by now I could do with

---

*Antonia Stearns is a freelance writer in Framingham, Mass., and the spouse of retired FSO Monteagle Stearns, who served three tours in Greece, the last as ambassador from 1981-85. This is her first published piece of fiction.*

## F O C U S

some floss, but who am I to complain while this poor widower is buying me cheese sandwiches and being oh so manly about his personal tragedy? He shrugs, and all the feedback I'm getting is: Let's talk about you. When he lights up (without asking, but hey, he probably needs it right now), I tell him about grief counseling, and how it really helped me after the Oklahoma City bombing. I mean, for the longest time I couldn't drive by the post office, or any building with a U.S. flag on it. But all Petros asks is if I'm from Oklahoma City, and I go, good grief, do I look like somebody from Oklahoma?

Where I never want to come from is Athens, which is major gridlock at 6 in the morning, and full of drivers who could learn a lot from Sensitivity Training. I think my late night talk about letting out grief is working, though, because Rock is holding my hand and saying I'm the first person he can relate to since the earthquake. "Sometimes I want to kill myself," he groans, on the way to his sister's apartment. We're in this taxi, which is running so many lights he may not have to, and I'm thinking hey, if I pull him out of his depression I might get extra credit for casework.

Only I'm the one who's sleepy. His sister has this black leather sofa in front of the AV system, so I sit down on it and hope I don't crash before Rock introduces me to her. "She's out," he says, even though it's like 7 a.m. "Make yourself at home," he says. "Want a shower?"

"Where?" I ask. He opens the bathroom door. "I mean your sister," I say, yawning.

"Oh," he says. "She had to take her little boy to the doctor." I look around for toys, but there aren't any, and the coffee table has all this breakable stuff on it.

"He must be a good little boy," I say, and tell him my sister has a 3-year-old, too, only she has to strip the living room when Jason's in it, but that's also because he's got this advanced case of ADDs.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but all of a sudden there's bad vibes between us. Petros looks really shocked. "And he's only 3?" he asks. I nod, telling him he was probably born with it because the doctor says it runs in the family. I'm half asleep now and wondering why he's so hyper about Jason. I mean, half his pre-school has Attention Deficit Disorder. The next thing I know it's late morning, and I've got this crick in my neck from the armrest. Petros is all showered and shaved, wearing this gorgeous gold chain around his neck — which reminds me of my

tote, because if I don't get it today, it's bye-bye stall 14. I ask right off if the police called yet? He shakes his head, and I'm, like, devastated. What do I do now?

His voice has this take-charge quality, and he tells me to go to the embassy. He's already got my suitcase and pelican outside in the hall.

We take a slower taxi this time, but only because there's smoke coming out of the hood and the driver keeps getting out to look at it. That way I get a good view of the Hilton, where Rock said you could see the Acropolis from the penthouse restaurant. That's a famous temple, the Acropolis, which I thought was named after Athens, but maybe that's how they spell it here. I'm thinking after the embassy we could go there together, only now he's in this rush to drop me off. I say, "Wait a minute, aren't you coming with me, to identify myself?" But he's got these appointments and says we can meet afterwards. "How about lunch at the Hilton?" he asks, all smiles, so I know he's feeling better about himself already.

I'm almost late meeting him, though, because of what happens outside the embassy, where you have to line up with a zillion people to go through security. It's amazing how many tourists lose their bags. So I park my pelican at the entrance gate, and take my place in line. There I am, minding my own business, and bumping my suitcase along, when these two guys in sun glasses are on both sides of me telling me to step aside, please, and from their body language you know they really mean it.

Later on the counsel officer I meet tells me he's sorry about that, but they have to be careful these days. Still, I'm really ticked off when Peter is finally returned, since his paint is coming off, not to mention his beak. The counsel looks over his desk for some papers and says, "Ah, yes, here you are. We've been wondering how you were faring without your bag. Must have given you quite a turn." Stuff like that. I ask how he knows I lost it, whether Petros had called him. What a guy. He looks puzzled. No, he says, but the tourist police did. He tells me I'm a lucky lady they found it, that I could have lost everything.

"I'll say," I tell him, so he knows I know a thing or two myself. "I hope you're keeping an eye on the tourist police."

I've got to hang around until the tote arrives tomorrow, which means I'll miss my charter after all. By now I'm pretty zapped out and thinking, maybe I'll just

## F O C U S

change my ticket and go home, before I lose my tan. Of course it all depends on Rock. I mean, if he needs more counseling, I should probably stay. I make this mental note to tell him he can get help at the embassy after I've gone. I'm not sure how good their counselors are, though. The one I met seemed a little on the stiff side. He gave me these drachs to hold me over until I get my tote and money back. I'm supposed to pay back the loan even though it's the taxpayers' money. But as somebody said, I think it was Kennedy, the government always gets you in the end.

Here's the funny thing. Rock's not at the Hilton. I wait around until sundown, when I'm really worried because that's the worst time of day when you're in a depression. I'd go back to his sister's if I knew where it was. I'm wishing now I'd taken Rock up on that shower.

Hold on a sec. I'm at the Hilton, they've got plenty of showers. I check in, leaving a note at the desk for Rock, and then I pig out on room service and hot water even though my hair's a mess without mousse.

Well, I wish I could tell you Rock's doing OK but I

don't know from anything at 30,000 feet, heading back to the U.S. of A. You're going to say I shouldn't have left without saying goodbye, but I say, if you're going to help people in life you've got to take care of yourself first, right?

So I start to watch "City Slickers," but then I get talking to this girl next to me. She has on these fantastic earrings, and right away I know we have a lot in common, even though she's a Pisces. She lets me try on her earrings. She tells me they look divine on me and I ask her where she got them. She looks in her bag for the box. It has the jeweler's name on it, and underneath, like on designer labels, it says "Athens, Geneva, Constantinople."

"Let me think," she says, remembering it wasn't Athens, and she hadn't been to Geneva, so it must have been Constantinople.

"No kidding," I say. I take out my Apple and type it in. Later on I'm thinking hey, this is my lucky day after all. Gold & Horn is giving me a refund, and I'm going back for sure, because it turns out Constantinople is not all that far from Istanbul. ■

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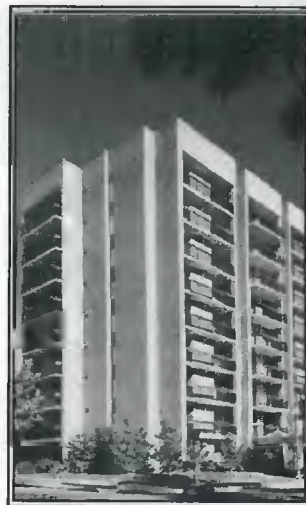
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# AT THE CHECKPOINT

BY MARK TONER

A Thai logging company had built this stretch of road, a 200-mile red-clay scar cut straight through the rain forest, for their trucks to carry the huge, majestic hardwood trees — mostly mahogany and ebony — to the port of Buchanan, where they could be loaded directly onto the decks of rusted cargo ships bound for Europe and Asia.

Periodically, the immense vehicles rumbled by in packs of twos and threes, like hulking beasts of burden tethered to a common rope. Their passing always prompted a flurry of excitement inside the money bus, as the driver lurched violently to one side of the narrow road and each passenger hurriedly reached for the handkerchief or piece of lappa kept close at hand to cover one's face from the dust. The dust they stirred seeped in every part of the bus, hanging above the road like a red, alien mist. It covered baggage, hair, clothes and skin. It coated throats and settled in lungs, producing a dry, hacking cough.

Inside a money bus heading south from Nimba county sat Jason Potter, dripping sweat and wearing a bandanna around his neck that pulled up, outlaw-style, to protect his nose and mouth from the dust.

He had been traveling nearly two hours when the bus — in reality a battered Toyota minivan crammed with 16 passengers and their belongings — crested the top of a long hill and began to slow down. Jason was immobilized in the back seat, tightly wedged between two massive

Mandingo women who poked and prodded him with their animated gestures as they conversed in a language he did not understand. He craned his neck forward and to the right in order to get a clear view out the front window.

The bus was approaching a military checkpoint — two long lengths of bamboo held together by twine and weighted on one end. A whitewashed, mud-stick wall was built up on either side of the gate. This was one of the most sophisticated checkpoints Jason had seen, though there were hundreds of similar constructions scattered throughout the country. They were part of Liberia's skeletal

national defense system set up after a recent coup attempt in which a small band of rebels had crossed the border from Sierra Leone and made it to Monrovia before being obliterated by the president's elite, Israeli-trained personal guards.

The soldiers who manned the gates were angry, malevolent types, often intoxicated with a mixture of power, cane juice and marijuana. They swaggered about, glassy-eyed and scowling, with loaded M-16s and AK-47s dangling nonchalantly, like eccentric handbags, from their shoulders. For them, the checkpoints offered a daily source of extortion revenue to enhance their

meager military pay.

The money bus rolled to a stop and the passengers began to disembark, a painfully slow process punctuated by the squawk of stepped-on chickens stashed beneath seats and the sputtering cries of infants unhappy to be woken in the stifling afternoon heat.



JASON LEVINSON

## F O C U S

*Jason's reserve of patience had been sorely tapped. He was hungry and hot, and making no progress toward home. This, he thought, was when traveling lost all pretense of adventure.*

Jason, returning from a friend's site in the north, had been through dozens of checkpoints and knew the routine: play nice, smile, and, if possible, offer a few cigarettes. But he also realized that he was unknown to this group of soldiers and these situations were always unpredictable. Some soldiers, he knew, simply could not resist the opportunity to harass a wandering *kwii-po* far from the protective fold of U.S. Embassy Monrovia. So he stayed between the two Mandingo women, hoping to hide himself in their copious flesh and flowing robes and avoid being noticed.

A soldier walked out of a makeshift guardhouse about 10 feet from the road, buckling his trousers hurriedly and wiping his forehead shiny with sweat. Jason struggled to keep his eyes downcast. He focused on the rutted road beneath him.

"You deh," came a voice.

Jason did not look up.

"Mah American friend, please come he-ah," said the soldier in heavily-accented English. His tone was casual, as though hailing an acquaintance.

It was unavoidable. Jason looked up, straight into the soldier's deadpan face. His cheeks each bore two short scars, a rite of tribal initiation, cut deep into the flesh and colored reddish pink. A pair of metallic, counterfeit Ray-Bans mirrored Jason's face.

Jason cringed inside with the dread of an impending confrontation, but outside he worked hard at appearing composed. It was important, he knew, to be able to bluff yourself through such situations, to act the part of someone in supreme control. Any sign of weakness was dangerous. One had to radiate confidence, a don't-mess-with-

me attitude. Though both parties often knew it was a facade, the bravado was still a necessary element of Liberian machismo. From the *gronah*-boys' hustling on the streets of the capital to the mildewed corridors of the presidential mansion, clout meant acting the part of the "Big Man."

"Show me your identification," the soldier commanded brusquely.

He seemed slightly irritated by Jason's demeanor. Here, after all, was a man used to extorting pocket money from the poor, docile passengers who passed him daily, a man accustomed to wielding fear like a well-honed cutlass. It was the required tool of his trade.

Jason reached towards his back pocket for his wallet, before realizing his Peace Corps I.D. was still on a bedside table back at his friend's house. He could see it very clearly in his mind. This was bad, he thought, an opportunity for the soldier to seize and exploit. It would require a drastic change in strategy, a display of respect to the man with the gun in front of him. Alright, Jason thought, be flexible, do what you must do. There was an art to dealing with these guys.

"Ma fren', I workin' for da Peace Corps," Jason said, his voice sounding increasingly small and feeble. "Enh you know dem? Da people who come here for to help da Liberian people."

The soldier sensed Jason's weakening and his whole body tensed, like a jungle cat preparing to pounce. He took off his sunglasses, revealing two narrow, deep-set eyes. The muscles in his jaw twitched. "But surely you must have some iden-tif-i-ca-tion?" he said, this time more loudly, carefully enunciating each syllable as though they were an incantation.

One appropriate response to this question was obvious: Jason could smile slyly, reach into his pocket, extract a pentagonally shaped \$5 coin, and, as smoothly and surreptitiously as possible, slip it into the soldier's palm. But Jason was loathe to do this, having steadfastly refused for

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*As a junior FSO, Mark Toner is a branch public information officer for the U.S. Information Service at U.S. Consulate General Krakow. His first post was U.S. Embassy Dakar. This story represents his debut as an author of fiction.*

## F O C U S

two long years to succumb to "dashing" - the casual, day-to-day corruption that was, like the clinging humidity and fire ants, a part of life here. He decided to try a different approach instead, relying on the cultural acceptability of begging to get one's way. Once again, the delivery and lines were ritualized as though they had been scripted long ago.

"Please, ma' man," he began, holding both hands in front of him, palms up. "Just forget about this identification business. I beg you, yah? I'm sorry to embarrass you ... but anyway, what to do?"

Jason clapped his hands, shrugged his shoulders and flashed a small, innocuous smile. The soldier kept on staring. He was slightly shocked that the *kwii-po* had missed so obvious a cue for a bribe to pass between them. Then his face soured and he walked past Jason, over to the driver of the van.

Words passed between them, in hushed and hurried dialect. Jason waited, felt the sun burning the back of his neck. The two men continued to talk while passengers filed through the gate. Jason tentatively began to follow the last few, hoping the soldier had finished harassing him, like a cat

grown tired of batting around a captured mouse. One cautious step. Two, three. Then, midway through the fourth step, a terrible voice boomed out from behind: "You... you Peace Corps... you mu' stay here."

Jason's heart sank to an uncharted depth. What was happening here? Facing the soldier, he stopped, his cheeks flushed red, partly from anger, partly from a mounting fear.

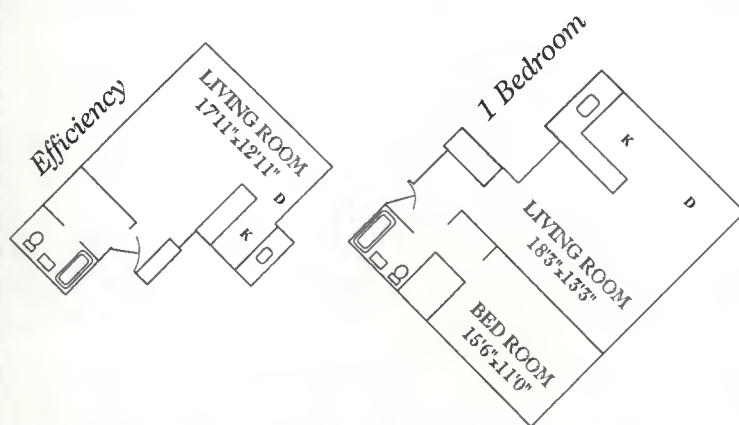
"What? You cannot keep me here against my will," he yelled, aware that his voice was trembling slightly. "What is your name? I want to report you to the American embassy."

That was it, Jason's most devastating salvo, the threat of action by the embassy. Yet it fell to the ground a harmless dud. The soldier only smiled in a tight-lipped way.

"It is well wit-in ma powah," he said in the cold, emotionless voice of a bureaucrat, "to detain any person who does not have proper i-dent-i-fi-cation. You will stay here until we decide what it is we are going to do wit' you."

By this time, the car boy had taken Jason's backpack down from the top of the money bus and was lugging it over to him. Alright, Jason told himself, this man wants to make me suffer

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## F O C U S

small. Remain flexible. The phrase was his mantra in difficult moments like this. He grabbed his pack and walked across the road and up a slight hill to where a ramshackle, mud and zinc cook shop stood. Jason sat down on a bamboo bench in the merciful shade of a small thatch awning. He knew he had no other option than to simply wait the bastard out.

After a quarter of an hour, Jason felt his anger begin to dissipate in the heat and boredom slowly creep in to fill the void. He sat there, his chin resting on his hands, jumping reflexively at the sputter of every wheezing engine that sounded in the distance in the frail hope that another money bus was approaching.

The soldier said nothing more to him. Perhaps he felt he had won, successfully imparting his lesson in power and subjugation to the arrogant *kwii-po*. Occasionally, the soldier glanced up at Jason. Jason began to watch the soldier and two others, now sitting next to the gate. Jason watched them. First, he saw a joint being passed, huge and cone-shaped. Next, a small schnapps bottle full of cane juice was produced from someone's pocket. Two of the soldiers sat on

the rusted hulk of an oil drum. A tall, gangly soldier sat on a small stool and the incongruity of his oversized frame on the tiny wooden seat made him look like a circus clown. Jason stifled a laugh.

His eyes then trailed away from the soldiers and followed along the wall, fixating on the brightly-colored lizards that scurried up and down the white, hardened mud. They alone appeared unfazed by the heat, comforted no doubt by the cold reptilian blood that coursed through their veins. He watched how the lizards moved in spasms: whoosh — up the face of the wall and onto the top — bodies motionless, utterly still — then a burst of erratic push-ups.

Jason had grown up in Boston on the sanitized, white-collar streets of Brookline. But he had read Thoreau in a college literary class and something about the harmony of a solitary man communing with nature had moved him, sharpened his eye to capture the delicate flight of a hummingbird or the excited dance of a rabbit across a summer lawn. He regarded the lizards as new and fascinating creatures to absorb, primitive and prehistoric, meshing perfect-

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## F O C U S

ly with the savage, timeless beauty of the forest that rose up, dark, primeval and foreboding.

A shout from one of the soldiers drew his attention. The tall, gangly one was standing, albeit unsteadily, in the pitiful sway of drunks swelling up with something important to say.

"Ma man, I tellin' you-oh ..." he began, but the words came falteringly, as though the combination of speaking while maintaining his balance required enormous energy. Jason drifted away again. The soldier went on speaking in the sing-song cadence of Liberian English and the sound sent Jason into a fuzzy, trance-like state. He gazed, unfocused, at the horizon. The broad blue expanse was now tinted purple at the edges. Perhaps a storm was approaching, he hoped. It was already late April, but still the first rains had not started. Jason reached into his breast pocket and extracted a half-smoked, hand-rolled cigarette. He lit it, dragged deeply and coughed. He squinted into the bright sunshine, then closed his eyes and, with his thumb and forefinger, slowly massaged the bridge of his nose. His head ached.

When in God's name was the next bloody bus coming anyway? His usual reserve of patience had been sorely tapped. He was hungry and hot, and making absolutely no progress toward his final destination. This, Jason thought tiredly, was when traveling lost all pretense of adventure.

Down below, the soldiers started to argue. Jason wondered where they found the energy. The tall, gangly one spoke excitedly in dialect to the small soldier who sat on the oil drum. His uniform sagged on his tiny body and, in contrast to the tall soldier, he looked like a child wearing his father's clothes, clutching a toy gun.

Although Jason could not follow what they were saying, he instinctively recognized the tone of the tall, gangly one's voice, full of bravado and challenge. He held up his gun and shook it like a spear. Jason felt a small bubble of tension forming in his stomach. The small soldier stared up at the tall, gangly one with intensity, shooting beams of hatred from his bleach-white, half-shut eyes.

Jason again searched out the lizards. There was something immeasurably sad in their eyes, Jason noticed, something that hinted at compassion, the soulful look of pity. He shook his head and sighed. What the hell? I'm starting to bond with reptiles, he thought.

Then, in the distance, came the halting grind of an engine laboring up a hill. Jason's heart soared. He pulled out his damp, red-stained bandanna from a pocket and very slowly and meticulously wiped the perspiration off his face.

The blotch of purple in the horizon was spreading now, like a stain across a paper towel, steadily swallowing up the sky.

Jason stood as the money bus neared the checkpoint gate and slowed to a stop. A carboy hung off the back of the pickup truck like a gymnast preparing to dismount. One hand on the tailgate, he swung from the side of the truck to the rear in a perfect arc before stepping gently down onto the dirt road. Jason smiled. The move was performed with the poise of a ballet dancer. The passengers again disembarked amid the choking sobs of babies and the nervous clucking of chickens.

The tall, gangly soldier walked casually over to the driver, and Jason caught the glint of metal as a bribe was passed in fluid motion of a handshake. The smaller soldier, still looking agitated, proceeded to the rear of the truck where the carboy was standing wearing one leather glove, a la Michael Jackson, and a smirk across his face.

Jason was coming down the hill when it happened. Like many such moments, it seemed to unfold much more slowly in memory than in reality. Jason must have looked away for an instant and missed whatever the carboy said to the



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## FOCUS

soldier. Afterwards, an old man told him that he heard the carboy laugh at the soldier and call him a *pekin* or "small boy." Whatever he said, it was apparently the wrong thing.

Jason heard the small soldier yell something. He glanced up to see the small soldier push the carboy away from the rear of the truck. The annoyed carboy turned his back on the soldier and started to walk away. Pop. Pop. Pop. It was like three balloons exploding or the dense, violent bursts of an engine backfiring. Then it was over and the carboy was lying face down in the dirt, one gloved hand extended.

Already a thin film of red dust began to settle on his black skin, and a small, dark-red puddle began pooling under his stomach. No one spoke. The small soldier's expression was now one of surprise, of absolute disbelief.

Then a woman shrieked and fell to her knees. Jason stood watching, vaguely aware of his jaw hanging slightly open, certain that none of what he had just seen was real.

The soldier who had detained Jason came up from behind and shouted for everyone to move through the gate. "Leggo, leggo," he spouted, gesturing with a revolver.

The people began moving, slowly at first, then quickly as the soldier's voice became more urgent. Uncertainty hung in the thick air, the cold realization that anything could happen now. The woman on her knees was mumbling something about God. The tall gangly soldier prodded her with the butt of his rifle until she stood and walked toward the gate.

Jason did not speak. He followed the others through the checkpoint. The gate was lifted and the pickup truck pulled through. On its tailgate, Jason noticed the driver had painted, in thin, crude letters, a popular Liberian expression: "The downfall of a man is not the end of his life."

Silently, they reboarded. As the driver pulled away there was only the high-pitched whine of the engine straining under its burden and the occasional cluck of a chicken. No one said anything.

And Jason, sitting there, choked suddenly as though he had tried to swallow something too hot. But that was all. After it was over, he leaned his forehead gently against a window smeared red with dust and watched the darkening sky, impatient for the rain. ■

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# THE LAMENT OF STAFF SGT. ALGER

BY HUME HORAN

I hate mids. They're the worst. If you got days or eves, there's at least some life, someone to see or talk to. But mids? Even the char foree's gone. Leaving behind smeared tile floors and a lobby full of BO. It filters through the security grill into Post 1. They should issue me a respirator like for those guards in Lincoln tunnel! These locals! Can't even swing a mop right. Muddy water right up the baseboard tiles onto the wall! Once I told them Gen. Colin Powell himself had spent a summer mopping the floor at a Coke plant in New York. I told them he did it so well he got noticed and promoted next year. To driving a truck, I think. The char force didn't believe me. They thought Gen. Powell was born with four stars on his shoulders. Couldn't imagine he'd ever done anything but crush Arabs, which was fine with them. The Ivorians, like all Africans, hate the Arabs. Say they're corrupt. Always screwing the Africans — in every way — but never marrying them. Still, they liked me telling them about Gen. Powell and mopping floors. Thought I was trying to be friendly.

I guess I'm better than some of the Marine security guards with the locals. Unlike some MSGs, I've never beaten them up. Not like the gunny — you know, the gunnery sergeant. At the airport parking lot he slapped the shit out of some teenagers who

kept wiping off his dusty Blazer with a dry, dirty rag. Then the cripple who used to sit in front of the Marine house? The gunny kicked him and his little wheeled dolly out into the street one morning. The old guy sort of crawled off into the park across the street. Like a bug. Really gross! The gunny said, "Enough's enough. I told the guy two, three times, 'Go beg somewhere else.' This ain't Lafayette Park — with the bums everywhere — and that nightmare's gotta stop frightening the kids who want to use the hoop or the weight room." The gunny's a piece of work. He'll ask once, maybe twice. Then, boom! We never saw that guy — or any other beggar — again in front of the Marine house. Still, it's good we all kept quiet. If the DCM had heard about it, the gunny'd be doing recruiting duty in Alaska — on an Indian reservation — in winter.

That deputy chief of mission. At Quantico we were told about DCMs. He's like the chief of staff and the ambassador's like the division commander. Chiefs and DCMs have to be harsh on people. That way the boss can always keep smiling. But around here, "Thorntree" (what a eall sign!) really gives his job that second effort. Makes him a real heavy-weight eontender for prickishness.

He's smart alright. Went to some Ivy League school and speaks a lot of languages. He'd been a political officer all his life, and always in Europe.



JASON LEVINSON

## FOCUS

*He's smart alright. Went to some Ivy League school, speaks a lot of languages. He'd been a political officer in Paris, where he met Jane. Oh Jane, how could you have ever married him?*

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Maybe supervised five people, max. His last tour was Paris, where he met Jane. She was a secretary in his section. *Oh Jane, how could you have ever married him?* But the regional security officer — we call 'em RSOs — told us he needed some “command experience” after years of just making paper. So he was sent here. Poor us. The amb's a good guy, but a little easy-going. The RSO let on that some big shot in personnel wrote to the amb saying the DCM really needed this job — so the boss gave in.

The DCM's hard to like. He's got this fat little penguin body. As he walks, he moves his arms like flippers in front of him so they just barely clear his stomach. And he leans his head forward like he's looking for something he lost. Nothing pleases him. He doesn't smile much. At staff meetings you can see him picking at his fingers — his thumbs are a mess. His in-box is always overflowing because he rewrites everything himself. I heard from the embassy communications center about a zinger he got from Washington. The State Department had asked for our quick views on some crisis on the continent: Rwanda? Burundi? Every African post got its answer in but us! Ten days late and still nothing! The DCM was sure, he said, the report had gone off. Maybe misplaced by CPU? Then it turns up in his hold tray! Big surprise! Like the White House! Nurse Peters said maybe he's stressed. This is his first hardship assignment ever. So maybe the demonstration against the embassy hit him extra hard. Only stones and loud hailer, though. But during the so-called attack, Cpl. Robinson caught him

barfing in the head. The DCM called it the flu. We guessed nerves.

And he doesn't like anyone — unless, maybe Jane a little. He especially doesn't like Marines. We all know this country's going straight to hell via the express lane. Another evacuation, total this time — like in Sudan in 1996 — is just a matter of counting the days. But when he was acting as *chargé*, he made Rear Adm. Beard, the deputy chief of staff for aviation, wait 20 minutes while he polished up some rat-turd of a memo. And the admiral had flown in to discuss Central Command's emergency evacuation plans in a “non-permissive” environment. The DCM asked what this meant. The admiral said, “It means they might be shooting at you.”

He doesn't know the first thing about us at post. He doesn't know our names. Hardly ever says hello. If he looks our way coming or going, it's like we're fish in an aquarium. Each morning he just heads right for the security door and gives it a pull. I'm supposed to time my buzzer perfectly to his tug. Hasn't a clue about our ranks, either. He's called me everything from “corporal” to “gunny” to “sergeant.” Even called me “soldier” one day. Maybe in about a thousand years he'll get it right for once and say, “Good morning, Staff Sgt. Alger.” And maybe monkeys will fly out my butt.

I think he dislikes me a little extra, though. He absolutely refused to do the regional award ceremony for the physical fitness test, even though I was No. 1 in all of Company G, out of more than 20 MSG detachments. But 300 was a perfect PFT, and I'd put almost 540 points on the board. Said he was too busy, but I knew he wasn't. OK by me, though. The administrative counselor did the ceremony, and Jane was there — she's working in the budget and

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*Hume Horan, a career minister, is diplomat in residence at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He has served as U.S. ambassador to Cameroon, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Cote d'Ivoire. He served in both the U.S. Marine Reserves and the Army in the '50s.*

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fiscal office as a secretary. Could it be my tattoo? It really got to him. Once at the ambassador's staff meeting, I wore my Charlies with short sleeves. Usually I wear the long ones. Honestly, I'm a little self-conscious about the little alligator crawling down my right forearm: All of us got one in San Diego the night we finished scuba school. He looks at the tattoo and I thought he'd barf. He asked me, "A tribal touch? You must be cutting a wide swath with the African beauties." Low blow.

Or maybe it's those little pink forget-me-nots that I've often left on his desk — those OF-117 security violations he deserves for leaving out classified papers all the time. He gets a lot — and more from me than anyone else. After the last one, he got docked three days' pay. Then he boo-hooed to the RSO that I was picking on him. Even kind of implied I was salting my claim. The RSO reminded him I was good. He told the DCM he should try a clean-desk policy.

Or maybe New Year's had something to do with it. But how could he know? The day Jane left, I called her to apologize. On the phone she told me, "He's jealous. He suspects."

But how? I wondered. I only danced with her twice that night. Could my eyes have given me away?

Anyway, his remark about African beauties really burned me up. So that night I went right to his office and stuck him with another security violation. I'd known all along where a "secret" document had slipped behind one of the drawers of his desk. Just a little something I'd been keeping in reserve for the dry season. We carnivores treat our environment with respect. We mostly only eat when we're hungry.

African beauties! I've had some tough tours: Desert Storm, then swimming into Mogadishu and almost getting my brains knocked out by the waves against the sea wall. And at the top? There was Dan Rather — open shirt, hairy chest and all — to welcome me. What an intelligence failure. But in Saudi Arabia and Somalia, we were mostly too busy to think of girls. When you're taking down a warlord's house or out on some other high-speed, low-drag operation, you stay focused.

After all that, you'd think MSG duty would just be ice cream and cake. But duty in Africa can be hard,

believe me. Especially social-wise. African women can be really pretty — and some, I can tell, would really like to get to know a young Marine better. But we're in one of the epicenters of AIDS — and day and night, that's all we worry about — AIDS, AIDS, AIDS. You're almost afraid to whip it out for a leak. That leaves the women in the American community. Dependants? After 15 or so they're usually in the United States or Europe at boarding school. And I'm not into statutory rape anyway. The secretaries? They're nice — but a lot older. It would be like hitting on a friend's mother.

I've mentioned Jane? I'd seen her around in B&F. I guess she must be about five years older than me. Twenty-eight? Twenty-nine? She was slight. Not much of a figure, but a pleasant face, pretty legs, and always a great smile. Anyway, I was lying in a deck chair one Saturday at our recreation site. She and the DCM come in and walk by me. She was going to play tennis. He's hauling along, with his skinny, pale, hairy arms, one of those government-issue expandable briefcases. It was full of — who knows, maybe unclassified reading? He sees I've got a book. It was Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma*. So he makes some wise guy remark like, "And here I thought Marines' brains — like Samson's strength — resided in their hair." I didn't get up. I just looked at him from my chair. Well, I told him, any grunt who'd done Somalia or Desert Storm and then read about Fabrice at Waterloo knew Stendhal got the murderous fog of war just right. Mr. Penguin narrowed his eyes at me and waddled off.

The DCM had gone back to the embassy before Jane had finished tennis. After her game, she stopped by my chair. "How do you think Fabrice would do on embassy duty?" she asked. I had to laugh. The idea was so unexpected, so outrageously astonishing. I laughed and laughed. I could hardly stop. The 16-year-old Fabrizio? The pet of the stupendous La Sanseverina at Parris Island? It was catching. She started to laugh, too, then took one of the chairs next to me. I said I'd give all my stripes to be in Fabrice's shoes for just one day.

She wondered if I'd like to read more Stendhal. She had him in both French and English. I was surprised and touched. I couldn't remember when a

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*I said I'd love to read more Stendhal. As I was towelling  
off to get into my T-shirt and jeans, our eyes met.  
Suddenly I knew she saw me, not just Staff Sgt. Alger.*

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niece, intelligent woman had last spoken to me in such a serious way. One of my high school teachers? Maybe no one? Ever?

I said I'd love to read some more. Then I offered her a lift home — the DCM's driver hadn't come back yet and our driver was waiting to take me back to the Marine house. She said "yes." As I was towelling off to get into my T-shirt and jeans, our eyes met. Suddenly I had the sense she saw me, not just Staff Sgt. Ted Alger.

All the way to her house, she was easy to talk to. She'd majored in French at Skidmore. Joined the Foreign Service as a secretary right after college. Paris had been her third post — that's where she had met her husband, remember? "He works so hard here," she said. A little wistfully, I thought.

She wanted to know about me. I found myself telling her about my hometown: gritty, liverish-colored brick, always cold, always dull. The high point of my grade school years: I grew a potato shaped like Mickey Mouse's head. You could see it — the pointy nose and two big ears. A picture of us — the potato and me — made the front page of the *Dunkirk Evening Observer*. Jane laughed. Then high school, that was dull, too. But how I loved boxing for the CYO! Won the state middleweight championship. Then I joined the Marine Corps, just like my older brother. Told her about Dad's job at the Honda plant. I even told her my Mom died of breast cancer. All the time Jane really seemed to listen. I told her she wasn't like those embassy people at cocktail parties who ask you something, then while you're answering, slide their eyes over your shoulder as they get ready to taxi off to a more interesting conversation partner.

I found myself saying that the MSG program could be tough — you always had to be 100 percent Marine, but in a 100 percent civilian and foreign environment. And why, I wondered out loud to her, do so

many people think that if you look like you're in shape and have a high and tight haircut, you're supposed to be a dummy? A racist, even? She laughed. Said maybe I was being too defensive about being a Marine. And then I surprised myself, and I heard myself saying the job could be lonely, too. She didn't seem to hear.

Over the next few weeks, though, I read *Lucien Leuwen*, *The Red and the Black* and *Travels in Italy*, in English, of course. What a career and life that Stendhal had. Soldier, diplomat, lover, writer. And I even memorized what one critic wrote, "*Son rejet de l'hypocrisie, son amour de l'authenticité, son culte permanent de l'honneur et de l'énergie.*" Jane had underlined this sentence in one of the books' introductions. Afterwards, talking to her at the recreation site, I said how I wished I'd had more than the 100-hour French course at State.

I've mentioned New Year's. How can I ever forget it? The admin counselor and his wife gave a dinner dance. Their wrap-around tiled porch made for a great dance floor. Chairs and tables were set on the lawn; strings of colored lights were hung on the trellises along the edge of the porch. There was a buffet that wouldn't quit, and a local DJ was playing some dated, but good, rock and country. The Bangles. Bruce Hornsby.

The weather was perfect, but no mosquitoes. The garden was almost irrigated with DDT. The whole embassy community was there. And what's more, we all needed a party. Threats were frequent, and the anti-American mood in town was high and growing.

I love to dance. I love sports, too, and dancing is kind of like boxing. All balance and timing set to music, but instead of an opponent, you've got a partner. Naturally, I didn't have a date, but I didn't really care. I just liked being out on the floor. I'd ask a lady

## F O C U S

to dance, then escort her back to her table, have a drink or two at the bar, then out onto the floor again. Did this for an hour or more.

Jane and the DCM must have come in around 21:30. I hadn't seen them come, but overheard him at the bar talking to the political counselor about a new treaty on peaceful nuclear cooperation. The counselor, I thought, looked like she'd rather be dancing, too. The DCM looked my way. I said, "Good evening, sir." From his reaction, I might as well have been one of those nonexistent mosquitoes. So I butted in and asked the counselor to dance.

It must have been around 22:30 when from the loudspeakers I heard the first few bars of Richie Valens' "La Bamba." The tune was a direct order to dance. A lot of drinks gave me the courage to ask Jane to dance. My best dance partner, hands down, ever. Like dancing with my own shadow. I could see people making a circle around us. I heard cheers: "Ole!" and the other MSGs' "Oooo-rah."

Afterwards, I went to the bar to get Jane a drink just as Nancy Griffith began to sing, "I found your letter in my mailbox today. You were just checking if I was OK." Of all pop songs, this one, "Once in a Blue Moon" is my favorite. I hurried back. Another dance? She nodded.

We began to dance, my right arm holding her flat against me, her left arm on my shoulder. She didn't use it like some girls did as a lever to fend you off; she lay her head against my chest. I was holding her right hand. Our fingers were intertwined, we fit so right. I told myself if, for all my sins, I were to die right then and there, I'd have lived a happy, full life. Our summer clothes were like just a sheet between us. Nancy kept singing: "Seems like it never even hurt you at all. Am I the only one who's getting up from a fall? Don't you remember, don't you recall?"

I knew what I was doing — and didn't know. I danced Jane toward the edge of the dance floor. Just as the music ended, we turned the corner of the

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## F O C U S

porch, out of sight of the other guests. We stood for a moment. She looked up, still in my arms, and said, "Thanks." I bent over and kissed her hard.

Did she kiss me back? I'll never know. Because something unbelievable happened. Like a heart attack. Like something breaking inside. Tears started to pour down my cheeks. I was ashamed. I was seared. Was I losing my mind? The tears wouldn't stop, and I felt these awful silent sobs shaking my body. It felt like I was training for a fight, like when they slam you again and again in the stomach with a medicine ball. Jane led me to a window alcove. Sat me down. I never even thought about people seeing us. Jane didn't seem to think about it, either. She just sat next to me with an arm over my shoulder.

The storm couldn't have lasted, in all, more than 30 seconds or so. My mind started working again. "Forgive me," I said in a low, quiet voice. "I could kill myself. I really would, I think, if anything bad happened to you because of me. You've got to get

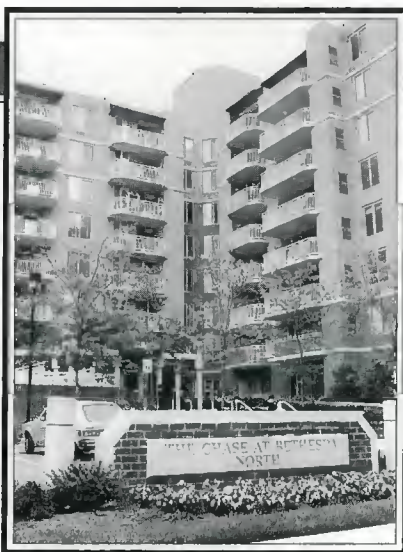
away. I'll go home. The Marine driver'll be outside for me." Almost as an afterthought, I heard myself say, "And I love you."

Jane looked at me in silence for a moment. Her face in the dim light looked soft, like a teenager's. "You're very sweet," she said. "You're young and very lonely. You don't know what you said or what you really mean, but I'm lucky and thankful that you said you feel this way about me. I have to go now. Happy New Year." She hesitated. For a moment, I thought she was going to kiss me, but she didn't.

The murders happened the next day. Or rather, the next night. Two of our communicators and an embassy driver were assassinated, as their car was stopped at a red light. Afterward, the CIA station chief heard it was a Lebanese Shiite, brought in by Hamas terrorists for the job. Two days later, most embassy Americans were evacuated, as well as a lot of private American citizens.

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I was one of the perimeter guards for the Air Afrique charter flight as the motorcade pulled up. The admin counselor's emergency evacuation planning had really paid off. All moved fast and smooth. Like the circus train I saw being loaded up when I was a boy.

Jane was one of the last on the plane. At the top of the steps, she stopped, a slim black silhouette, and turned back and waved. To me? To the DCM? I never learned. We were in the same line of sight. The fool waved back with his two little arms. There I stood. I didn't dare look up or move a muscle. Then she was gone. The RSO watched as the plane took off and vanished into the night. Diminishing flashes of red and green. Then nothing, and he told the admin officer, "They're out of range."

What's more to tell? The admin officer's wife heard from Jane. She was working at the FLO office. Had rented an apartment. She hoped, but didn't believe, the department would let dependants back into the country — not even those whose principals, like the DCM, had a year or more left to serve. Three weeks later, a package came for me. Two books. One, the Flammarion edition of *La Vie de Henri Brulard*; the other, the Penguin edition of *The Life of Henri Brulard*. The French book had a note clipped to its cover, which said, "Your transition texts. Would you bring them back to me sometime? Love, Jane."

How I pored over those simple lines. And the awkward backward slant of her "J." I felt somehow proud of her that her handwriting was as bad or worse than mine. It seemed to bring us closer together. And surely, no African talisman was ever more revered and cherished. I put Jane's note between the pages of a small pocket Bible. I often take the Bible out, just to see her handwriting. The gunny was observant. In a friendly way, he once said: "Staff sergeant, we'll have to get you a new chaplain's assistant."

Of course I wrote to Jane. Often. As I said in one of my first letters, I'd have been a pretty sorry specimen if I hadn't. And did I work over those letters. Built them word by word. Read each letter out loud to myself several times to keep the language simple and my meaning clear. Always I kept my letters to one page. I said I loved her. That I respected her, above all. That 10 years from now, I'd feel the same. I said I felt sorry for the poor little words I was sending her; like raw troops into combat, they would never be up to their mission.

Real love, I thought, was like faith: Either it's given or not; you can't reason or argue your way to it. I ended one letter with, "I'll love you unconditionally each day of my life until I die. And I hope there are moments, too, when you're moved to remember me."

This evening, in the Marines' mailbox, a small envelope came, addressed to me. It was postmarked Washington, D.C. My name and address had been typed on an old fashioned typewriter. But I felt — I just knew — the letter was from her. Maybe she didn't want her handwriting to be recognized by people here?

The letter was indeed from Jane. It was written by hand. She said, "I've received your letters. Believe me, your special caring brought tears to my eyes. I will never forget it. And remember my saying I was lucky and thankful that you felt the way you did about me? That is true. Believe me. And please believe me when I say I respect you so much that I must be completely honest with you. I will always miss you. You are very special to me."

"Sometimes, I ask myself, 'What if we'd met earlier?' I even ask myself if I could love you, and I don't answer no. But my note to you? I'd just gotten back to Washington. It was an emotional time for me, but I love my husband too much to hurt him."

"So until you come home, letters are not what I want — nor do I want phone calls or meetings when you're here. There is too much frustration and, perhaps, lying to others. The more liberal social conditions of today I cannot accept. But also know it will always be a pleasure to see you."

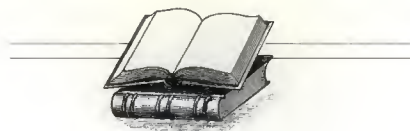
There was more. But nothing different.

There wasn't time or reason to reflect. I said down at a word processor and wrote Jane my last letter. "Dear Jane," I wrote. "I saw this quote, of all places, in an advertisement at the USAIR lounge at Dulles. It's from something Thornton Wilder wrote. I liked it. It made me think of you and of me: 'There is a land of the living and a land of the dead. The bridge is love. The only survival. The only meaning.'"

I didn't sign it.

I left Post 1 on my last rounds. As luck would have it, the DCM had left his safe open again. He got my last pink slip. I asked myself, where next? I decided on the RMO's consulting room.

As I loaded my weapon I thought: This is a clear violation of post and USMC weapons policy. ■



# BOOKS

## *In FSO Novels, Art Really Can Imitate Life*

BY WILMA JOHNSON

### **To The Happy Few**

Hume Horan, *Electric City Press*, 1996, softcover, \$12.50, 268 pages.

### **Someone Else's War**

Howard R. Simpson, *Brassey's*, 1995, hardcover, \$21.95, 224 pages.

### **Sky Blue**

Alexander M. Grace, *Brassey's*, 1995, hardcover, \$21.95, 256 pages.

Breathes there an FSO with a soul so dead who never to himself hath said, "When I retire, I'll write novels based on my tours in (add names of countries)."

The quality of these three efforts suggests that reality-based fiction by former or active FSOs should not only be tolerated as an enjoyable curiosity, but encouraged as a component of Foreign Service outreach. If the Service wants the American public to understand what FSOs do and how they do it, fiction written by those with experience is certainly part of the answer. Three novels penned by retired or active FSOs, which have been released in the last year, *To The Happy Few*, *Someone Else's War* and *Sky Blue*, are good examples of writers who have suited their experience to the written word, skillfully conveying the unique Foreign Service flavor to readers.

Most recent up to bat is Hume Horan, who centers his novel, *To a Happy Few*, in the Sudan, where civil war is raging among various tribes with historic ethnic and religious conflicts. FSO writers understandably gravitate to tormented areas; that's where the dramatic action is.

The story is told in the first person by Joshua Chamberlain, a middle-grade FSO who arrives in Khartoum as the newly appointed deputy chief of mission (DCM). Horan's classic writing style is particularly noteworthy in his description of a Sudanese protocol officer as "columnar, prime ministerial, a caryatid on the move." The pictures of Khartoum and the appalling relationship between the Muslim military and the southern Christian blacks are so skillfully drawn that readers feel they are watching over Chamberlain's shoulder.

The political situation is unstable and U.S. embassy security is tight. Rumors fly of coups, assassinations and Libyan troublemaking. Embassy personnel are in constant danger of attack.

Horan, a senior FSO who has served as ambassador to Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Côte d'Ivoire, tells not one but two stories. The primary one includes unbelievable derring-do by Our Hero that we happily accept because it's fun and provides the

skeleton for the second and more important one: a chronicle of Foreign Service life in an embassy under siege. With a sure touch, Horan moves seamlessly from topics as mundane as administrative tribulations and servant relationships to those as tense as crisis management and emergency evacuations. In between, he throws in a snapshot or two of the fun as well, such as a glimpse of what goes on at the annual Marine Corps Birthday Ball.

"Foreign Service people, when we're in the Third World, drop back a generation or more," notes protagonist Chamberlain, his mood a touch ruminative. "We live and work in 'village' communities. We live in a peculiar, story-book world. The world of Mom and Dad, Dick and Jane and their dog Spot. There are no poor, no unemployed, few handicapped and no chronically ill among us."

In all of this he writes with authority, as one who has been there, done that. Hardly a false note echoes from *To The Happy Few*, except for the occasional gobbledegook he places in the mouths of some of his characters.

Next up is retired FSO Howard R. Simpson, now living in Ireland, whose extended career at the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) included assignments in Vietnam during the war's French and American phases. *Someone Else's War* tells the

## BOOKS

story of a U.S. intelligence agent ordered to participate in the "termination with extreme prejudice" of a friend — a French intelligence agent who has long been helpful to the American. This in itself is a novel twist: How often is one asked to sympathetically follow the planning of an assassination? It's a story of adventure as well as torment, as the hero struggles with divided loyalties.

After an uneven start as the focus lurches between the French and American periods of war, from 1946-54 and 1965-73, respectively, Simpson settles down to a slam-bang denouement in the midst of the TET offensive that will prove satisfying to readers of spy novels. Though not all the characters'

actions are convincingly motivated, Simpson's skill in describing life in Vietnam is superb: "A Vietnamese patrol boat, with a small deck gun and white canvas awnings, cast off as I watched it move slowly upriver, its red and yellow flag hanging limp in the still, hot air." His description of fighting omits no detail of what modern weaponry can do to human flesh, such as this description of a bomb's aftermath: "A heavy French woman in a flowered dress was sitting on the sidewalk. Both her legs were gone below the knees."

His stream-of-consciousness, first-person narration moves the action smartly — though sometimes too smartly for this reviewer. Perhaps Simpson should slow down, do more showing and less telling. Nevertheless, his portrayal of the complex political situation in Vietnam, which has clearly disillusioned him, is utterly convincing. The underlying mood is one of cynicism and pessimism: There are no heroes and everyone is to blame.

*Sky Blue*, written by active FSO Alexander M. Grace, is the last one at the plate. *Sky Blue* follows a multinational U.N. peacekeeping force struggling in a Bosnia-style civil war in the former Soviet republic of Kazakstan. The force is commanded by one Julian Chandler, a newly appointed general with a fragile psyche traumatized by war experiences in Somalia. Though Chandler's emotional strength eventually returns, it's not quickly enough for readers who will soon grow weary of his problems.

The imaginary Kazakstan civil war provides a fine foundation for fiction, as it deals with the

usual array of contending forces: the Muslims, the unreconstructed communists, the Russians meddling from across the border, the U.N. delegation and the multinational components of the peacekeeping force. Grace's strong suit is in descriptions of military engagements; the drawn-out combat sequence is superb.

Other elements are less successful. International political figures are, implausibly, almost non-players — until the end. Characters too often speak in briefing-paper language. The general's interactions with key characters, such as his British deputy, the U.S. charge and the local U.N. representative, are often unbelievable. For example, the last one to enter the plot is a pasteboard character, a U.N. high commissioner who shrieks such diatribes as: "Do you think I care about what happens to a handful of little whores? ... You have obstructed my operations from the moment you arrived here, general. From this moment on, I consider you to be in a state of mutiny."

Too bad. A more dispassionate and thoughtful treatment of the command-and-control problems of multinational forces would have made this a stronger novel. Grace perhaps loads the dice to demonstrate, as he obviously believes, that U.S. forces should not be under non-U.S. command, nor subject to rules of engagement controlled by the U.N. secretary general. ■

*Wilma Johnson, a pseudonym for a retired FSO, is the author of two Foreign Service novels, one published in 1986 and the second, self-published, in 1993.*

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## IN MEMORY

**Abbot L. Moffat**, 94, a retired FSO, died April 17 in Hightstown, N.J., of cancer.

Before joining the Foreign Service in 1943, Mr. Moffat was a leader in the New York legislature and also worked on international economic assistance programs. As head of the Southeast Asian Affairs office, he urged the United States to acknowledge the government of Ho Chi Minh as legitimate Vietnamese nationalists.

Survivors include a son and two daughters.



**Daniel Webster Montenegro**, 79, a retired FSO, died April 10 in Arlington, Va., after a long illness.

During World War II, Mr. Montenegro served in U.S. Army counterintelligence, and following the war, he joined the Foreign Service. His posts included Australia, Germany and Spain, and he retired in 1969.

Survivors include two daughters, Marcia Montenegro of Arlington, Va., and Valerie Montenegro of Washington, D.C.; two brothers, Henry and Louis, of Albuquerque, N.M.; and one grandson.



**Albion W. Patterson**, 92, a former employee of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), died Feb. 14 in Ojai, Calif.

During World War II, Mr. Patterson worked in Paraguay for the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. He then served as mission director for Point Four foreign assistance programs in Paraguay, Chile and Argentina. After the creation of USAID in 1962, he served with that agency in the Dominican Republic. Survivors include his son, Philip, of Vail, Col., and a sister of Santa Barbara, Calif.



**Samuel E. Perkins IV**, 86, a retired FSO, died Feb. 3 in Culver, Ind.

Mr. Perkins was a graduate of the National University Law School in Washington, D.C. Before joining the Foreign Service in 1941, he held several federal government jobs. He served in the Navy during World War II and, after the war, on the staff of the U.S. military governor for Germany. His Foreign Service postings included Paris and Belgium.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Collins Perkins.



**Charles W. Shellhorn**, 78, died of a heart attack March 9 in New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

Mr. Shellhorn joined the Foreign Service in 1955 as a technical security officer in the Asia region, posted to Manila. Other postings included

Bonn, Cairo, Beirut, Buenos Aires and Frankfurt, Germany. He retired in 1979.

Survivors include his wife, Constance; two sons, Charles Jr., of New York City and Richard, of Baltimore, Md.; one daughter, Mary Sobraliski, of Dothan, Ala.; and one grandchild.



**Richard W. Tims**, 84, a retired FSO, died April 6 in Austin, Tex.

Mr. Tims taught history at Columbia University and Trinity College before joining the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. He joined the State Department in 1945, entering the Foreign Service in 1955 and serving in Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Survivors include his wife, Glenn Tims, of Austin; two sons, Paul Tims and Wilson Tims, of Austin; a daughter, Margaret Ling, of Houston, Tex.; and three grandchildren.



**Elizabeth Taylor Toon**, the spouse of a retired FSO, died on April 25 in Southern Pines, N.C. Mrs. Toon accompanied her husband, Malcolm Toon, to ambassadorial posts in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Israel and the Soviet Union.

She is survived by her husband, two daughters, a son and three grandchildren. ■

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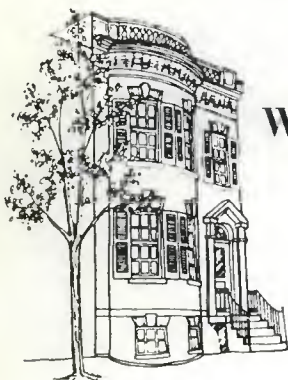
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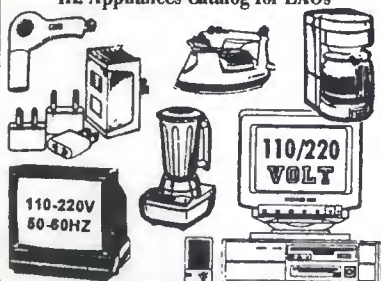
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# POSTCARD FROM ABROAD

## *Digging Up Suriname's Jewish Past*

BY ARTHUR P. STRELICK

Just in front of me, peeking out from Suriname's jungle floor, was a piece of stone covered by an eight-inch-thick network of roots and earth that I had to roll back like a thick carpet. Underneath was a stone with an inscription in both Portuguese and Hebrew. Excitedly, I tapped the surrounding ground and heard the echo of another stone. After a month of serious searching by me and two German friends — during every day off from my U.S. Embassy Paramaribo job — we finally found the legendary 300-year-old village of Cassipora and its cemetery, the oldest Jewish burying ground in South America.

Jews have been in Suriname since the 1600s, when the country was under English rule, after huge groups fled from Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition. The first English speakers settled 12 miles south of the present-day capital of Paramaribo; later settlers went 12 miles further south to Cassipora Creek. They were joined in 1659 by a group of Italian Jews with agricultural experience.

In 1665, for the first time in English history, the English governor of Suriname granted the country's fewer than 1,000 Jews full religious liberty and citizenship, freedoms not granted blacks until centuries later.

*Arthur P. Strellick is retiring from the Foreign Service this month. In his 30 years in the Service, he served in Munich, Colombo, Saigon, Oslo, Cairo, Madrid, Sao Paulo, Bonn, Athens and Paramaribo.*

*After a month of  
serious searching,  
we found the  
legendary long-lost  
Jewish cemetery,  
the oldest in  
South America.*

This Jewish group founded Joden Savanne, later renamed Jerusalem-on-the-Riverside, and nurtured the country toward becoming a major sugar and timber exporter. During the 18th century, many Jews left the isolation of Joden Savanne to create a small community of storekeepers and professionals in the then Dutch-ruled capital. Meanwhile, the village, decimated by a French invasion in 1712 and a fire in 1834, dwindled in size.

Though I was familiar with the village's history, I discovered while reading a late 1994 article that an even older settlement — Cassipora — and its cemetery had existed nearby, reportedly just south of Cassipora Creek, though no one had seen evidence of either for centuries.

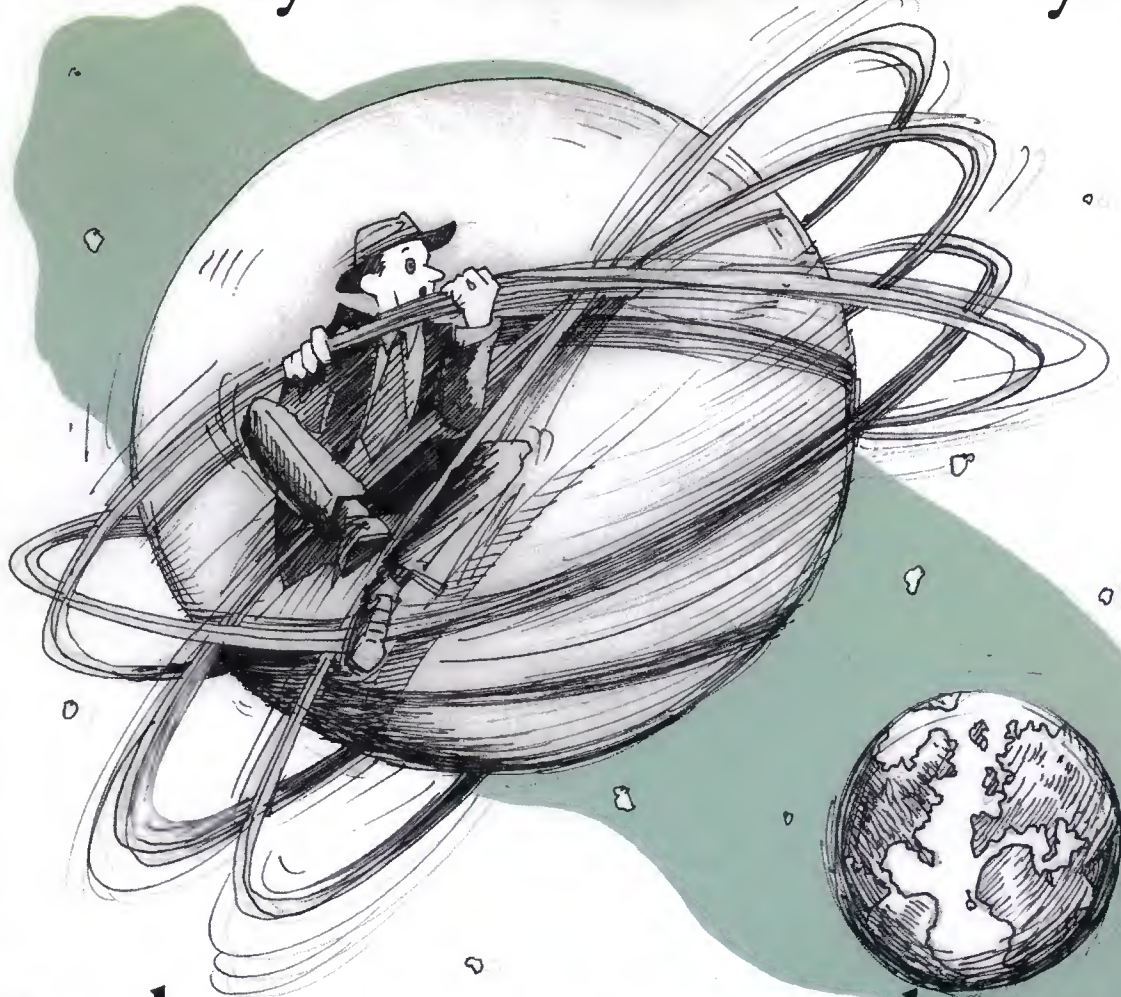
My friends and I became obsessed with finding what remained of the

town or the cemetery. Armed with a 1937 land survey map, we started our search at the Suriname River, reportedly two miles from Cassipora. We hiked up steep slopes, crossed streams, walked precariously on moss-covered logs and hacked our way through bamboo grass. But we were always, unbeknownst to us, traveling in circles. After a nearly four-hour search, we gave up. It was then, as we were returning on the same path back that we found another track, which led directly down to a covered area.

There, I glimpsed my first tombstones, both two yards long and shaped like four-sided prisms, and others from the early 1700s fashioned from dark European stone and white Italian marble. For five months, we returned on weekends to catalogue the gravestones on videotape and computer. Most tombstones had been imported from Europe long after the death of those they commemorated. We read the Old Portuguese words used to describe the dead: "*Bem Aventurado*" (dearly departed) and "*Anjinho*" (little angel).

Although the rainy season of May 1995 halted our work, I ended my tour in Suriname, having helped catalogue, for the first time, 180 graves and gravestone inscriptions from Cassipora's cemetery. And although my research was criticized by the Suriname government, I passed on my notes to Henry Green, a professor of Judaic studies at the University of Miami, who has added them to his vast collection of data on the Jewish diaspora. ■

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