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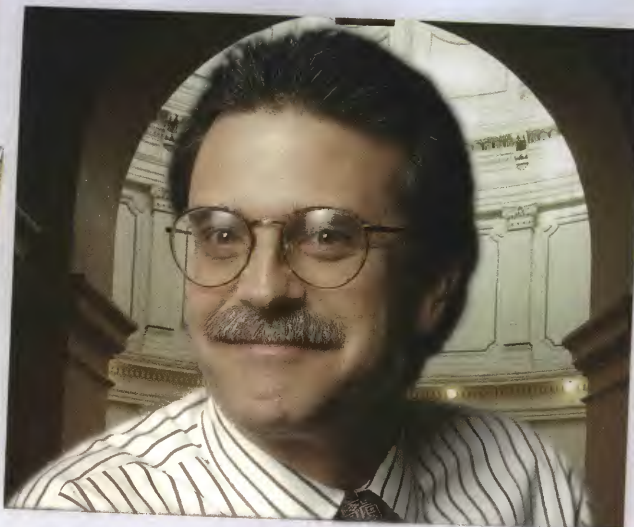
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# PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

## Over and Out

BY DAN GEISLER

July 1999, when we inaugurate a new Governing Board and President, marks an important transition for AFSA. Before handing over the gavel, I want — in the great Washington tradition — to place my own spin on our work of the past two years. There are several important things which the outgoing Governing Board has done right. There's one particular thing which I should have done better. Let's start with the good news.

**75th Anniversary:** The Board launched a year-long series of events, still under way, to mark the 75th Anniversary of the modern Foreign Service. Under the leadership of Ambassador Brandon Grove, our 75th Anniversary Committee has garnered substantial media attention for the Foreign Service, generated seminars around the country, run a high school essay contest which drew more than 300 participants from 35 states, and hosted high-level events for the U.S. business community, congressional leaders and the media. In all of these, the role of AFSA as initiator was essential. There is no other organization willing or able to let Americans know who the Foreign Service is and why our work matters to them.

**Embassy Security:** Nothing is more important to Foreign Service officers, specialists and families than their safety. In light of the administration's highly disappointing budget request this year, AFSA continues to focus sus-

*In which the  
presidential gavel  
is passed to new  
hands ...*



tained attention on the question of the security of U.S. overseas missions. The Governing Board has worked assiduously to break the cycle of interest and neglect which has characterized our government's approach to this problem for decades.

**Legislation:** AFSA's package of proposals for the 106th Congress is producing results both on bread-and-butter issues such as tax relief, and also on important professional issues. Thanks to help from concerned members of Congress, we succeeded in getting AFSA's recommendations on workforce planning, education allowances and diplomatic status of administrative and technical personnel inserted into pending legislation.

**Conditions of Overseas Employment:** The Governing Board has called attention to the increased financial burden of overseas service caused by the continued erosion of salaries, allowances, and medical services. These issues are important to our ability to retain top-flight talent in the face of increased competition from the private sector.

**Outreach:** The Governing Board identified outreach, especially outreach beyond the Beltway, as an essential area in which to expand AFSA's work. Under the energetic leadership of Ambassador Bill DePree, our highly successful Elderhostel program has already exposed more than 1,000 participants around the country to the work of the Foreign Service. We're enlarging that effort, establishing a Friends of the Foreign Service and revitalizing our nationwide Speakers Bureau.

**Foreign Service Integrity:** We have worked hard to counter allegations of lax discipline within the service. While doing so, we achieved reforms to guarantee Foreign Service employees full due process and to ensure that any warranted punishment is swift and certain.

My own area for improvement was *communications with our members*, especially our members abroad. This means using electronic media, not just to report on events, but also to elicit feedback, which is always in short supply. Both active duty and retired Foreign Service people are becoming accustomed to rapid — if not instantaneous — communications on issues of interest to them. State Department cables and snail mail no longer suffice. AFSA can use communications technology more creatively.

Take heart. The incoming President has more experience (and, I am convinced, talent) than the outgoing one. That spells good news for AFSA and the U.S. Foreign Service. ■

Dan Geisler is president of the American Foreign Service Association.

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# LETTERS

## Isolated in an Embassy

Kudos to Charles Schmitz for his thoughtful letter about "fortress embassies" in the December issue. I hope that AFSA will support some of these ideas in its work on the Hill. Ironically, the department chose the opposite course in the Philippines, pulling offices into the embassy compound and thus increasing the value of the target to be attacked.

My own work as environment, science and technology counselor could certainly be done outside the embassy, and that way I could have real-time access to real-world Internet and e-mail now denied me by security rules here. But the procedures using the Classified C-Lan for my cables and most e-mail with State Department offices would make that impossible even if the embassy were supportive. We badly need some innovative assessment of our operating procedures, both to reduce our security risk and enhance our effectiveness as diplomats.

Marshall Carter-Tripp  
FSO  
Embassy Madrid

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## Secretaries' Small Rewards

Concerning the letter by A.W. Michael, regional personnel officer, in the April *Journal* on respect for secretaries and the treatment of the secretarial staff:

Secretaries are not promoted and yet management keeps saying there is a shortage in our field. Does that mean those of us who are working currently with the State Department are not doing our jobs, and that management has to hire replacements at higher starting salaries than some of us earn who have been in for 15 years or more?

Secretaries are also treated to "paper awards" just to appease us. Many cash awards are given to FSOs and FSNs, but when secretaries are nominated for awards, we get a paper certificate with no monetary award recommended. One administrative officer told me: "It's the very least that can be done." How true that statement was.

Stella P. Stutz  
FS Legal Assistant  
U.S. Mission, Geneva

## Preposterous Wailing

It surprises me that Manish K. Mishra is allowed to wail at great length in the March issue of the *Journal* that under current State Department regulations he is not able to take his boyfriend with him should he go to an overseas assignment unless all the boyfriend's charges are paid by the U.S. government. Furthermore, and what is seemingly more preposterous, he

expects the boyfriend to receive all the rights and privileges of a Foreign Service officer.

Mishra considers this a great injustice! What would he think if any single male colleague would want to take along a current lady friend with the same entertainment privileges in mind? Actually, before I was married that might have seemed like great fun, but I can't imagine how it would have been justified despite Mishra's anguished pleas.

Cabot Sedgwick  
FSO, retired  
Nogales, Ariz.

## Equal Value, Equal Benefits

I must take issue with "Speaking Out: Equal Benefits for Relationships of Equal Value" that appeared in your March *FSJ*. The author's premise that homosexual partners of Foreign Service officers be granted equal benefits to married FSOs is based on a number of half-truths and distortions.

The writer seems to think that his own subjective feelings should determine State Department policy. He seems to say that as long as he "values and loves" the person he refers to as his husband, then not only is no one permitted to disapprove, but they must show their whole-hearted approval for what most people have and will always consider unnatural behavior by rewarding it with taxpayer-subsidized benefits. (Of course, many will scream "intolerance" at this point, but the author himself has betrayed his own bias in favor of "committed, monogamous relationships." Is he not

## LETTERS

thereby trying to impose his morality on the rest of us?)

The writer makes a correct observation that marriage customs and laws have changed over time. What he fails to notice is that at no time in human history has a sexual relationship between two people of the same sex been considered the equal of one between a man and a woman, for obvious biological reasons, even in societies that tolerated homosexual behavior.

Finally, I don't know that the role of the Foreign Service is to promote change in American society. For the State Department to propose what would be, in effect, a revolution, flying in the face of the laws of all 50 states (and implicitly encouraging behavior that is illegal in several — laws upheld by the Supreme Court as recently as 1986) would be to

detach ourselves from what we were intended to be: the representatives of the American people overseas.

*Raymond D. Toma, Jr.  
Chief, Visa Section  
U.S. Consulate General  
Naples*

### Bombing China's Embassy

The media has pilloried the administration and especially the intelligence community for relying on an out-of-date map from the National Imaging and Mapping Agency (NIMA) to determine NATO bombing targets, resulting in the unintended bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. There really is no question about the map's accuracy, per se, but rather the data it contained, which was woefully out of date.

Apparently, the U.S. government and NATO had not provided a sys-

tematic vehicle for knowledgeable individuals currently or recently serving in Belgrade to view the map and critique it. The result of the unfortunate bombing was the largest public demonstration in Beijing in 10 years and a major setback for U.S.-China policy which could affect relations for years to come. Part of the reason for this foreign policy mess is that the diplomats either lacked the appropriate background in geography, or for some other reason did not challenge information contained on a map from an authoritative U.S. government source. This incident, I believe, points out the need for the State Department to develop mastery over the new technologies that are impacting foreign affairs. This is not to suggest that the State Department should develop its own mapping capability equivalent to that of



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## LETTERS

NIMA. But, it does underscore the importance of geography and cartography in foreign affairs. What is often viewed as an arcane world of back-room specialists has caused a tizzy for the front-room diplomats. Decision-makers made the false assumption that information appearing on a printed map must be correct. In the digital world, the user of a map may choose which data to display (e.g., topographic information, rivers, buildings, roads), but the display will only be as accurate as the information in the database.

In order to maintain its leadership role over foreign affairs, State Department personnel must understand the technologies employed by other agencies to become knowledgeable users and thoughtful critics of how those technologies are deployed. Because the State Department has

traditionally acquiesced to other agencies on the technological front, its role has been minimized to mopping up disasters resulting from the mistakes of others.

In many respects the State Department's culture is antithetical to and resistant to modern technology. Indeed, computers remain a threat to how the State Department operates. Because they easily permit the widespread dissemination of information, the leadership does not have the same degree of control over computers (especially e-mail) as they do over the department's communications mainstay, the cable system. And, fully mastering computer technology involves a far greater investment in time and money for training than the State Department and its employees have traditionally been willing to make.

Foreign policy is too important to

be controlled by agencies, such as NIMA, which lack overall responsibility for the conduct of foreign relations. The State Department should take this opportunity to embrace and master modern technologies, making them broadly available not only in Washington, but also in the field. Only by demonstrating technological sophistication of its own will State be able to ensure that its influence over foreign policy prevails.

As a retired Foreign Service officer employed in computer mapping, I am keenly aware of the difficulties facing the State Department. Digitized maps and databases represent only one small area of the technologies which the State Department should eventually embrace and utilize.

*Gil Donahue*  
FSO, retired  
Annandale, Va. ■

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your own. ...  
What kind of  
superpower is  
this? What kind  
of morality?"*

—TIMOTHY GARTON ASH  
IN THE JUNE 24  
NEW YORK REVIEW  
OF BOOKS

### VISA FOLLIES I: LAX DISCIPLINE

What does the State Department do when visa officers are found doing official favors for friends in exchange for money or other inducements? Little or nothing, according to a long exposé in the May 9 *Los Angeles Times*. State handles investigations of illegal activities and other problems among U.S. diplomats in a "slow, cumbersome and spotty way," write reporters Rone Tempest, Tyler Marshall and Patrick McDonnell.

Although the vast majority of the 800 visa officers in 230 consulates resist temptation, the reporters are careful to note, "those suspected of issuing visas in exchange for money, gifts, or sexual favors often are allowed to retire or move to another post rather than face extensive investigation or prosecution."

The article details several recent prosecutions of U. S. consular officers for malfeasance, most of them ending in acquittals if they even made it to trial.

But the story centers on the case of Charles Matthew Parish, the non-immigrant visa line chief in Beijing from 1994-96. Parish was accused of using his position to grant visas to friends, accepting gifts in excess of strict State Department limits, and improper fraternization with Chinese women. Several of the women accompanied Parish on trips back home to Los Angeles and Phoenix, where they all stayed free of charge as guests of the local representative of a Chinese state trading company.

Parish, an ex-Marine who was on his fourth foreign assignment for State, acknowledges acts during his tour in Beijing that appear to violate the department's code of conduct, but denies

breaking the law. Still, when he was removed from his post in May 1996, he was prepared for the worst: embassy security officers sealed his office, seized documents and barred Parish from coming back to Beijing. But there was no timely follow-up, and "the trail ran completely cold," the *Times* reports. By the time FBI investigators got to Parish in 1998, key visa records had been destroyed, since regulations require that they be held for just one year, and the case sputtered to a halt.

Parish might never have faced prosecution at all if his name hadn't surfaced in connection with the 1996 U. S. presidential campaign finance scandal. FBI agents interrogated Parish about visas he issued to Chinese friends of Johnny Chung, who has told federal investigators that he was given cash by the chief of Chinese military intelligence to support President Clinton's reelection. Chung also claims that he witnessed Parish accepting a bag of cash from an executive of a Chinese brewing company in an apparent exchange for visas, but Parish denies the allegation. In the end, far from being prosecuted or even disgraced, Parish was transferred into a sensitive post back in Washington, sent on special assignments abroad and even awarded a merit raise. Eventually he retired on an annual pension of \$43,000.

### VISA FOLLIES II: MOUNTIES MOBILIZE

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police are investigating and cracking down on local employees in Canadian embassies around the world who have accepted bribes for visas, according to an article in the *National Post*, Canada's new nationwide daily newspaper.



## CLIPPINGS

Employees in Islamabad, Kuwait, Damascus, Los Angeles, Cairo, Conakry and Belgrade have been fired or suspended in the last three years for "subverting Canada's immigration laws, and in some cases for theft, police say." None of the employees have been arrested, though, "because they are not Canadian and are not working in Canada," says the article by Marina Jimenez.

According to Inspector Jean Dube, head of the RCMP's immigration and passport section in Ottawa, a typical scam is for would-be immigrants to bribe a local embassy employee to issue a visitor's visa. The visitors then dispose of their documents when they arrive in Canada. Many then make refugee claims either in Canada or in the United States, if they are able to cross the border.

### NEWS EXECs TARGET KOSOVO CENSORSHIP

Editors of leading U.S. news media sent a joint letter to Secretary of Defense William Cohen April 9 complaining about strict censorship of news from NATO's Kosovo campaign, according to the June *American Journalism Review*.

The news executives wrote, "Though the ongoing campaign in the Balkans is one of the largest and most important U.S. military operations conducted in recent years, the Department of Defense has supplied far less information to the media and public than during the Persian Gulf War and the more recent Desert Fox operation." The letter was signed by executives of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, the Associated Press, CNN and NBC News.

The editors complained that few details about allied attacks were being made available. "At a minimum, we believe the department should make public its information on what targets in Yugoslavia have been hit ... which planes are involved in operations, how many operations they fly, and the degree of their success." That would approximate the level of detail Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf provided during the 1991 Gulf War, says writer Patrick Sloyan.

One restriction that especially irked the media: NATO commander Gen. Wesley Clark ordered that no military personnel could be identified by name or hometown in news stories. That stricture, the article says, "violated rules in effect since World War II." It also left reporters on the scene filing stories with no lively quotes.

Beyond that, the article states that NATO briefers intentionally misled the media and the public about an April 14 incident in which a NATO warplane mistakenly bombed a convoy carrying refugees near the Kosovo town of Djakovica. The briefing officers said the bombing was carried out by a U.S. Air Force F16 Falcon codenamed Bear 21. NATO then presented the pilot's debriefing tape, in which he makes clear that he took extraordinary care in deciding to bomb the convoy.

"The hope was the public would be sympathetic to someone who had taken great care to be accurate," writes Sloyan. "They [NATO] picked him for propaganda reasons," says a senior U.S. military official. The blame-placing outraged senior Air Force officials, who said it deliberately misrepresented the event and smeared an excellent pilot."

# 50 YEARS AGO

"Luxembourg is what is called a Grand Duchy. Its ruler is a Grand Duchess, a female. ... Would it be so much out of harmony with the concept of women in government if we should send a minister to the Grand Duchess who was also a woman? ...

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—SEN. TOM CONNALLY  
(D-TEX.), SPEAKING IN FAVOR  
OF THE CONFIRMATION OF  
FAMED WASHINGTON  
HOSTESS PERLE MESTA  
AS AMBASSADOR.  
THE EXCERPT FROM THE  
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD  
APPEARED IN THE  
AUGUST 1949  
FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL.



*"There is the recurrent hope [in the U.S.] that foreign affairs will give so little trouble that the Secretary of State will be free to go fishing and that the most important of the United States embassies can be staffed with party spoilsmen."*

— THE LISTENER  
(PUBLICATION OF THE BBC), 1959

## BIBI NETANYAHU, PEACE PROMOTER

Benjamin Netanyahu may have accomplished more for the Middle East peace process, albeit unintentionally, than most are willing to give him credit for. According to the June 7, 1999 *New Republic*, the recent Israeli election proves Netanyahu's success in "creating a broad consensus in favor of the peace process for the first time." The irony, of course, is that Netanyahu was elected Likud Party prime minister in 1996 as a strong opponent of that very peace process.

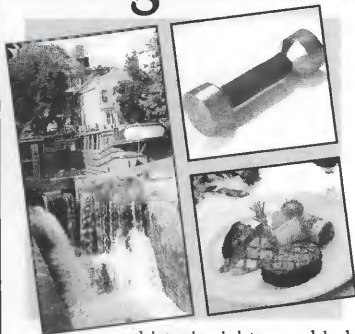
"As a result of his own grudging dealings with the PLO, many, perhaps most, of the right's constituents have come to accept the Oslo agreement as a framework for negotiation," writes Hillel Halkin, an Israeli-based contributing editor of *The Forward*. "At long last, it can be said that

the public mandate for Oslo that Yitzhak Rabin failed to seek in 1993 has been obtained."

Netanyahu's fall is evidence of the changing face of the Israeli electorate. Halkin states "there is an underlying process of Israelification" affecting at least two key groups who were previously on the margins of Israeli political life. On one hand, Russian immigrant voters moved leftward and closer to the Israeli elites they aspire to join.

In addition, ultra-orthodox Jews who once rejected Israeli society now have "a growing sense of being part of that society and wanting a full share of its political benefits and entitlements." That has led to a "growing political aggressiveness" which in turn prompted a backlash from secular Jews that helped turn Netanyahu out of office and return the Labor Party to power. ■

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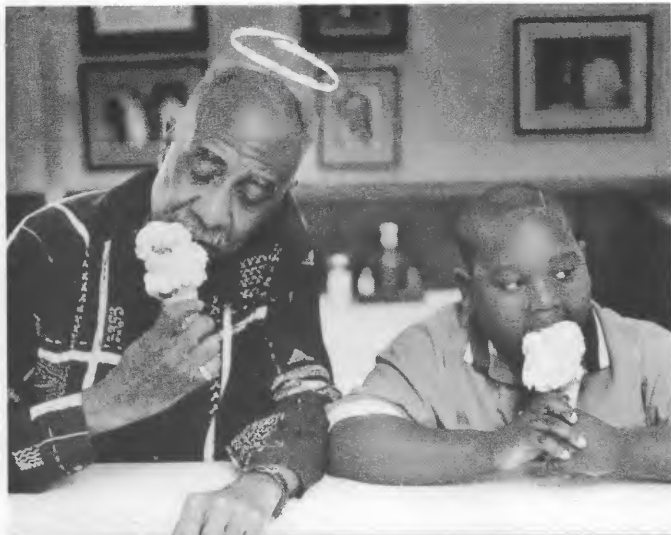
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# SPEAKING OUT

## *Fluent In The Language Of Discrimination*

BY LAWRENCE GARRED

I recently settled a four-year-long dispute over the State Department's denial of tenure. I endured this ordeal to hold the Foreign Service accountable for flagrant breaches of its own personnel regulations. Sadly, my experience shows that the employee-dispute-resolution process at State is ineffective and preeminently self-serving. That process puts maintaining the status quo far ahead of genuine resolution, conceals duplicity and obscures discrimination.

A lifetime coping with "speech disfluency" has challenged me to develop effective oral communication skills. This condition means that I can randomly block or stammer on words or sounds. Despite this obstacle, I was able to earn a graduate degree, compete normally through the FSO process without affirmative action, entering the service in 1991, and earn more than satisfactory performance evaluations during my first (Anglophone) tour in Manila, from 1992 to 1994.

For my second tour, I was assigned to a consular position in Zurich requiring a 3/3 (oral comprehension/reading comprehension) language proficiency level on the State Department's 0-5 language scale. With my history, one might suppose that my main obstacle in achieving fluency in German (what Mark Twain called "that awful language") would

*The author, an FSO from 1991-96, is an aspiring financial analyst now living in Ohio.*

*Though I was  
diagnosed with  
a severe language  
learning disability,  
discrimination  
against me  
continued.*



be speaking. But that was not the case. Rather, from my first days in language training, my major weakness turned out to be listening comprehension.

I struggled mightily just to achieve a 1+/1+ in German, far below the prescribed level, and kept Zurich apprised of my difficulties. Yet the Personnel Bureau never processed the mandated waiver of the language requirement, and I proceeded to post in January 1995, linguistically unprepared to perform professionally.

Exacerbating matters, the most commonly spoken language of Switzerland is a dialect substantially distinct from classical German. Not surprisingly, after just six months there, I actually regressed to a test score of 1/1. A junior officer at Embassy Bern who had achieved a 2+/3 and a 3/2+ during the same period later volunteered to investigators that she had been granted leave for

further study of German and embassy-paid tutoring to reach her 3/3. Though I needed far greater assistance to achieve the required proficiency, I was never offered any tangible support towards that goal whatsoever.

From Zurich, I wrote the department seeking reasonable accommodation to my speaking disability. Specifically, I sought an exemption from the foreign language qualification of the tenure requirement so I could serve in English-speaking posts or non-language-designated positions. Later, I expressed willingness to explore employment in the Civil Service or as a Foreign Service specialist, but never received a reply to any of these requests.

### **A Protracted Process**

My Zurich position had both consular duties and economic reporting requirements. I performed satisfactorily at the visa window but received a disparaging employee evaluation report in November 1995 emphasizing my lack of reporting production. The box for overall evaluation was improperly left unmarked, yet the narrative stated that my performance had been unsatisfactory. Furthermore, even though I was in a language-designated position, the reviewing officer claimed that English was sufficient to report on international business from Zurich, thereby implying my linguistic shortcomings were not material to my overall poor performance. Finally, and most egregiously,

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## SPEAKING OUT

the rating officer made up four dates on which he had allegedly counseled me about areas for improvement.

My written response stated that I had never been counseled at all about my job performance; in fact, I was documentably on leave during one day of the fictitious four. The supervising officers then received a cable with instructions to prepare a second draft of my employee evaluation. While passing through Washington on his Christmas leave (and during the government shutdown) in 1995, the rating officer came to the employment evaluation office in the Personnel Bureau for off-the-record guidance on how to do so. Not surprisingly, the revised version, which I did not see until a month later (in January 1996, right before I was denied tenure), was no fairer than the first draft but contained more plausible dates for the alleged counseling sessions. In the meantime, the acting director general of the Foreign Service ordered my immediate curtailment from post and I returned to Washington on Dec. 21, 1995.

In January 1996, the department arranged advanced language aptitude testing for me. After two days of examination, a department-selected expert diagnosed me with a severe learning disability in the acquisition of language. My listening comprehension difficulties were finally objectively explained.

The diagnosis had no impact on events, however. On the basis of the revised performance evaluation, I was denied tenure in February 1996. I then grieved my evaluation on the grounds of its many factual inaccuracies, further stipulating that State had failed to process the mandatory language waiver and had selectively enforced personnel regulations in my case. Having acquired a healthy skepticism about the duplicitous nature of

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the Foreign Service's personnel processes, I also filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office at State, alleging a discriminatory pattern of events arising from my language learning disability. Ultimately, the Appeals Board "suspended" action on my appeal of the employee evaluation grievance due to the action pending before EEO. I was involuntarily separated from the Foreign Service on Oct. 11, 1996 while the EEO investigation proceeded.

Although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not apply to the federal government, Uncle Sam has similar regulations prohibiting disability-based discrimination. So when the State Department ignored the examiner's diagnosis of my severe learning disability in the acquisition of language, I was left wondering why it had arranged the test at all.

I came to believe that State hoped the test would discredit my assertion of an organic problem entitling me to reasonable accommodation, specifically modification of the "worldwide availability" requirement. Any threat to the worldwide availability doctrine is very serious business at State. Yet incredibly, in response to EEO-ordered discovery, the department would assert that the phrase "worldwide availability" had no relevance to my case, nor was it "generally understood" by State.

The relative unpopularity of the EEO office at higher levels of State speaks eloquently of its integrity and effectiveness. Its problem, however, is speed. Because time burdens individuals more than institutions, I believe EEO's grossly inadequate budget represents a conscious choice by the department to let investigations languish. The resulting backlog promotes fault-escaping settlements.

### Lessons Learned?

Some 23 months after filing the original complaint, I finally received the report of investigation in March 1998. It filled four volumes. The power of my painstaking documentation was central as my allegations were entirely supported and additional anomalies were turned up. Among these: a handwritten note in personnel files from my last career development officer, my putative "advocate," inquiring about her civil liability if I pursued legal redress; and unsigned notes from imaginary performance counseling that mysteriously appeared in my personnel files in 1996, along with a statement by the consul general's secretary that she could only remember seeing those notes after I had departed post. In addition, the application form for the 1996 FSO entrance exam suddenly included a "Self-Identification of Disability" page, where speech disfluency and language acquisition disability (my very conditions) were among those enumerated.

I have settled my case and am looking to pursue another career. I am not bitter toward the service, though I find only hypocrisy in its solemnity and prestige; delay and obfuscation are well-practiced arts at State.

Obviously, I feel qualified disabled individuals should be able to serve abroad as U.S. diplomats. But this will require some changes on the part of the Foreign Service, starting with adherence to the ADA and related regulations.

My motivation in pursuing this process alone against all hardships has been a desire to hold the department accountable for its actions. Everyone is potentially disabled. But unreasonable treatment of the disabled few reveals how the many are valued. People should not be discardable. ■



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# SALIMANGA

By JOSEPH SALVO

Salimanga hoped this was her last trip to the market town near the northernmost arch of the Niger River. She held her boubou up away from the muddy path that led from her hired taxi down to the motorized canoe beached on the bank of the strong brown river. She compared her estimated profit for this trip to the amount required to take her daughters and Boubacar to France. She came up short. Again.

As she reached the canoe the driver of her taxi honked impatiently. She looked back and saw a man and a woman leaning over the driver's window and moving their hands in a wild manner. The woman was tall, thin and black. She wore shorts in a public place. The man was shorter. Toubobs, foreigners.

The horn sounded again but Salimanga was not worried. The taxi driver would not leave. Salimanga had rented five of the taxi's seven passenger seats, including two for herself. Salimanga was a big woman.

Salimanga had finished high school. She went to church with the Europeans. She was fluent in Peul, English, Arabic and French. She had toubob friends who invited her to their homes when she had things to trade. Not bad for a Peul girl from a village half a day up river from Banjul. Not as good as Miriam N'jiaye, of course. Miriam N'jiaye had just been named deputy finance minister in the new government.

Boubacar helped twelve-year-old Bijou, with the baby on her back, into the narrow canoe that worked as

the river ferry. The craft rocked unsteadily as Salimanga settled herself in the front seat. She was two meters tall and weighed almost twice as much as the equally tall but bony Boubacar. Her assistant and his ancestors had been the property of a prominent family in Mauritania. Salimanga had taken him in trade for a consignment of counterfeit designer cosmetics. She needed an assistant and sometimes a bodyguard. She paid Boubacar a small salary and did not beat him. He presented her with sandals on Islamic feast days and slept outside her door during her travels.

A Mandinka man was already in the boat with two of his wives. A leopard skin hung over his shoulder. A ceremonial flywhisk he carried identified him as a "big man," a chief. He nodded at Salimanga. She returned the courtesy.

Salimanga adjusted her boubou to keep it out of the water in the bottom of the canoe. Her breasts ached. She would have to feed the baby soon. She smiled at the chief's wives who wore colorful cotton prints that featured portraits of a president from several coup d'etats ago. Salimanga's garment was made of Parisian silk in a black and white geometric pattern. She wore

a turban that matched her boubou and huge golden ear ornaments shaped like twisted star fruit. Salimanga's costume said, here is a woman who does not pound millet, draw water or sit below the village men's speaking platform. People made way for Salimanga.

A small boy pushed them out into the current and they moved out toward the far shore where the



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## F O C U S

rounded mud buildings of the market town emerged seamlessly from like-hued soil the color of rust. The mud towers of the Grande Mosquée dominated the town's silhouette. The sacred ostrich eggs atop the mosque's tallest spires glowed like beacons in the early morning light.

Boubacar hoisted a white umbrella over Salimanga, but she motioned for him to shade Bijou and the baby. The infant girl's ears were already pierced with small gold studs. Bijou wore a small gold nose ring like her mother and a set of Walkman headphones.

They entered the market. Pungent piles of brown, dried fish thickened the air. Fulani men in conical hats sold mounds of fiery red chilies. Flute and drum music accompanied a troupe of Mouride acrobats as they solicited support for their walk to Mecca with handstands and back flips.

Salimanga had promised Boubacar she would pay for his passage to Mecca when she went to France. Boubacar would be the first in his family to add the honorific of El Hadji to his name upon completion of a pilgrimage to the sacred city. After this trip, Salimanga would be the first in her family to fly in a plane.

They entered the shop of a Lebanese trader. Salimanga was surprised to see the same pair of toubobs who had been arguing with her driver now standing in Ousman's shop. Ousman Dupres sold sundries in the front of his mud-walled shop and anything he could in the back. Salimanga knew he manufactured African "antiques" and bootleg beer in a converted latrine. She could see a stack of fake "33" brand beer labels that had spilled onto the floor. "Adaptée au Climat" they said.

Ousman offered quick cash and no questions about provenance. On her last trip, Salimanga had traded cosmetics and a fax machine for some Roman coins and a bag of amber. He had promised her more amber for this season's visit. Salimanga had buyers in Dakar.

Dirty plastic bags full of amber lay strewn on the counter. Salimanga began to open the plastic bags and examine their contents. This was not the highly polished amber familiar to toubobs. These pieces were as big as a baby's fist, worn smooth and opaque with long use. One had to work and worry these beads to see what lay inside. These necklaces had been the wealth of families, daughters' dowries and means of escape.

---

*Joseph Salvo is an FSO with USAID in Washington, D.C.*

Salimanga sorted them into two piles, speaking in Arabic to Ousman.

"15,000 Swiss," he replied and then turned to the foreign man. The woman was holding up a complicated triple strand of amber colored beads.

"C'est combien?" asked the man.

Ousman responded with a ridiculous price. The man spoke with the woman and then paid Ousman. The woman arranged the strands as a necklace. Salimanga was so taken aback by the woman's strange actions that she forgot her bargaining for a moment and turned to leave. Ousman, quick as a snake, turned back to her and lowered his price in whispered Arabic. After more haggling they agreed on a price and Boubacar helped Ousman wrap the amber.

Salimanga wondered why the foreign woman would wear the strands of frankincense around her neck. Village women wore them like a G-string during their monthly cycle. Salimanga had always preferred the cotton pads she bought at the pharmacy. Maybe this was a new European fashion. Salimanga would look for it in her magazines.

At the taxi, the driver told Salimanga that the toubobs had purchased the last two seats and were having a drink in the taxi stand restaurant.

Boubacar waited with their purchases at the taxi. Salimanga and her daughters entered the restaurant called "Buvette de la Gare." The window openings were bare of glass or screens. Clouds of flies explored every surface inside the "Buvette." The foreigners were just getting seated in the corner. The woman wore a tight pink blouse and baggy white shorts. The other customers, taxi drivers and market women, stared at the woman's bare legs which were covered in insect bites. The woman's hair was done Peul style in long thin braids. Bijou had thin braids too, but they were shorter and they stuck straight out from her head in a style the Banjul Beauty Academy called "Le Sputnik."

The toubob man was older and red in the face. He wore a long-sleeved shirt, a hat and pants covered with pockets. Perhaps he had so much money he needed the extra pockets.

The owner and an old man were playing checkers with bottle tops on a table near a kerosene-powered cooler. The owner came to Salimanga's table. She ordered two Fantas. After their drinks came they kept the bottle caps on top of the bottles when they weren't drinking.

*Salimanga undid the top of her boubou,  
grabbed her breast and expressed a triple stream of milk  
onto the stricken woman's face.*

---

The room smelled of burnt millet, kerosene and human waste. A sign over what appeared to be the bathroom door said, "En panne."

The owner went over to the foreigners.

The man said, "There are only two choices, Michelle. Orange Fanta or 33 beer."

"Give me one of each."

The owner brought the foreigners' order. Condensation dripped off the bottles. Michelle picked one up and rubbed the moisture off on her neck. The bottle felt only slightly cooler than the stifling room.

The man held up a beer bottle and read the label. "At least it says it's from France," he said. "The local stuff will blind you."

He carefully wiped the neck of the bottle and took a drink. A few moments later he spit a mouthful of beer on the floor and held the dark bottle up to see if any more flies had become trapped inside.

Bijou stared at Michelle. Salimanga kicked Bijou's leg under the table. "Stop staring," she whispered in Peul.

Bijou opened one of Salimanga's glamour magazines and showed Salimanga a picture of Michelle in a perfume ad.

"She's so elegant, mother. A model from Paris. Am I pretty enough to do that?"

"You can do better than that, Bijou. Look at the scandalous woman. She's not even wearing a brassiere. And she smells of butter."

Bijou was silent.

"Learn about commerce, daughter, and no man will ever throw you out into the street, like your father did to me," continued Salimanga.

The foreigners finished their drinks and followed Salimanga to the taxi. The driver's name was Samba Ba. He had gray hair and wore a Chicago Bulls T-shirt. Two new designer suitcases were on Salimanga's seats.

"Bonjour," said the man with a Parisian accent.

"Bonjour," said Salimanga. She continued in French, "My name is Salimanga."

"Yes. My name is Jacques. We are in a great hurry to reach Bamako."

"So are we. You have business in Bamako?"

The toubob woman interrupted in American-accented French, "We flew up yesterday on a chartered plane but it broke down. Another will meet us in Bamako tomorrow."

"Do not worry. I have been with Samba many times. He will get us to Bamako tonight. Samba will tie your suitcases on the roof. Then we can go," said Salimanga.

The Frenchman spoke, "Pardon me, Madam. We cannot put the suitcases on the roof. They contain valuable equipment and mademoiselle's clothes. They must be inside, in the air conditioning, or the heat and dust will damage them."

"Ah, but I have purchased all of the other seats." Salimanga motioned to the driver. "Tell them about the air conditioner."

"C'est en panne," said the driver.

"Perhaps your solution is to take another car," said Salimanga.

Samba tied the luggage to the roof with plastic twine. The Frenchman followed him around the car and retied some of the knots. Samba and the toubobs sat in front. Salimanga, Bijou and the baby sat in the middle seats. Boubacar sat in the back with their purchases and cut a sandal pattern out of cardboard with a curved knife.

Salimanga and Bijou began to wrap loosely woven white shawls around their faces and over the baby as the driver tried to start the car. The car started on the third try.

Michelle tried to wind down the front window, but the handle turned freely with no effect.

"En panne," said Samba Ba.

The taxi pulled away from the parking area, picking up speed over a dry laterite road, which veered off from the river. Lush green gave way to goat-eaten thorn trees and termite mounds. A high rooster tail of red dust grew behind the car. Gritty red particles began to enter the car from every direction. Hot orange plumes blew in through the open windows and swirled in sunlit eddies around the passengers. The air vents deposited small drifts on Michelle's thighs. The sweat

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on Jacques' forehead ran down his face in muddy streaks. Every time the car hit a bump fine siftings from the worn roof liner drifted down on the passengers' heads.

Salimanga looked over at her daughters. The dust-coated shawls rendered them featureless like figures from Pompeii that she had seen in one of Bijou's books.

They did not stop until the twine unraveled and the suitcases flew off the roof. The road was again near the river. On the river side, tall grass covered a gentle slope to the water. The other side of the road had sparse grass at the base of a reddish-brown cliff. The temperature was 120 degrees. The suitcases were scuffed and partially open but had remained intact.

Salimanga walked to the side of the road and crouched down, encased in her boubou, to relieve herself. When Salimanga had finished she stood up and moved away. Boubacar crouched in his plain brown tunic on the same spot. When he was done he kicked dirt on the dark wet circle until it was covered.

Michelle was saying something to Jacques as they returned with the bags.

"...and Jacques, they know nothing about personal hygiene. They're like animals." Michelle began to make her way down to the water's edge through the waist-high grass. Salimanga started to say something, thought better of it and remained silent. The woman probably had a bidet in Paris. Salimanga remembered the first time she had seen a bidet in a foreigner's house. She had taken a drink, thinking it was an oddly shaped fountain.

Boubacar, Samba and Bijou were all watching as Michelle lowered herself into the grass. The wind kicked up wraiths of dust, the first stirrings of the dry season harmattan that would blow red dust all the way to the snows of Europe. Gusts created patterns in the grass and on the river water. The grass responded more quickly than water to nuances of wind.

Salimanga started when she saw the wake. Not in the water, but in the grass. The grass blades parted as if an invisible finger were making a furrow aimed down the



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slope toward the woman. Boubacar saw the wake and grabbed his umbrella.

Michelle stood up facing the river and began to button her baggy shorts. She turned toward Salimanga just as the huge cobra arched up into its S-shaped striking position. Its head was even with hers and an arm's length away.

Boubacar moved to a point several yards behind the snake.

Michelle's eyes and mouth were wide open. She did not blink. She did not move her hands as her unbuttoned shorts fell around her legs. The snake tracked the movement. Its black neck below the flared hood was as thick as Michelle's. The woman's underwear was lacy and white.

Samba shouted. Jacques saw the snake and jumped on top of the car. Boubacar edged closer, raising his feet high with each step. Only a few yards from the snake he paused with one foot raised and the umbrella held over his head, point down.

Michelle's shirt darkened under her arms. Flies quickly gathered on her shirt and face. Boubacar took a step closer. Bijou clutched her mother's arm. The baby began to cry.

At the sound of the child Michelle seemed to wake up. She made a small noise and took a step back. The snake's head made a quick natural jerk. Michelle screamed, grabbed her face and crumpled into the grass.

Boubacar struck with the umbrella point like a marabou stork attacking a carcass. He reversed his weapon and used the crook end of the umbrella to snag up a portion of the snake's middle. He dropped the umbrella and held the snake with both hands about five feet from its head. He whipped it forward. Salimanga could hear the pop as its neck broke.

Boubacar made sure the cobra was dead, then ran to where the woman lay writhing in the mud. He picked her up and carried her to the car. She screamed and tore at her face.

Salimanga got into her seat. "Lay the girl in the middle seat," she said. "Put her head on my lap, quickly."

Boubacar did as Salimanga instructed and went back into the grass. He called for Samba to help him with the snake. Bijou rocked the baby outside the car as her mother examined the woman inside the car. Salimanga knew exactly what to do; she'd watched a village woman save a little boy after a cobra had spit in his eyes.

She spoke in English in a soft voice, "Keep your hands away from your face, or you will rub in the poison."

Boubacar and the driver dragged the snake out of the grass. The animal was three yards long. Boubacar began to carefully skin the snake and roll up the skin. There was enough to make several new pairs of sandals.

Michelle lay on her side with her head on Salimanga's lap. She had scratched several deep furrows around her eyes. There would be scars.

Salimanga spoke again in soft even tones. "The eater of snakes only spat at you. We must wash out your eyes so you will not lose your sight. Please open them a little."

Salimanga undid the top of her boubou and exposed a massive breast. She grabbed her breast and expressed a triple stream of milk onto the stricken woman's face, just as the women in Salimanga's village had done.

Boubacar asked in Arabic, "Why do toubobs disturb the snake's home, madam?"

"They are like children, Boubacar. Their mothers did not teach them."

"Can you save her?" asked Jacques in rapid French from the front seat.

"I will try."

"She is a famous lady in France. I will pay you a lot of money if you can save her."

After sunset and nearer to Bamako, the road had smoothed out. Salimanga was at ease, her eyes closed, half asleep. Her lap was soaked in milk but comfortable with the woman curled there. The air coming through the window brought the heavy river smell mixed with the aromas of her milk, her girls and Michelle's "necklace." Speeding through the warm Sahelian dark she wondered if it would be too cold for her in France.

Later, on the taxi ride from the airport to her village, Salimanga smiled at her good fortune. She had made more than twice her planned profit on this trip. Her goods were carefully packed in designer luggage in the back of the taxi. She had flown on a plane. She decided she preferred travel by car. The plane had almost hit a goat while landing.

With her profit she could go to France, but thought she might open a shop instead. Perhaps she would run for village mayor in the next election. The taxi stopped in front of her house. It took some time to get Salimanga, her family and her belongings out of the car. She was, after all, a big woman. ■

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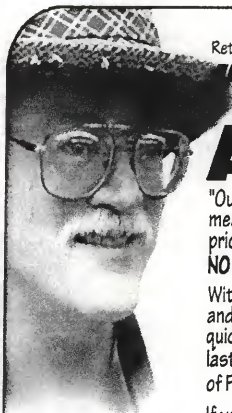


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# FOLLOW THROUGH

BY ANDY LARAIA

When I was eight, my father moved our family to London. The Cold War was nearing an end, but for my father it was still raging. In 1989, the Navy needed him in Europe and we found ourselves living near Grosvenor Square. From my father's office window at Naval Headquarters, Europe there was a beautiful view of the American Embassy and a statue of Ike, towering over the park as if it were the whole of Europe that he had helped to conquer 44 years before. I was only in my father's office once; what he did for the Navy was always a mystery to me.

For my four sisters and my mother, raised on *Jane Eyre*, *Emma* and other models of genteel British life and manners, moving to London was a dream come true. For me, however, the enthusiasm was non-existent. I liked living in our quiet town of Alexandria, Va., where I was left relatively alone in my world of books, toy soldiers and fishing off the pier in Old Town. I didn't have friends, save for a lieutenant colonel's son named Martin. Martin, just like anyone else I ever played with, was in charge.

The fact that Martin was able to bully me should come as no surprise. I was the consummate target of bullies because of my size. I never grew very tall and remained the same size from about the age of 12. Not only was I tiny, but I had a head of bright, blinding

blond hair and wore glasses thick enough to earn the nickname "Bug Eyes." At the American School in London, however, I spent the majority of my time getting the hell beat out of me by other misplaced American kids: sons of colonels and generals brought up on football and wrestling, armed with well-built American muscles. I can't say why I was picked on so much. Some people are just unlucky and some are just mean.

I blamed my father in part for my constant state of siege. If he had been around more, I would have known better how to defend myself from the raging hordes at school. Without my father's influence I had no one except my sisters to teach me how to protect myself. All they were capable of showing me was how to bite, kick, scratch, and pull hair — all taught through example. So, I assumed the safest position of defense that I knew: I hid.

Aside from hiding, the other best defense I knew was to not let being picked on bother me. It was no extraordinary feat of the mind. It was more a case of displacement. Is that the word? I'm not a psychologist. Out of necessity, I realized that the best way to survive being a human punching bag was to ignore it. I was confident, even at a young age, and decided that being different was something I could live with. My father was the perfect example. He was different. Most fathers came home each night from work, watched TV, took their kids to baseball games. My father was gone, rarely had



Loed Burr

contact with his children, and he seemed fine. He lived a life that most people only dreamt about and being his son in some way gave me the right to be different as well. It was reason enough, and when you took as many beatings as I did, there needed to be some excuse.

**M**y father was the head of our household only in spirit. He was gone so much on "official" business that I sometimes did not recognize him when he returned home. Although their mighty empire was teetering on collapse, shadowy Russian ghosts kept my father away for days and weeks at a time. The Cold War was never called off for a holiday, so my father's time with us was relegated to the occasional long weekend. When he was home, he was a nice enough man, if a little out of place. I always felt awkward around my father and he seemed to feel the same around us. If losing my father meant keeping the Russians from charging across our borders and into our cities, then I was willing to make that sacrifice.

When he was home, my father usually spent his time in the kitchen reading the newspaper or going over what could only have been secret documents. My mother didn't allow us to bother him while he was working, but I would occasionally sneak in to get a look at him. He didn't look like a soldier, but more like a businessman. He would usually be reading, lips pursed in concentration, rolling a pencil between his thumb and forefinger. He always wore a tie and kept his collar button done up tight. He kept his haircut short, high and tight. He looked formal, stiff, and he behaved the same way.

When he wasn't working and I was allowed to be with him, there was always an uncomfortable silence that underscored our lack of having anything to say to one another. He would make the usual inquiries about grades and hobbies, and satisfied with the cautious answers I gave him, would return to his work. He never asked about how things were for me where it concerned my bruises. And I never told him. My father had his war to fight and I had my own.

I looked on him with awe reserved for the mythical

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*Andy LaRaia is studying writing at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. Follow Through is his first published story.*

characters in my books. He was my hero and I planned with all certainty to be just like him when I grew up. It didn't matter that I was small, uncoordinated and blind without my glasses. It didn't matter that I hardly knew enough about my father to want to be like him, let alone even call him anything as familiar as Dad. To be like my father meant to be a solitary figure, alone and standing up to the world. The bullies I faced in school were my communist hordes and, though I took my fair share of losses, I was doing my best to defend the world.

But I needed a hero and I needed to know that my father had a good reason to leave us on our own. For as much as he was my father only in name, he was still my father, and he did try.

**I**t was close to Christmas, our second year of living in London. My father had just returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., a secret meeting in the basement of the Pentagon, I imagined. I was home alone. I heard the front door open, and expecting my sisters, instead heard my father's deep voice call out, asking if anyone was home. I went down to the front landing and looked down. His bags were sitting in a neat pile by the front door, but my father had wandered off looking for us. I went down the stairs and called out his name. He came out of the kitchen and smiled. In his hand, he carried an oblong object, and he caught me off guard by tossing it to me. I instinctively put my hands up to catch it, but the thing sailed through my hands and bounced off the polished wood floor. I turned, looked, and realized it was a football. I turned back to my dad, unsure of what was going on.

"It's a football. Pick it up."

I got the ball and turned it over in my hands. Imprinted on the red leather surface was a logo of an Indian head. Underneath, in a frilly script, was the word *Redskins*. The thing was big and felt awkward in my little hands. I looked up at my father and he answered my puzzled expression with, "It's a football, a present for you."

"I know it's a football," I said, a little surprised at receiving a present.

"One of the boys at the Pentagon took us all to a Redskins game. I thought you might like a souvenir. You were a Redskins fan back at home weren't you?"

*I needed a hero and  
I needed to know that my father had  
a good reason to leave us on our own.*

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I wasn't much of an athlete. The playing field was dangerous territory for me. I spent most of any recess far away from the action.

"Stephen," he said, instead of the Stephen, Jr. he uniformly called me, "what do you say we go toss this thing around in the backyard?"

"But I don't know anything about football."

"That's all right. I can show you." With that, he turned and went towards the back door leading to our backyard.

I followed him outside and the cold December air hit me. It was wet and I didn't have a coat, but something told me not to worry about it. My father walked to the far end of our long, narrow lawn and told me to stay where I was. He turned to face me. I rotated the ball around in my hands, wondering how to hold it. I looked at my father, thinking I should ask him what to do now, but he was busy. He undid his tie, folded it neatly and laid it on the grass a few feet away from him. Then, he not only undid his collar button, but a few more down, revealing his white undershirt. Then he rolled up his sleeves, clapped his hands together and called to me, "All right, Stephen, give it a toss."

I hoisted the ball over my head, thought about how I should throw the thing, then lowered my arms. My hands were small and I thought if I held the ball with just one hand, I would drop it. I lifted it again, this time with one hand gripped as tightly as I could around the laces and the other against the back tip of the ball, and let go with a half push, half throw. The ball made a blocky kind of lurch up into the air, then hit the ground with a thud a few feet wide of my father's left foot.

"Here, try again," he called and tossed the ball softly to me. It made a delicate rise and fall pattern, spinning like an odd shaped top. I stuck both hands out to catch the thing and it glanced painfully off of my fingertips. I picked it up again, trying quickly to come up with a better way to throw the damn thing. In my nervousness, I had neglected to watch how my father held the ball. This time, I gripped the ball toward the back, with one hand

only, and gave it a heave. The ball did a zig zag across the yard and landed far from its mark. My father trotted over towards the stone wall that surrounded the lawn like a castle battlement and picked up the ball.

"Watch me," he called and lobbed the ball with another perfect spiral. "Over the shoulder, straight arm. Throw it like an arrow. Straight through. Let your arms go naturally. Always follow through."

It was a beautiful thing to see as the ball passed through the air, cutting the dull London light, coming slowly, easily toward me. I began moving backwards with quick steps, made a basket of my arms and waited. The ball came down, still spinning deliberately like a whirlpool of water going down the sink, and landed in my arms. I hugged the ball to me hard, afraid of losing it. I stopped moving and realized my eyes were closed. When I opened them, the ball was there, cradled to my chest. I looked up towards my father, who smiled and said, "Great catch. Never let go of the ball. If you drop it, the other team can take it from you and make a touch-down off your mistake."

I looked at the ball, tucked there against my chest and I thought if I could catch it, then certainly I could throw it. I hoisted the ball again, this time copying what my father had done; I gripped the ball near the back end, letting my fingers spread over the laces instead of locking them in between. I pulled the ball back straight past my ear and let it go, imagining it to be a rocket headed for my father in a straight, unwavering path. But it didn't make it. The ball skidded off of my fingers and flew lopsided across the air, bouncing at my father's feet again. He picked the football up and dropped back a few feet, holding the pose of a trophy athlete for a moment.

"See if you can catch it again," he called and let the ball fly. This time, I had to move forward to catch the ball, and I did it in quick nimble steps. The ball sank into the pocket of my waiting arms and I fell forward into the grass, then rolled up and landed on my feet.

*My fingertips were red and swollen.  
The cold hurt them and I was covered  
with a light sheen of sweat.*

"Excellent catch, son," my father called with a rare smile on his face. "Excellent catch."

I tossed the ball underhanded to him and trotted back to my end of the yard. "How about I practice my spiral and you keep working on that catching game of yours?"

And for the rest of the afternoon, my normally silent father called out plays, made the noise of a cheering crowd when I executed a particularly good catch, and made up the play-by-play of countless, on the wire, do or die games that would be won or lost on the last ditch play of desperation, with my father as the star quarterback and me as the great receiver. Sometime during our game, my mother and sisters had returned. My mother opened the back door and called us in to dinner. It was almost dark and the rain had started to fall in big, fat drops. My father picked up his tie and came over to me.

"Well, you got the hang of it, didn't you?"

"I think I did."

"We might be able to make a great receiver out of you someday."

"I'm too small to be a football player."

"Most receivers are small, Stephen. That doesn't matter, as long as you're quick and you have strong hands. Let's see those hands."

I put my hand up and he held out his. I placed it against his outstretched palm. His hand engulfed mine and he scrutinized it. "You've got to have strong hands," he said.

My fingertips were red and swollen. The cold hurt them and I was covered with a light sheen of sweat.

"Do they hurt?" he asked me.

"Only a little," I said. "But I don't mind."

"They look a little swollen. But you'll get used to that." He buttoned up his shirt and pulled his tie around his neck.

"Maybe we can play again tomorrow?" I asked.

"Maybe we can."

When I woke up the next morning, my father was gone again. I asked my mother where he had gone, and she said, "Stephen, you know the answer to that. Now go get ready for school."

I dressed in my maroon school blazer and gray trousers. I kissed my mother goodbye and then began my route to school. I had another plan, though. Instead of catching my usual bus to school, I took the Tube to Grosvenor Square, hoping I could find my father. The morning traffic was heavy, with black cars arriving at the embassy, dropping off important people. Men in uniform, British and American, rushed past me; I looked for my father in each one of them. I wanted to go into headquarters and find my father, but I knew to get in you had to have a special pass and be searched before going through the guard's station. I was afraid that the guard would send me back to school. I had never skipped school before and I felt a little thrill at being out on my own. It was as if I were on my own mission, just like my father. After being jostled around for a while by the people on the sidewalk, I headed across the street for the park. I went to the statue of Eisenhower and looked back across to my father's office window. The lights were off and I decided to wait until they came on. Ike's statue threw a long shadow over me as I waited. I sat down, watching for my father's lights. I lost track of the time and Ike's shadow changed as the day grew longer. I finally conceded that my father was not at work. I sat with my head leaning against the pillar of the statue. I stood up and turned to look at Ike, his face covered under the shadow of his cap, obscuring his features. He could have been looking at something in the distance. Whatever it was, he was proud and faced the future with confidence.

"Hey, Ike," I said, "Always follow through. And never let go of the ball. If you drop it, the other team can take it from you and make a touchdown. Always hold on to it."

Maybe I was hoping that he would move or make some gesture to me. I took one more look at my father's window, then headed for the street. Over my shoulder, I called out to Ike, "Always hold on to the ball." I turned quickly, hoping to catch him off guard. And he stood there watching me go, wishing me luck. ■

# RHYTHM KING

BY BENJAMIN CHAMBERS

**B**efore he was 20 he flew across Europe, dropping tonnage all over the map. He liked flying at night above the blacked-out cities, his flight crew whispering in his headphones. It was easy to imagine that he was not a destroyer, for he built new edifices of shell fragments, fire, and soundless columns of smoke. On the ground there were DPs everywhere, but he slept soundly.

A Polish kid who worked for *The Stars and Stripes* asked him, "It doesn't get to you? Bombing cities. Displacing people. Coulda been your home town, things been different."

Rhythm King shrugged. "It's the Army that's paying me. Let them deal with it."

But he had his limits. There were guys who bragged about what they could make a DP do for chocolate or cigarettes. Rhythm King would squint his eyes and imagine guys like these going out on a mission and not coming back. They always came back, though. It was the nice ones who didn't make it.

After the war he went to California to work for Lockheed, on the line. He scraped along until he couldn't stand it anymore and went back into the Army. He did a tour in Korea, got out when he had the chance. From there he went to Alaska to become a bush pilot. Thereafter you could often find him in a Lisbon bar, fat-faced and pale, ready to deal. He'd fly anywhere.

There were women. He piloted charters to Greece

whenever things got slow, and one of the tourists fell for him. It's true he was overweight, his dungarees stale. Still and all he was a dead hand at flying, a breezy and compelling liar — to his passengers he was a figure of romance, and he never hesitated to trade on that.

Guys he knew were all pilots like him, willing to go anywhere for a price. Each one had an eye out for the main chance, the big job that would allow him to go back home and never have to work again. Rhythm King made a show of going along with them. He'd talk about a cabin in Alaska, with trap lines for game and a noisy mail plane coming once a month, but he didn't believe in it. Anyone could see how guys in the business ended, their planes shot down, cracked up. Or customs impounded their cargo and incarcerated them. Slow death for a flier.

Rhythm King wanted only to stay in the air. He didn't care where he was sent or what he ferried. What mattered was to keep moving. He was nervous on the ground, between jobs. His appetite dwindled until the next assignment came along. With the first installment of sweat-dampened notes, he'd treat himself to a first-class steak and take off as

soon as he got clearance.

One day in 1967, he walked into the American Express office in Lisbon and found a black-and-white snapshot of a 10-year-old girl waiting for him. She stood in front of a brick house wearing knee socks, saddle shoes and a jumper. Her right hand was a blur. On the back of the snap, an adult had written,



Loel Har

*The exhausted Ibo captain signed the manifest,  
turned and sleepwalked right through  
the moving propeller.*

---

October. Someone else had written in large, loopy handwriting, *Hi, Uncle Rhythm. Love, Carly.* There was no return address. No other pictures came.

He bought himself a Moroccan wallet with silver trim hammered onto the corners and in it he placed the photo of the girl, and a photo of himself standing in front of a Fairchild Hiller in Mozambique. He knew the girl wasn't his niece.

In 1969, kids were starving in Biafra. Joint Church Aid agreed to pay Rhythm King 2,000 a week to fly stockfish and Formula 2 from São Tomé to Uli. It would be a limited run. The Biafrans were holding off the Nigerians with ack-ack guns rigged from automobile exhaust pipes. Recruits learning the machine gun had empty magazines. They'd pull the trigger and yell, "Buppa buppa buppa!"

The airport at Uli was only a strip of pitted highway during the day. At night, the blue Christmas lights strung along the roadway flashed on just long enough for him to bring down the aging Super Constellation, its hold filled with mite-ridden rice and wormy powdered milk. He found it strange not to smell rifle grease, cordite.

He only stayed long enough to drop his cargo. He left his props turning, convinced for those seven minutes that a 90mm rocket would drop out of the night sky and light up the hidden airfield like a pinball machine: clanging, numbers thunking upwards, the buzzing screams of the wounded, and lots of pretty winking colors.

It didn't happen. He sold a cigarette to an exhausted Ibo captain who signed the manifest, turned, and sleepwalked right through the moving propeller.

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*Benjamin Chambers received his MFA from Washington University. He has published fiction and non-fiction in various journals. Assiduous readers will find the rumor of the airplane full of gold in Herbert Gold's Biafra, Good-bye.*

Rhythm King pivoted and spewed. Crinkly sheets of bile splattered his shoes. Warm rain poured out of the night heavens, soaking his back and the paper in his hand. In the air again, the flak bloomed beneath him, each red shellburst like a head flying apart.

When he got to São Tomé, he turned right around and flew back with another load. After that first time, he was there every night. MiGs were strafing Biafran hospitals, but he didn't notice. American newspapers talked of the starving children, of how their rectums prolapsed and hung down between their legs like ugly red tails, but he didn't read them. During the days he slept in the damp bunkhouse in São Tomé. Planes from Portugal screeched overhead while he dreamed of Christmas. Nights, he popped Benzedrine tabs and chewed Juicy Fruit by the yard.

One of the priests on the island pulled him aside. "Why don't you take the night off?"

Rhythm King put on his green-lensed sunglasses. "I've got money to earn, Father."

The priest raised his eyebrows. He had a disfiguring overbite. "You know we can't pay you a bonus. Was that what you were thinking? No? Then perhaps you wanted to save Biafra single-handed?"

"I don't give a shit what happens to Biafra. Nigeria can have it, for all I care."

"You don't admire the Ibos just a little? Their spirit, perhaps? Fighting on with almost nothing?"

"A little," Rhythm King agreed reluctantly. He told the priest about the Ibo captain who'd walked through his propeller. "You know, I've killed a lot of people, but I ain't ever seen anyone die before."

"You feel you've sinned."

Rhythm King rolled his shoulders, stretched his neck. "I wouldn't go that far. I just don't get it, is all. What was in it for him? He must've known the Nigerians are gonna win eventually. It's not like he got anything for keeping himself awake. Now he's just ... propwash."

## F O C U S

The priest lowered his head for a moment. Gravel crunched beneath their feet. "And you? What do you get for staying awake?"

The sun flashed as it sank beneath the horizon. "That ain't the point."

"It most certainly is."

"You know what I wish?" the pilot said suddenly. "I wish to hell I hadn't of sold him that cigarette. I could've just given it to him."

"Yes." The priest's tone was soothing, as if he were talking to a wounded animal. "There may be something else you can do. I could speak to someone."

But Rhythm King appeared not to have heard. "Father, the American churches are sending you money, aren't they? The interfaith councils, right?"

The priest nodded. "It's common knowledge."

"Can you get a message to somebody?"

"I can try."

Rhythm King pulled out the Moroccan wallet. "There's this little girl. Her name's Carly."

The priest examined the picture Rhythm King held. "Very sweet girl." From somewhere he produced a pen and paper and wrote *Carly* down. "And her last name?"

Rhythm King licked his lips and shook his head. "I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"I don't even know where she lives."

"Are you joking with me? How am I to find her, then?"

"All those churches ... I sort of thought you stuck together." Rhythm King thrust the picture at him. "Run it in the newsletter, you know. 'Do you know this little girl?' That sort of thing."

Now the priest was embarrassed. He made a show of putting away the pen and paper. "Perhaps I could do something else?"

"Skip it." The pilot looked down at the picture, and then at his tight shoes. "It don't matter anyway."

Not long after, a couple of honest-faced Biafrans picked Rhythm King to co-pilot a flight out of Uli. For captain they picked Nacho, a hotdog Rhythm King had known in Palestine after the war. The deal was that Nacho and Rhythm King would get 5,000 American dollars each to fly 19 Ibos out of free Biafra. The plane they would use was an old American Convair with all the seats ripped out, loaded instead with piles of boxes wrapped in lead foil. They were supposed to crank this

cargo through Nigerian flak and over the ocean for their gravy.

It was good money. But Rhythm King did something he'd never done before. He asked what would be in the boxes.

"Sweets," one of the Ibos said, grinning. He'd been educated at Harrow. "Chocolates."

"Hot damn," said Nacho. "From fucking Hershey, Pennsylvania, right? It say that on the manifest?" He was trying to gloss over Rhythm King's gaffe. The Ibo spokesman laughed politely.

But Rhythm King leaned forward and said to them, "I don't want to help the top Biafran brass clean out the treasury and desert the country while everybody else gets wiped out. If that's what this is, I'm not doing it."

The spokesman's grin disappeared. "What is in those boxes is our last hope."

"Now you're talking," said Rhythm King.

The night began dully. Even the crescent moon was blunted. The Biafrans loaded the cargo, sweat staining their shirts black, then boarded the plane with their carbines.

"Only got one round between 'em," Nacho said to Rhythm King, and winked. It was probably true.

The Christmas lights flashed on and then they were in the air. They flew over the dark, tangled masses of greenery. No little red balls of flak floated up to greet them. It was as though the Nigerians had been put to sleep by a spell.

When they reached the coast and left the range of the Nigerian guns, he and Nacho relaxed. "Five grand," Nacho sighed. "That's a lot of money. What'll you do with yours?"

"Haven't thought about it." Rhythm King had pulled out his wallet and was looking at Carly's picture. "Hey Nacho, you got any kids?"

"Two daughters and a son," he said proudly, "that I know about. Live in San Antonio. Their mother won't let me talk to them. Says I'm a bad influence."

"Miss them?"

"Sorta. Don't hardly know 'em, really." He nodded at the picture in Rhythm King's hands. "Who you got there?"

*The black men looked at each other  
in a way that gave him goosebumps.  
No one actually pointed a weapon at him,  
but the feeling was the same.*

---

"I don't know," Rhythm King said, and put it away.

Across the pale welkin the plane floated, steered by its melancholy gondoliers. Rhythm King dozed. The Biafrans stayed with the cargo, huddled around it with their guns.

Later, an engine went out. The plane sank, waking Rhythm King. Nacho was sweating, but calm. The water beneath them was smooth and neatly groomed in the moonlight, like the lawn of a cemetery.

"We gotta dump those damn boxes before they drag us into the slime," Nacho said. "Get the Biafrans to help."

As Rhythm King got to his feet, Nacho handed him a loaded machine pistol.

"What's this?"

Nacho shrugged. "Not saying you gotta use it."

Rhythm King found that the Biafrans had already unsealed one of the hatches. The briny smell of the ocean filled the cabin. The men were crowded together at the hatchway, taking turns peering out. Each of them was dressed in a yellow life jacket. Rhythm King pointed to the hulking pile of boxes and called, "You waiting for a chance to swim? We gotta pitch this out."

The black men looked at each other in a way that gave him goosebumps. No one actually pointed a weapon at him, but the feeling was the same. One man stepped up to him and cried over the wind rushing in the door, "What is in these packages is the blood of Biafra! Without it, she will die."

"If there's any dying to be done, it ain't gonna be by me," Rhythm King said. "Nor you either." He gestured with the pistol, pointing again at the cargo. "Now throw it out. We ain't got much time."

"We cannot do this!" the man said. "Do not be a fool. I tell you it is the blood of our country, and you would have us spill it into the ocean?"

"Blood," Rhythm King repeated. The man who had spoken to him nodded curtly. No one else said anything.

Rhythm King crossed to the pile and carefully folded back the lead foil on one of the packages, as if he were opening a candy bar. Inside was a brick of solid gold. Nacho's pistol felt light as balsa wood in comparison. He looked again at the packages, then at the men.

"You're traitors, aren't you?" he asked in a depressed voice. "You cut and run like dogs." Beneath his feet, the floor vibrated. Mixed in with the smell of the ocean was the stink of the men in the hold. Would they kill him?

The spokesman broke into rapid speech. "We are not traitors. Biafra is losing the war. We are losing because we do not control the oil wells and so the world sides with the Nigerians. Also, we are losing because we are poor and cannot afford to buy weapons. So you see, we cannot dump this gold. No. It is impossible."

"You were going shopping?" Rhythm King asked. "That what you were gonna do?" His head hurt and his voice was getting hoarse. The other man nodded. Rhythm King looked at the piles of gold. There was enough to change the course of the war forever. Enough to set him up in Alaska for life. "Where'd you get it?"

The man shrugged. "I am the minister of finance."

Rhythm King tightened his grip on the pistol. "I think you're lying. I've half a mind to throw you out that door yonder."

The man grew angry. "We are wasting precious time!" The Biafran looked over his own bony shoulder at the open door. The night air seemed to panic him. "I tell you this gold is of utmost importance. It means life or death for the Biafran nation."

Thin tracings of blood vessels curtained Rhythm King's sight. "Don't be an idiot. You want us all to die?"

"My compatriots and I will jump. Together, we must

*Continued on page 33*



## AFSA Award Winners

*After Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras with devastating force in October 1998, Avis Bohlen Award winner Gwyn Creagan made extraordinary efforts to help with disaster recovery. Here, (in blue jacket) she is cleaning up a mud-damaged kindergarten.*

*Also pitching in are major-league baseball pitcher Dennis Martinez (left) and Honduran first lady Mary Flores (in white sweater). That's Creagan's husband, U.S. Ambassador James Creagan (in blue cap), lending moral support.*



*FSO James Loveland, in Mexico City, with Foreign Service nationals from the Non-Immigrant Visa Unit. Loveland received the W. Averell Harriman Award for junior officers after taking courageous stands to improve the treatment of FSNs, curtail abuses and improve morale in his consular section.*



*Pat Alter, community liaison officer at the embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, used the phone and her personal resources of energy, dedication and empathy to maintain employee morale and cohesion during a five-month-long evacuation of U.S. dependents and employees from Pakistan. Alter is the winner of the M. Juanita Guess Award.*

# AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association



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## 1999 AFSA AWARD WINNERS

**E**ach year at this time AFSA is pleased to recognize outstanding members of the Foreign Service community. The 1999 AFSA award winners were honored at a ceremony in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the Department of State at noon on June 24th.

This year Cyrus Roberts Vance was honored for his lifetime contributions to American diplomacy. Vance, who served as secretary of State in the Carter administration has a career of government service stretching back to the Kennedy administration. From obtaining release of Americans taken prisoner in the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 to



Cyrus Vance

his tenure as UN Representative to the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1993, Vance has wrestled with the thorniest foreign policy issues facing the nation. For over four decades Cy Vance's reputation for honesty and integrity has been a hallmark of his government service.

Rarely is a secretary of State so revered by Foreign Service personnel. He is a diplomat's diplomat.

Since Secretary Vance was not able to attend the ceremony, David D. Newsom, former under secretary for political affairs in the Carter administration was to accept the award on his behalf from AFSA President Dan Geisler.

FOR LIFETIME CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN DIPLOMACY:  
CYRUS ROBERTS VANCE

## • AFSA Dateline •

•AFSA and management have agreed on a revised procedure to award limited career extensions (LCEs) to specialist and generalist members of the Senior Foreign Service. Under the program, LCEs will be used to fill senior advertised vacancies which have not been filled within 30 days of the opening of stretch season. To achieve maximum transparency and fairness in implementing the new rules, AFSA sought and received assurances that LCEs granted would have no impact on promotion numbers. No one serving under LCEs can compete for promotion

and LCEs are not renewable. AFSA will carefully monitor the implementation of this program and will conduct a joint review with management after 18 months. The full text of the memorandum of agreement is posted on the AFSA web site ([www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org)).

•Management has accepted some of AFSA's recommendations for liberalizing rules concerning TICs and TISs for specialists. The new proposal would increase the 27-year time-in-service limitation to 30 years. While the six-year

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## CHRISTIAN A. HERTER AWARD WINNER:

# DAVID B. DLOUHY



David B. Dlouhy

The Christian A. Herter Award for senior officers who demonstrate initiative, integrity, intellectual courage and constructive dissent went to David B. Dlouhy. Putting his own career at risk, he spoke out against what he perceived to be improper procedures by the Office of the Inspector General responsible for the Department of State, U.S. Information Agency and Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. He worked to increase awareness of the problem among senior officials and the American Foreign Service Association, and published an article stating his concerns. The result was a constructive dialogue between AFSA and the OIG, also involving the Congress, in which significant progress has been achieved. Dlouhy

has exemplified the highest standards of moral courage.

A native Texan, Dlouhy is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He began his Foreign Service career in 1975 as an economics officer in Guinea. His overseas posts include Santiago, San Salvador, Luxembourg and La Paz, the last three as deputy chief of mission. He currently serves as the U.S. director to the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council and as Director of EUR/Bosnia Implementation. Dlouhy has received three Superior Honor Awards and a Meritorious Honor Award. He is married with two sons.

Christian A. Herter, Jr. was slated to present the award.

## WILLIAM R. RIVKIN AWARD CO-WINNERS:

# NICHOLAS HILL AND ROBERT NORMAN

Nicholas Hill and Robert Norman exhibited the intellectual courage, constructive dissent and attempt to change the course of policy that embody the highest tradition of the William R. Rivkin Award for mid-career officers. Hill, as a political officer in Belgrade with responsibility for reporting on Kosovo, consistently provided accurate analysis and foretold the future conflict in the troubled region well before the outbreak of fighting between the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serbian security forces.

As chief of the political and economic section in Belgrade, Robert Norman demonstrated outstanding integrity and honesty by supporting his officers' commitment to convey accurately and objectively the situation in the former Yugoslavia, though their analysis might be distasteful to policy-makers.

Norman and Hill co-authored a report on Kosovo outlining an active policy to head off the conflict they could see coming. Had their views

been adopted on a timely basis, the subsequent displacements, death and destruction might have been avoided.

Hill was born in Belgrade while his FSO father was serving there. He received his BA at Bowdoin College in Maine and his MA at George Washington University. In 1986 he entered the Foreign Service. His other posts have been Montreal and Sapporo. He is married with one son.

Born in Ohio, Norman earned his BA at Ohio State University and his MA at Kent State University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1980 and served his first tour in Belgrade. He was posted to Prague, Izmir, and Skopje before returning to Belgrade in 1996. He speaks five languages and has received a Meritorious Honor, two Group Superior Honor, and two Superior Honor Awards. He is married with a daughter and a son.

Mrs. John Sterry Long, widow of Ambassador Rivkin, was to present the award.



Nicholas Hill



Robert Norman

## W. AVERELL HARRIMAN AWARD WINNER:

# JAMES D. LOVELAND

James D. Loveland fully merits the W. Averell Harriman Award for junior officers. Loveland's courageous actions entailing professional risk for no personal gain are a model for other junior officers.

As deputy chief of the nonimmigrant visa unit of the consular section of the embassy in Mexico City, he demonstrated outstanding leadership and intellectual courage. He urged that the pay of local employees be reviewed and upgraded as appropriate. He successfully challenged a practice of not allowing overtime for junior officers who were working many extra hours to deal with the heavy visa workload. And finally, he

insisted that inappropriate behavior by a consular official be investigated with the result that the individual was forced to curtail and eventually resigned from the Foreign Service.

Born in Salt Lake City, Loveland received his bachelor's degree in history from Utah State University and his master's degree in economics from the University of Utah. He joined the Foreign Service in 1994 as a consular officer and served his first overseas tour in Port-au-Prince. He expects to be transferred to Montreal this summer. Loveland is married with two sons.

The Harriman Award was to be presented by Robert C. Fisk, grandson of W. Averell Harriman.



James D. Loveland

## M. JUANITA GUESS AWARD WINNER:

# Patricia Ann Alter

As a newly arrived Community Liaison Officer in Islamabad, Patricia Alter faced the challenges of helping employees and families during the five months of ordered evacuation following the bombing of U.S. embassies in East Africa and the retaliatory U.S. strikes against terrorist camps in neighboring Afghanistan. From the anxiety of the sudden departure through the stressful days of the extended evacuation, she was a constant source of information, reassurance and strength to fellow evacuees worried about where they were going and how long they would be separated from spouses and personal belongings left behind. That the cohesiveness and morale of the diverse mission survived, and in fact grew stronger, was due in no small part to the outstanding energy, sensitivity, dedication, tenacity, optimism and imagination of Patricia Alter.

Alter began her international life as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay. Since 1975 she has been a Foreign Service spouse serving with her husband, Bernie Alter, in Lahore, New Delhi, Chiang Mai, Toronto and Hong Kong as well as Islamabad.

Trained as a librarian, she has worked in the State Department library, as high school librarian at the Hong Kong International School and with Network, a Pakistani non-governmental organization. She was also the first CLO in Chiang Mai. She is the mother of two sons.

The M. Juanita Guess Award was to be presented by Jon Clements, President of Clements & Co. The award is given each year to an outstanding CLO in honor of Clements' mother who founded the company and worked closely with community liaison officers around the world.



Patricia Ann Alter

## AVIS BOHLEN AWARD WINNER:

# GWYN CREAGAN



Gwyn Creagan

As wife of the ambassador to Honduras and president of the *Damas Diplomáticas* (Diplomatic Women's Club), Gwyn Creagan was in a pivotal position to develop programs to help the less fortunate in Honduras. She taught crafts and baking skills to children, worked with American business leaders to improve security of a local orphanage and led American volunteers in clean-up campaigns.

When Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras in October of 1998, one of the early casualties was a local orphanage housing 40 girls supervised by seven nuns. Creagan immediately moved them to the ambassador's residence and cared for them until the orphanage was repaired. She worked untiringly with the first lady of Honduras and American agencies to bring relief to the

Honduran people. Her volunteer work was in the highest tradition of the Avis Bohlen Award.

Born and raised in Crystal City, Texas, Creagan is a graduate of San Antonio College. She has accompanied her FSO husband, James F. Creagan, to posts in Mexico City, San Salvador, Rome (twice), Lima, Naples, Lisbon, Brasilia, the Vatican, São Paulo, and the U.S. Mission to the UN, as well as Tegucigalpa. She has worked as a secretary, as community liaison officer, taught physical education, dance and aerobics and volunteered in schools and charitable organizations in all her posts. She received a Meritorious Honor Award for community service in Rome and is the mother of two sons.

The Bohlen Award for Foreign Service family members was also to be presented by Robert C. Fisk.

## AFSA ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS WINNERS:

# SHIRLIE PINKHAM AND HERMAN J. COHEN

The AFSA Achievement Award for an active member went to Shirley Pinkham for her willingness to donate time, wisdom and energy to assist AFSA's efforts to maintain the highest professional standards in the career Foreign Service. Her advice on advancing global issues in American diplomacy led to significant improvements in the multifunctional program. She contributed to improving the entry and promotion systems and participated in the State Standing and Election Committees.

Educated at Catholic University (BA), SAIS-Johns Hopkins in Bologna, Italy and Washington, D.C. (MA), and the

London School of Economics, Pinkham had a distinguished career of the Civil Service Commission in personnel and as an economist of the Commerce Department before joining State. She has worked in the consular, administrative and economic cones and served in São Paulo, San Jose, Rangoon and Ankara. She is presently Deputy Director of the Office of Population.

Herman Cohen received the Achievement Award for a

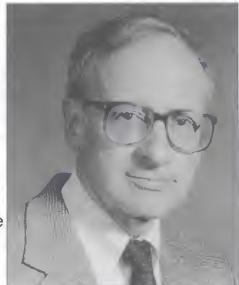
retired member. He brought his invaluable labor officer's experience to the Governing Board in the 1970s when AFSA became a labor union. As chair of the members interests committee he fought for benefits and allowances to improve the quality of life overseas. Recently as chair of the insurance committee, he has tailored insurance programs to Foreign Service needs. Several AFSA presidents have benefited from his judgment and experience and AFSA is grateful for his dedicated service.

Cohen's 38-year Foreign Service career took him to Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Zaire, and as ambassador to Senegal with dual accreditation to the Gambia. He retired as a career ambassador after his tenure as assistant secretary of State for Africa. He currently is president of the consulting firm, Cohen and Woods. His honors include the Distinguished Foreign Service Presidential Award, the Foreign Service Director General's Cup, and the Christian A. Herter Award.

AFSA president Don Geisler was to present the Achievement Awards.



Shirlye Pinkham



Herman J. Cohen

*DELAVAN AWARD CO-WINNERS:*

**LINDA CLARK, LINDA COULSON, BONITA ESTES,  
LINDA HOWARD, CAROLYN RILEY, JEAN SHIFFER,  
VICTORIA SPIERS, AND SHEILA WILSON**

The Delavan Award for office management specialists goes to a group of eight outstanding people who demonstrated extraordinary effort and achievement following the terrorist bombing of the American Embassy in Nairobi on Aug. 7, 1998. The first moments after the blast were spent searching for and assisting their colleagues, but within the hour they were in the AID office building across town reestablishing embassy operations. They set up communications with the operations center in Washington, laid the

groundwork for a Nairobi control room, organized office space and equipment, pieced together computer systems, installed phones, and started crucial files. Their achievements demonstrate both their personal dedication and the importance of the work of office management specialists.

Ambassador William Harrop was to present the award. He is married to Ann Harrop, whose parents established the Delavan Foundation which funds this award.

*continued on page 6*



Linda Coulson



Bonita Estes



Linda Howard



Carolyn Riley



Jean Shiffer



Victoria Spiers



Sheila Wilson

STATE  
**V.P. VOICE**

• BY JOHN NALAND •

## A Catalyst for Change

*Note: The Governing Board appointed John Naland to the position of State Vice President as of June 15, 1999.*

Greetings from your new State Vice President. Over the next two years, I pledge to work to make the State Department a better place for Foreign Service officers and specialists to build a career. While I am under no illusion that change will be easy, I refuse to believe that it is impossible. I know that AFSA can't do everything, but I am confident that it can be a catalyst for change.

The State Department should be a great place to work. Its mission gives employees the opportunity to help shape the future of the world. Its people are widely recognized as being among the most talented individuals that America has to offer. Its proud heritage dates back to the founding of the nation.

Unfortunately, as an organization, State sometimes is less than the sum of its parts. Too often, employees feel under-appreciated, poorly equipped and supported, or otherwise constrained by the system from performing to their fullest capacity. Employees often perceive a gap in personnel policies between what is said and what is done. Fun is not a word that many would use to characterize a typical workday.

Few doubt that change is needed. Indeed, Secretary Albright and her top managers have said that State needs to reinvent itself to improve efficiency and effectiveness. While the department's past experience at self-reform does not augur well, the next two years will

see several significant openings for reform: the consolidation of USIA with State, the desire of the current administration to leave a lasting legacy, and the coming of a new presidential administration.

AFSA's "To Do" list is always

**"I plan to form virtual working groups of electronically linked members to address key issues."**

long and covers many issues that directly impact on members' lives. I am just starting to identify the issues that I will focus on. Among others, I will push for more resources for security, for improved quality of life overseas, and for increased transparency in personnel matters. To

make it possible for more members to help shape and advance AFSA's agenda, I plan to form virtual working groups of electronically linked members worldwide to address key issues.

Above all else, I will keep you informed and (to the extent that you want to be) involved. If you are not already signed up for e-mail updates via AFSANET, you can subscribe by visiting my home page on AFSA's web site at [www.afsa.org/statevp](http://www.afsa.org/statevp). While there, you can answer my online survey to tell me what issue I should make my top priority.

In conclusion, as an FS-O2, I am less senior than most of my predecessors in this position. As such, I will likely still be in the Foreign Service 10 or even 20 years from now. That is reason enough for me to be eager to help make the State Department a better place in which to work. I hope that I can count on your active support.

## AFSA Award Winners

*continued from page 5*

• **Linda Clark** was born in Omaha, Neb., and raised in Kansas City, Mo. A U.S. Marine from 1982 to 1985, she joined the State Department in 1992. She has also served in Shenyang, La Paz, and the U.S. Mission to NATO. She is presently office manager to the ambassador in Khartoum. (No photo available.)

• **Linda Coulson** has an associate of arts degree from Santa Monica College, and 28 years of secretarial/administrative assistant experience. She came to the Department of State from the National Park Service — having worked at Yosemite, Lassen Volcanic, and Grand Teton National Parks. Previous to that she worked at the University of California at both the Los Angeles and San Diego campuses and for Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the Maui Field Site. Working in the regional security office and the administrative office in Nairobi was her first Foreign Service assignment. In August she will transfer to Dar es Salaam as OMS to the deputy chief of mission.

• **Bonita Estes** was born and raised in Chicago, Ill. From 1965 to 1971 she was with the Peace Corps: in Liberia as a volunteer secretary and high school business teacher; in Washington as assistant desk officer in East Asia Pacific Region; in Thailand as a volunteer secretary. She joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Pretoria where she worked as secretary for the political office, the deputy chief of mission and the ambassador. She married a Marine security guard and worked in the private sector. Rejoining the Foreign Service in 1997, she was assigned as the regional security offices' OMS in Nairobi. Estes is currently studying Spanish for her assignment to Lima as OMS to the deputy chief of mission.

• **Linda Howard** is from the San Francisco Bay area. After graduating from San Jose State University with a degree in business administration, she joined the Foreign Service in 1974. She has served in La Paz (twice), London, Montevideo, Beijing, Belgrade, Dakar, Madrid, Caracas and is currently assigned to Nairobi. She has received two Meritorious Honor Awards and three Meritorious

Step Increases. She speaks Spanish and French.

•**Carolyn J. Riley** was born in Cannelton, Ind. and raised in New Castle. She worked with several firms in the private sector in Indiana (Modernfold, Inc., Jenn Air and P.R. Mallory Co.) and in Florida (Landmark Bank and Florida National Bank) before joining the Foreign Service in 1987. She has served in Dar es Salaam, Harare, Lagos, and Nairobi. Since February she has been posted to Sarajevo. She has a son and daughter and two grandchildren.

•**Jean Shiffer** joined the Foreign Service in 1991 and served in Oman, Nepal and Nairobi before retiring in 1999. She now lives in Chicago where she plans to spend time with her five children and 12 grandchildren as well as work part-time, travel and learn to quilt.

•**Victoria Quilacio Spiers** is from San Antonio, Zambales, Philippines. Married to courier escort Gary Spiers, she joined the Foreign Service in 1985. Her assignments include La Paz (RSO OMS), Beijing (CG OMS), Manila (RSO OMS), Santo Domingo (ADM OMS), San Salvador (POL OMS), Nairobi (POL and ADM OMS). Her awards include: two Group Superior Honor Awards, two Meritorious Step Increases/Quality Step Increases, a Meritorious Honor Award, a Superior Honor Award and runner-up for the 1999 Foreign Service Office Management Specialist of the Year. She speaks Tagalog and Spanish.

•**Sheila P. Wilson** of Reading, Pa., joined USIA in 1971. She was secretary to the public affairs officers in Tangier and La Paz and then served in Lome as a roving secretary to the African Area which took her to Senegal, Chad, Botswana, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. In 1979 she left for the private sector as secretary to a vice president of General Battery Corp. in Pennsylvania. Returning to the FS with the State Department in 1983, she had assignments in Accra, Ghana, Abidjan, Rabat, Manila and Georgetown as well as OMS to the deputy chief of mission in Nairobi. She has three Meritorious Honor Awards and two Group Meritorious Awards. She is the mother of two sons.

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USIA

## V.P. VOICE

• BY RILEY SEVER •

### Update on Best Practices

Last fall when Congress passed an authorization bill that included USIA's integration with State, I made a list of State's "best practices" that would benefit USIA FSOs: (1) a more generous language incentive pay (LIP) policy; (2) participation in the Career Transition Course for up to two months for domestically assigned FSOs who TIC/TIS out; (3) the option for a six-year domestic assignment; and (4) a more liberal TIC/TIS extension policy for long-term training.

I proposed that USIA management immediately implement these "best practices" to demonstrate the benefits of integration. Six months later, however, only State's long-term training policy appears likely to be implemented before consolidation.

The current State language incentive pay policy couldn't be adopted earlier because USIA didn't have the money. The director general's new proposed LIP policy will apply to everyone about Oct. 1, 1999. That means USIA FSOs, even those who start language training in August, will get USIA's current language pay until October 1 and can't opt to be grandfathered in to the current State policy as our State colleagues can.

Also due to budgetary constraints, USIA was unable to implement State's "best practice" of allowing all FSOs who TIC/TIS out to participate in the Career Transition Program for two months. For officers retiring prior to Oct. 1, USIA permits two months if they TIC/TIS while overseas but only one month if

domestically assigned.

After meeting with USIA management, I am optimistic that USIA will implement State's "best practice" on long-term training, because there would be no cost to USIA. Since March 12, 1997, State has added a year to the TIC/TIS date of officers assigned to the Industrial College of the

Armed Forces, National War College, Senior Seminar and similar training programs of 36 weeks or more. State also provides TIC/TIS extensions for completing 44 weeks of hard language training but USIA requires a 3/3 to qualify for the extension.

Application of State's long-term training policies would benefit approximately 7 percent of USIA's FSOs and put them on equal footing with State colleagues who received these benefits. However, changes to TIC/TIS dates should take place before Oct. 1 since the dates can't be adjusted after integration. A review of the officers eligible for this TIC/TIS extension revealed that the impact on promotion rates would be spread over many years and therefore would be minimal.

USIA management has a clear precedent for changing the regulations retroactively since State is proposing changing the TIS date for over five thousand FSOs to take advantage of USIA's "best practice" of a 27 year TIS. That is certainly adequate precedent for 42 USIA FSOs.

Hopefully, USIA management will implement State's long-term training policy.

*"Hopefully, USIA management will implement State's long-term training policy."*

# 1999 AFSA/AAFSW Academic Merit

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) and the Association of American Foreign Service Women (AAFSW) are pleased to announce the winners of the 1999 Merit Competition. This program is open to Foreign Service high school seniors for their academic and artistic accomplishments. The winners were presented their awards on Foreign Service Day on May 7, 1999.

The 66 Academic Merit Award applicants were judged on their grade point average, Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores, two-page essay, letters of recommendation and extracurricular activities. The 10 Art Merit applicants submitted an entry in one of the following categories: visual arts, musical arts, drama, dance or creative writing. Allen Cross won the Art Merit Award for his charcoal and acrylic drawings. Winners received \$1,000

awards while the Honorable Mention winners received \$200 prizes.

The one Art Merit winner and 20 Academic Merit winners are listed below. The Academic Honorable Mention winners are listed on the following page. Lindsay Rollins' essay is printed on page 10. She won the Community Service Award as well as the Best Essay Award.

AAFSW is providing nearly half of the \$23,200 awarded this year with funding from proceeds from its annual BOOKFAIR held in the fall. AFSA's Committee on Education along with volunteers from the foreign affairs community spent approximately 8 to 10 hours scoring the students.

For more information on applying to the AFSA Merit or Financial Aid Program, contact Lori Dec at 202-944-5504 or dec@afsa.org.

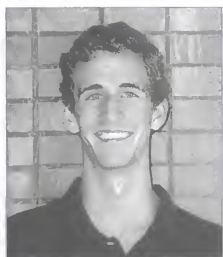


### Art Merit Scholar

**Allen Cross** - graduate of Maret School, Washington, DC; Regional Gold Key Award for Art; enjoys math, physics and drawing; son of Kumika (State) & Peter Cross; attending University of Rochester in New York.



**Tara Arness** - graduate of McLean High School, McLean, Va.; co-captain of tennis team, National & Spanish Honor Societies; daughter of Craig & Rekha (State) Arness; attending University of Richmond majoring in biology.



**Erik Bigelow** - graduate of Taipei American School, Taipei, Taiwan; National Merit Commended Scholar; Music Honor Society, Athlete-Scholar Award; enjoys piano, hiking, and astronomy; son of Marjorie & Stanton (State) Bigelow; attending University of Texas at Austin.



**Maria Blaney** - graduate of Yorktown High School, Arlington, VA; National Merit Commendation; 1999 Class Valedictorian; second in 1999 Northern Va. Regional Science Fair; daughter of John (State) Blaney & Rabin Suppe-Blaney; attending Reed College in Ore.



**Jamie Brown** - graduate of Colegio Maya American Internat'l School of Guatemala, Guatemala City, Guatemala; 1999 Class President and Valedictorian; National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalist; daughter of Clifford (USAID) and Ellen Brown; attending Tulane University.



**Emily Ellickson-Brown** - graduate of International School of Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; member of Drama Club; National Honor Society; daughter of Deborah & James (State) Ellickson-Brown; attending Vassar College majoring in biology and environmental studies.



**Tanya Goldman** - graduate of American Embassy School, New Delhi, India; National Merit Finalist; Scholar-Athlete Award; enjoys music and sports; daughter of Heather (USAID) & Richard (USAID) Goldman; attending Stanford University majoring in international relations.



**Ethan Hurdus** - graduate of Rabat American School, Rabat, Morocco; National Merit Scholarship Finalist; president - National Honor Society; son of Alan (USAID) and Luzviminda Hurdus; attending M.I.T. intending to pursue a career with NASA.



**Peter Hutchens** - graduate of Internat'l School Manila, Manila, Philippines; Nat'l Honor Society, Cum Laude Society, Art Merit Award Honorable Mention; interested in film, music composition and sports; son of Daniel (State) and Martha (State) Hutchens; attending Asbury College in Ky.

# Merit and Art Merit Award Winners



**Erik Kolb** - graduate of Yorktown H. S., Arlington, VA; Commended National Merit Scholar; French IV Certificate of Merit; interested in music, travel and reading; son of Kenneth (State) & Linda Kalb; attending Wheaton College in Illinois majoring in Bible & theology.



**Catherine Stimets Kass** - graduate of Thos. Jefferson H. S. for Sci. and Tech., Alexandria, Va.; Nat'l Merit Finalist; first-place - Jefferson Engineering Competition; Jefferson crew, swim & dive teams; daughter of Patricia Stimets & Andrew (USIA) Kass; attending Harvard College.



**Gregory Lucas** - graduate of St. Albans School, Washington, DC; enjoys working on school newspaper, member of soccer and lacrosse team; Meyer Language Award for French; son of Bill (State) & Jill Lucas; attending Dartmouth College majoring in French and foreign studies.



**Jennifer Lunstead** - graduate of International School of Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; National Merit Finalist; co-editor of high school newspaper; daughter of Jeffrey Lunstead (State) & Deborah Sharpe-Lunstead; attending Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania.



**Kurt Mitman** - graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria, Va.; AP Scholar with Distinction; Grand Prize at Va. State Science & Engineering Fair; son of Matthias (State) Mitman & Susan Elliott; attending Stanford U. majoring in physics.



**Madjimbaye Namde** - graduate of Internat'l School of Manila, Makati, Philippines; National Merit Achievement Scholarship for Black Americans; captain of track team; son of Joyce (State) & Naubassem Namde; attending U.S. Air Force Academy.



**Natalie Ostrander** - graduate of The Bishop Strachan School, Toronto, Canada; National Merit Scholar; A.P. Scholar with Honor; participated in Model UN; in Debate Club and Ski Racing Team; daughter of Bonnie & Frank (State) Ostrander; attending Dartmouth College.



**David Polansky** - graduate of A & M Consolidated High School, Callege Station, Tex.; member of Math and Science Club; son of John (State-deceased) & Brenda Polansky; graduating after completing 10th grade; attending Texas Academy of Math and Science.



**Alyson Rose-Wood** - graduate of Yorktown High School, Arlington, VA; president of Environmental Club; 1998 softball MVP; enjoys white-water rafting; daughter of Carol Rose & Peter (State) Wood; attending Trinity University in Texas majoring in photojournalism.



**David Schmierer** - graduate of Choote Rosemary Hall, Wallingford, CT; National Merit Commended Student; AP Scholar; Cum Laude Society; enjoys athletics; son of Richard (USIA) & Sandra Schmierer; attending University of Pennsylvania majoring in liberal arts.



**Julian Walda** - graduate of Georgetown Preparatory School, Bethesda, Md; National Honor Society; National Merit Semi-finalist; interested in computers; son of Jacqueline McKennon (State) & Jeffrey Walda (State); attending Bowdoin College in Maine majoring in the classics.



**Alexander Zvinakis** - graduate of International School Manila, Manila, Philippines; Leadership Participation Award; English Dept. Award; enjoys hiking and reading; son of Anh (USIA) & Dennis (USAID) Zvinakis; attending Stanford University majoring in engineering.

# Best Essay

• BY LINDSAY ROLLINS •

## My Experience With Culture Shock: A Personal Essay

When I moved to Egypt nine years ago, it was hard to sense anything beyond the rancid garbage and overwhelming poverty. With evidence in the deep lines on their faces, the poor quality of their clothing, and the humbleness of their homes, I could see that most of the Egyptian people had encountered their share of tribulation. But I also noticed that a cheerful, contented atmosphere radiated from them. The Egyptians were happier and more friendly than any people I had previously known. At first this made no sense to me, because they had so little.

Although I did not understand the motivation for the Egyptian people's happiness, I was filled with a great admiration for their positive attitude in such a depressing environment. Whether it was the cheerful "ahloe" (hello) from the local school children, the smile of the shepherdess as she tended her flock, or the gift of wild flowers from shy girls on the street, I felt fortunate to be able to interact with such happy people.

The answer to how they could remain so happy under such miserable conditions eluded me until certain events in my own life changed my perspective. During the spring of my junior year I began experiencing seizures and was diagnosed with a form of epilepsy. The medication my doctors prescribed robbed me of energy and dulled my thinking. As I struggled to maintain my academic and personal goals, I could feel myself slipping into a state of self-pity and depression.

During home leave last summer

the cause of my seizures was linked to a small tumor in the left frontal lobe of my brain. Though the suggestion of remaining in the States for treatment came up, I was determined to return to Cairo to complete my senior year. The place encouraged hope and strength to a degree that I had encountered nowhere else, and I figured that if the people there could endure their trials and remain strong and optimistic, then I could do the same.

At this point, I began to perceive how the Egyptians could radiate such a warm, brilliant light despite their humble surroundings. Mere survival was a problem many of them had to deal with on a daily basis. However, they didn't spend much time worrying about it or feeling sorry for themselves. That would only make the load heavier to bear. As it had for many Egyptians, life had dealt me an unfair blow, but, surprisingly, I felt no bitterness. In fact, after returning to Egypt, I found life to be more satisfying than ever before. It became precious in a way that only someone facing extreme hardship could understand.

Now as I walk along the streets of Cairo, I no longer see garbage. I no longer smell the pollution that hangs in the air, or taste the dust stirred up by my feet. Instead, I see the cloudless blue sky above me, I smell the brilliant scent of jasmine in the markets, and I taste the freshness of the dew in the mornings. I can do all this, because the humble people of Egypt helped teach me to appreciate the beauty of life amidst its hardships.

### ACADEMIC MERIT SCHOLARSHIP HONORABLE MENTION WINNERS

**Miriam Bensky** - graduate of Singapore American School, Singapore; daughter of Jonathan (Commercial Service) and Sandra Bensky.

**Lauren Bruno** - graduate of Yorktown High School, Arlington, Va.; daughter of Jane & Richard (State) Bruno.

**Andrew English** - graduate of College du Leman, Geneva, Switzerland; son of Suzanne & Thomas (State) English.

**Alexander Hastings** - graduate of McLean High School, McLean, Va.; son of Lilly & Norman (State) Hastings.

**Christine Jensen** - graduate of Washington-Lee High School, Arlington, Va.; daughter of David (State) & Janice King Jensen.

**Karin Lion** - graduate of Langley High School, McLean, Va.; daughter of Donor (Ret. USAID) & Linda (USAID) Lion.

**Caroline Moats** - graduate of James Madison High School, Vienna, Va.; daughter of Nancy & Simeon (Ret. State) Moats.

**Rhian O'Rourke** - graduate of Cairo American College, Cairo, Egypt; daughter of Jon (USAID) and Susan O'Rourke.

### ART MERIT SCHOLARSHIP HONORABLE MENTION WINNER

**Peter Hutchens** (See page 8.)

### BEST ESSAY AND COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD WINNER

**Lindsay Rollins** - graduate of Cairo American College, Cairo, Egypt; daughter of Jay (USAID) and Nancy Rollins.

Applications for the Year 2000 AFSA/AAFSW Academic and Art Merit Awards available November 1999 at [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) or [www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org)

## AFSA Award Winners

continued from page 7

### RUNNERS-UP FOR THE 1999 AFSA AWARDS

#### **Christian A. Herter Award:**

Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO

#### **William R. Rivkin Award:**

Carol Rodley, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy Phnom Penh

#### **Delavan Award :**

Patricia King Keegan, Ambassador's Secretary in Kuwait

#### **M. Juanita Guess Award:**

Judy Pike and Susan Wiley, Co-Community Liaison Officers at Embassy Nairobi

#### **Avis Bohlen Award:**

Amparo Wing, Spouse of USAID Officer, Harry Wing, for service in Lima.

## AFSA Elections

are in progress as the *Foreign Service Journal* goes to press.

The Elections Committee will announce the results on July 2 and the new Governing Board will take office on July 15.

RETIREE

## V.P. VOICE

• BY ED DILLERY •

### Thanks and Farewell

With the new Governing Board being sworn in on July 15, this is my last column for the *Foreign Service Journal*. I want to share with you some thoughts as I finish my term as your vice president.

First, I thank the retiree members of AFSA for the vital role you play in the association. We make up about one-third of the membership, significant for an organization that represents an important, albeit too small, part of the federal professional community. Retirees are among the most active volunteers on all committees and special events. A good example is the work of Ambassadors Brandon Grove, Sheldon Krysz, Robert Duemling and Anthony Quinton in developing and carrying out AFSA's excellent program to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Service.

Second, I commend the AFSA officers and staff. I dropped my membership when I went to work directly for the under secretary for management in 1987 — I know it was not required but I wanted no suggestion of conflict of interest. So when I rejoined AFSA on retirement, and particularly since being on the board, I gained a new appreciation of what AFSA does for all its members, retired and active. Recent presidents, and especially Dan Geisler, have been persistent and determined in working with the Congress, the Department of State and other agencies with Foreign Service personnel to defend our interests. But they also have promoted the association's professional side in cooperation with DACOR and the

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. And most recently, Dan Geisler and our executive director, Susan Reardon, have planned and initiated an outreach program to tell the story of the Foreign Service across the country.

I also thank all the leaders and members of regional Foreign Service retirees associations across the country. Though not formally linked with AFSA, you have been helpful to us in communicating with Congress and working to get the Foreign Service story out in your communities.

Finally, I mention two AFSA staff members — the Thompsons. Dick Thompson has worked tirelessly on projects, like updating the memorial plaque and planning Foreign Service Day, that promote the Foreign Service.

And last, but certainly not least, Ward Thompson of the Alumni Office acts much above the call of duty in defending retiree interests in every venue and in helping individual retirees with real life problems — annuity glitches, medical insurance issues and other administrative problems that are hard to solve if you are outside the Beltway. Every time I come to the office, he is on the telephone helping someone. And by the way, he also is the action officer for the new outreach program which will feature a better speaker's bureau and an enhanced Ederhostel program. Thank you, Ward.

So I leave the office with great appreciation for AFSA's work and comfortable in the knowledge that we retirees will continue to be well served by the new board and the excellent staff.

"I leave the office with great appreciation for AFSA's work."

# Association of American Foreign Service Women's

## 1999 Bookfair

Oct. 15 - 24

Proceeds benefit  
the AFSA/AAFSW  
scholarship  
program and  
local charities.

Support the book fair with  
donations of books, art-  
work, collectibles, stamps  
and coins. For more  
information call the book  
room at 202-223-5796.

Open daily to State  
Department pass hold-  
ers. Open to the gener-  
al public Oct. 16, 17,  
23 and 24.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AFSA's Congressional Affairs Department actively pursues legislative initiatives on behalf of our members. The following is a status list of current bills that we are watching closely.

- After a long journey with lots of prodding from AFSA, the Virginia Residents Voting Rights Bill (HB 2647), amending the state constitution to allow Virginia residents temporarily posted outside the state an government orders to vote in state and local elections, was signed into law by Governor James Gilmore on March 28. The bill goes into effect July 1.

- The Thrift Savings Plan Bill (HR 208) would allow new hires to sign up immediately for the TSP instead of waiting until the next open season. As of April 20, it had passed the House and was referred to the Senate Government Affairs Subcommittee on International Security.

- Authorization bills in both the House and the Senate contain language on the following issues pertinent to FS employees:

- 1.) requiring the State Department to demonstrate workplace planning with a five-year projection of personnel needs by grade and skill;

- 2.) addressing the financial hardships due to host country tax laws visited on FS Specialists, because they don't have diplomatic status;

- 3.) allowing a family to apply the past education allowance toward tuition, room, board and transportation of the scholar of their choice either at or away from post; and

- 4.) calling for new embassy construction beginning immediately rather than in FY 2000 as the administration requested. The Senate version includes \$600 million each year for five years beginning in FY 2000, while the House version includes \$1.4 billion for FY 2000.

Want to know more about  
AFSA's legislative agenda?

Click on AFSANET  
<http://www.afsa.org>

## Inside

THE FOREIGN SERVICE COMMUNITY

- Farmer Secretary of State **Larry Eagleburger** received the 1999 Common Wealth Award of Distinguished Service in the field of government for 35 years of contributions to U.S. foreign policy.

- Youth for Understanding (YFU) International Exchange has appointed farmer ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, **Sally Grooms Cowal**, as its president and chief executive officer.

- Retired FSO **John W. Dalton** recommends the portrait exhibit of the Muscorelle Museum of Art of the College of William and Mary. A fine 1808 painting by Rembrandt Peale of William Short, considered America's first career diplomat, is the centerpiece of the show. The voyages of Short's career will also interest Foreign Service visitors to the exhibit.

- Robert Fritts**, former ambassador to Rwanda and Ghona and now a senior fellow at the Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy at the College of William and Mary, informs AFSA that the college has established the **Pamela Harriman Fellowship Program** in honor of the late ambassador to France.

Beginning in the summer of 2000 the program will provide a \$5,000 stipend for three interns: one each in the embassies of London and France and in the secretary of State's office. Junior and senior students from U.S. colleges are eligible for the Harriman Fellowship. The State Department will evaluate applicants, then an advisory committee of leading citizens will review them, and a selection committee will make the final decision. Applications will be available in the fall of 1999. For more information contact William T. Wolker (tel. 757-221-2624, fax 757-221-1021).

Do you have news about an AFSA member or of an event of interest to the FS Community?  
Fax it to [202] 338-8244.

## Dateline

continued from page 1

window for promotion across the senior threshold would be retained, years in which there was no promotion opportunity into the SFS would not count. A new feature would allow the carryover of up to five years of single-class TIC upon promotion to FS-02 and FS-01. The new draft rules, which would apply to all specialists except medical technicians, OMSs, and security technicians, would go into effect upon consolidation. Ask your AFSA representative for the complete text of the new proposals or see the AFSA web site.

•**Jeff Kaplow** joins the *Foreign Service Journal* as the summer editorial intern. A rising senior at Yale University studying political science, Jeff comes from Michigan, speaks Spanish and juggles.

•The advertising intern for the FSJ is **Kristine Latronica**. Kristine graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in May 1999 with a BA in International Relations.

•**Seema Shah** is the summer intern for the Communications Coordinator. Seema, a native of Ohio, is a senior at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland studying English and religion.

•Congratulations to **Zlatana Badrich** in the Labor Management Office for her promotion to Labor Management Attorney.

•AFSA and the Thursday Luncheon Group (TLG) will sponsor **Shameka Johnson** as this year's summer intern to work in Deputy Secretary of State Strabe Talbot's office assisting his speechwriters. A senior at Emory University, Shameka will start her State assignment at the end of June. This internship is designed to give an economically disadvantaged student an opportunity to explore diplomacy first-hand and provide encouragement and mentoring in pursuing a career in foreign affairs.

F A S

# V.P. VOICE

BY MAGGIE DOWLING

## More Employee Involvement Sought in Plotting Our Career Paths

The recent steady gains in workforce productivity can be credited to a number of factors. Certainly at the top of that list is the evolution of participatory management. President Clinton's Executive Order in 1993 establishing Partnership Councils encouraged employees to take a greater role in issues affecting their workplace conditions and career goals. In FAS, we seized that opportunity and the FAS Partnership Council is now five years old.

The data continues to build showing that organizations which offer significant employee involvement and maximum flexibility in determining workplace conditions often are those with the quickest pace of productivity growth. While there may be grumblings from time to time about the Partnership Council, none of us would part with any of the fruits of the effort. In fact, we want more.

The success of the flexischedule in Washington has demonstrated that both the employee's and agency's interests are advanced when employees are offered greater flexibility in arranging their work schedules. We will soon submit the flexiplace pilot survey project to the Executive Advisory Group for broader implementation throughout the agency. Many managers have concerns, but the launch of flexischedule also prompted concerns.

FAS has 15 employees on flexiplace. The current policy restricts flexiplace to two days of the week that have to be, for the most part, pre-arranged. Recommendations from the pilot project are to increase the days and increase the

flexibility in determining the days taken. With the completion of this initial phase of the pilot study, we plan to look at ways to use flexiplace overseas to broaden employment opportunities for spouses.

Probably no policy impacts the career and personal lives of FSOs more than the overseas assignment process. The AFSA/FAS tour of duty proposal seeks to give our members greater control of their careers in order to balance personal and career goals. Setting tours at three years and giving FSOs the option for two one-year extensions (providing four or five-year tours) will

increase our flexibility in charting our careers. FSOs in Washington have seven years to make a career move; the two one-year options would give overseas FSOs three years to make the best career decision for them and their families.

If management has established clear goals for career development to meet the mission's objectives, the FSO can plot the appropriate career path probably as well as the new area officer who just rotated in. Requiring FSOs to give a two-year notice if they decide to exercise the extension option gives management the same long-range planning horizon presently used. Further, giving FSOs more control over their careers releases scarce managerial and financial resources now required for assignments to other objectives. Increasing the FSOs' flexibility will result in an assignment system that operates more efficiently, effectively and consistently for the greatest number of our members.

*"No policy impacts our careers and personal lives more than the overseas assignment policy."*

# REMEMBER THE EAST AFRICA BOMBING VICTIMS

Remind Congress and the American public that U.S. embassies are still not secure. Wear a purple ribbon on Friday, August 6 to honor the sacrifice of the Americans and Africans killed and injured one year ago in the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Dar es Salaam.

AFSA will distribute ribbons at the main entrances to the State Department on August 6.

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*"Here's your hat. What's your hurry?"  
Rhythm King mumbled.  
His legs buckled. He half-leaped and half-fell out  
of the plane into the impartial sky and dropped like a brick.*

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*Continued from page 31*

weigh 1,000 kilos — a metric ton. That will be enough, I think." He meant they would jump into the ocean rather than jettison the cargo.

"But that's nuts," Rhythm King screamed over the wind. "That's fucking goofy."

"Listen to me," cried the minister. "You will be met on the island by three men. They will know what to do."

From the cockpit came Nacho's curses. The plane lurched and Rhythm King stumbled. "You'd trust me?" He couldn't take a deep breath. Everything below his heart seemed to belong to someone else.

"I must." The Minister stepped into the hatchway. The others lined up behind him. Several of them had tears on their faces. "Heroes!" the minister called to his men. "Long live Biafra!" They answered him in shouts.

Wind roared in the open doorway. Over the Biafran's shoulder, Rhythm King could see the face of the ocean ripping past. "You can't do this to me!" he shouted. He pointed his gun at the gold. "I'll take it, you know. I'll steal it when you're gone."

The men froze. Wind whipped at their tattered clothing, their thin bodies. "You shouldn't have told me that," said the minister. He looked absurdly thin in the fat, puffy life jacket. Two of his men turned and lifted their carbines. Were they loaded?

Rhythm King dropped the pistol to the floor and pointed to the minister. "He can stay. Let me go instead."

The Biafrans looked at each other doubtfully. Others spoke up in a rattle of English. The minister stared at Rhythm King. "You would do this thing for free Biafra?"

"To hell with Biafra," Rhythm King said. His mouth was so dry his tongue clicked against the roof of his mouth. He pointed to the minister's life jacket. "Give me that. You won't be needing it." As he put it on, he looked again at the gold, and then stepped to the hatchway.

The wind rushed past so furiously he had to close his eyes. The smell of the water filled his nostrils. His legs shook. The frame vibrated with the whine of the engine.

"He needs help," someone said behind him. A hand touched him softly in the small of his back and then began, firmly, to push.

"Here's your hat. What's your hurry?" Rhythm King mumbled. His legs buckled. He half-leaped and half-fell out of the plane into the impartial sky and dropped like a brick.

A French cutter picked him up. He was put ashore in Marseilles with borrowed clothes and pocket money he promptly spent in bars along the coast. He moved back to Lisbon.

But he couldn't get work. No one trusted him anymore. Nacho had made it back, minus the gold, and word was out. Rhythm King had gotten "too involved."

He drifted, finally settling again in the States as a day laborer on construction sites. Few noticed him, but those who did were struck by his air of puzzlement, as if he'd found something he didn't know how to use. He had a favorite bar where he was often drunk and always told the same story. It was a story about an airplane full of gold floating through the moonlight, an airplane piloted by two crazy, lonely Americans and 19 Africans from a tiny country willing to jump out of that plane for the sake of the gold and their homeland.

You only had to hear it once to remember it forever. ■

# THE SHARK WOMAN

BY BARBARA NEU

I remember how I used to long for the rainy season in Africa. I would stand on the balcony of our apartment and let the rain pour over me and run down my body. One day I looked out over the railing and saw 10 Africans lined up on the road watching me. Each one stood on only one leg, and each had his arms crossed. It was as if they had nothing better to do. I didn't yell at them or gesture. It seemed fruitless to try and communicate.

When I first arrived, I thought it would be possible to make a difference, help the poor people. On the ferry from the airport into the city, a small boy asked me for something, anything. I gave him a pen and asked him to write me a letter. He put the pen in his pocket and called to a female he called his sister. They discussed the pen, I think. I didn't completely understand what they were saying, but I assumed they were discussing its resale value. This was my first lesson on what I had to offer Africa.

For almost two years I welcomed the rains because they washed the dust off everything. Then they would continue, go on and on. The rains drove some Americans crazy, but they made me feel safe.

The second rainy season was easier than the first, because I gave in to the rain and let it take me. The rain put me to sleep if I tried to read, so I spent long hours lying on the couch, doing crossword puzzles and napping. Then, in the evening, the sun would

come out and the world that I could see from my balcony would be steaming. At those times, the sky was deep blue, not its usual glassy, hazy yellow. Sometimes, when my husband came home from work before eight o'clock, we would go swimming at the pool at the Marine House or at the beach.

The Marine House was preferable only because it was safer. The pool there was a small, green swamp; groups of boys would crowd the chain-link fence to watch us. At the beach, we had more privacy, because we didn't mind swimming in the deserted part, where the sharks were. We swam with the fish and dolphins, ignoring the sharks. They were an occupational hazard, like everything else in Africa, and we were used to them. My husband's amorous insistence was a different kind of danger. He frequently wanted to make love on the beach, in view of the road. I didn't like the sand, or the curious crabs, or the large dead rats, but I felt I should let him do what he wanted. He was the diplomat, the important one. I was just a wife overseas, a vestigial organ shriveling from lack of use.

When the heavens opened up, and the rains poured down, I was left alone. I didn't have to go out and shop or socialize or swim or let my husband make love to me on the beach. I could stay on the couch and watch the rain obliterate the banana trees, the huts with their rusty, corrugated metal roofs, the people and the dirt. I could be anywhere, maybe even on an ocean liner that would take me home.



Leel Barr

*My husband frequently wanted to make love on the beach.  
I felt I should let him. I was just a wife overseas,  
a vestigial organ shriveling  
from lack of use.*

---

All the women at the embassy had tailors and dressmakers who worked making custom-designed dresses for only seven or eight dollars each. At least that was what I always paid for them. We met at parties and compared prices. For many women, bargaining at the market was a substitute for real life. For me, it was just another disgusting thing I had to learn, like cleaning fish and killing cockroaches. I hated standing in the hot sun arguing over tiny bits of money with people who were so much poorer than I. It made me feel mean and conspicuous. I just wanted to buy my stuff and get it over with.

But having a dress made was always a thrill. I had a favorite fabric seller in the market whom I called "Ma." She always made bargaining seem like fun. Then, all I had to do was drive to my dressmaker's tenement and show him a picture from a catalogue or magazine. He would know how to make me a dress. I bought the beautiful local cloth at the market and he would make the dress from the magazine out of that.

I planned to have a new dress made for the Marine Ball out of yellow fabric with white polka dots. I rarely went out of the gates of our compound, so when I left to make the trip to the dressmaker's, I was greeted with smiles and waves from the guards. The dressmaker's room was in a little village up the hill from our apartment building in a grayish-red structure that looked as though it had been under construction for God knows how long and was not yet finished. I had to walk around to the back of the building, jump over an open sewer and climb up outdoor stairs before I finally arrived at the dressmaker's door. The dressmaker was a slight man with a perfect face, which was oval and smooth and beautifully brown. His long fingers

treated my American magazines and catalogs with contempt. He spread them out on his old work table with exaggerated delicacy and looked at me out of the corner of his eyes as I described what kind of dress I wanted.

When I showed him my yellow fabric, he said: "Yellow fabric for a yellow body." To him, I did not belong in Africa.

My husband wanted to take a trip up-country, but I got so carsick we had to turn back. I panicked when we lost sight of the city, because I felt it was my only link to civilization, even though civilization meant waiting until ten o'clock at night for my husband to come home, and then sitting across the table from him and listening to his endless gossip about the embassy. Our generator would go out a lot during the rainy season, and he loved to go out and hassle the man who was trying to fix it. He tried to be jolly and buddy up to everybody, but he seemed huge, pale and grotesque next to the graceful and polite Africans.

Often, when the generator was out and there was nothing to do but sit in the dark and drink wine, he would discuss "the family." This was a discussion that inevitably ended up in bed. He wanted me to get pregnant, but what would I do with a baby in Africa? I guessed I could always hand it over to an African nurse, who would know how to take better care of it than I.

My Marine Ball gown was almost finished, although the dressmaker was having trouble getting the bust to fit right. I was so small-breasted that the dressmaker finally went downtown and got some falsies to stick inside my bra. He brought them out for me and giggled. He knew I was a good sport and would laugh, too. I went into the other room of his apartment,

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*Barbara Neu is a writer and artist who has accompanied her FSO husband to posts in Sierra Leone and Italy. This is her first published short story.*

*Everyone thought there was a  
baby growing inside me when, in reality,  
something quite different was a guest in my body.*

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which was really just a closet behind a curtain. There was a small window that looked out over the trees toward the ocean, but the heat of the street and the smell of chickens were oppressive. I felt like I would drown in them. I had grown weary of my body and its habits and fretful demands. I wanted to be set free.

I stood next to the dressmaker's sewing machine as he worked on the straps and the bust. He slid the falsies onto my breasts without even looking at me. We agreed the fit was finally right. The dress was almost finished. I went back into the bedroom and changed back into my clothes. I handed the dress back to the dressmaker and started out the door, promising to come back in a few days. He put his hand on my arm and stopped me. No. He would send the dress along with his brother. It had already been paid for. There was no need for me to come back.

**T**he Marine Ball was held on an oppressively humid night. We drank some champagne in our apartment before heading out. My dress fit perfectly and my husband admired everything about it. But as soon as we walked out our front door, the hot air hit my body and my sweaty thighs began to stick together. My underwear felt like a wet diaper, and I wished that I could just stay home. But this was the biggest night of the year at the embassy, so I had to make my appearance.

I guess I drank too much punch at the ball, but nobody really noticed. During the cake-cutting, when we all had to stand, I simply passed out. I didn't have any idea I was going to faint; I just fell over, like a tree might fall. The right side of my head hit the concrete floor. When I woke up, it was as if I had been dead. The embassy people were all whispering that I was pregnant, as my husband carried me out to the car. When I had to ask my husband to pull over so that I could throw up on the muddy road, I began to worry that they were right. When I was finished, I looked up and saw the kerosene lamps flickering along the road.

People had set up stands to sell whatever they had: cigarettes, oranges, peanuts. The Africans looked so clear and beautiful, and I felt so bodiless and spent. It was as if I had melted into the landscape, as if I had become a piece of Africa.

I didn't want to be pregnant. I lay in bed all the next week praying that it was the heat of the punch that had made me faint. Finally, I went down to the Peace Corps doctor and had myself checked out. Every other wife at the embassy had gotten pregnant in Africa. Why not me? People used to say there was something in the water. But I still had a thread of hope as the doctor put me through several tests. It turned out that I wasn't pregnant, but I did have worms. I couldn't help but laugh. Wonderful. My husband and everyone else had thought that there was a baby growing inside me when, in reality, I had something quite different as a guest in my body. I felt relieved and happy to be invaded. Not only was I becoming a part of Africa; now Africa was in me.

My husband kept his distance. I spent the dark and quiet nights when the generator gave out imagining myself lying on the dressmaker's cot in the village. I wondered what his skin would feel like. I imagined that he would be repulsed by me, not because of my parasites, but because of my white skin. I was probably like some kind of unfinished being to him, like a grub or a maggot.

The next time we went to the beach, I swam out very far, until my husband started yelling at me to come back. I had no fear of the water, or the sharks, or anything. I felt I was a part of the ocean, of the world. I finally swam back in, and teased my husband as we sat on our blanket in the early morning sun. He was always angry when I did anything he considered out of character. I don't even think he cared about my getting hurt. He just didn't want me to do anything crazy and wreck his career.

It was a Saturday, and the fishermen were hauling in their nets. Thirty muscular men strained uncomplaining in the sun to bring in the fish. They sang as they pulled, and then they began to shout as the haul of fish came

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*People were acting strangely toward me.  
I was a beast who ate men. I slept with them and  
their penises fell off.*

---

up on the beach. They gathered around the net excitedly. My husband and I went over to look. In the net, which was just about ruined, lay a ten-foot-long hammerhead shark. It was a frightening sight. With its odd-shaped head and huge eyes, it looked like a creature from outer space. My husband grabbed my arm and yanked me back to the blanket. He said that there was to be no more swimming. We'd just have to swim at the Marine House or nowhere at all. It was too dangerous here.

I got the car one day a week. So the next Monday, I drove down to the market. Ma, who sold me fabric, was there with her daughter. She didn't greet me as enthusiastically as usual. I picked up some pretty fabric, and she quoted me a price that was twice as much as usual. When I laughed at her, she looked away. I started bargaining, but she wouldn't budge. Finally I told her that I was going to buy from someone else. She said that would be fine.

I found a young woman nursing her child who was willing to sell me some fabric at a cheaper price. I could tell she was only doing it because she was desperate. As I walked away, I heard hissing and whispers behind me.

As I drove to the dressmaker's, the clouds were gathering and I knew that it would rain soon. It would probably be the kind of rain that would wash out the streets, so I should have hurried. But as I climbed the steps, I felt happy. The dressmaker didn't answer the door when I knocked, so I pushed it open. He was asleep on his cot. His foot was bandaged in a dirty piece of cloth. I could see that he was feverish; his foot was probably infected. A mangy dog lay under the cot, and eyed me lethargically. The dogs were always sick, too, in Africa. I should have felt sorry for the dressmaker. I should have gone back home and gotten a first aid kit and cleaned his foot and re-bandaged it. I should have been gallant and condescending. Instead, I undressed and got on the cot with him. Somehow I knew what would happen, that he would wake without surprise and grab

my yellow body, and that the dog would go skittering out the door in fright as the cot jumped and the thunder echoed through the hills and the lightning struck the sea.

Later, the dressmaker told me that he never thought he would make love to a Shark Woman. So that was why people were acting strangely toward me in the market. The word had spread that I had swum out and called to the shark to come eat the fishermen. I was a beast who ate men. I slept with them and their penises fell off. But the dressmaker told me that he was already very sick. His foot was infected and he wasn't afraid of a Shark Woman. Maybe I could even make him feel better.

The shark story spread and I couldn't go anywhere. Small boys stood below our balcony, hoping to get a glimpse of me. It was a week before I could get back to the dressmaker's. When I arrived, women were feeding chickens in the yard. They hissed at me as I stepped over the open sewer and climbed the stairs. But in the dressmaker's room, I was once again a blessing, not a curse. The women down below must have been able to hear us. I'm sure they knew that I had not come to have a dress made. But the dressmaker didn't care. His foot was better. In the stifling room, my skin felt slick and wet like a shark's. I was all muscle and teeth and water.

When I went out to my car to drive home, the streets of the village were deserted. I drove back to my apartment with its five air conditioners and reluctantly washed away my real self, the shark self I was beginning to like. I tried to put on my other self for my husband, but I just couldn't do it. I don't think he noticed anyway. He came home early and told me that he had to be back in Washington in a week. He told me I could leave right away and stay with his mother until he could join me.

So that was the end. I took my husband up on his offer. I left four days later. I packed my yellow dress

## F O C U S

*The sharks seemed to swim in this colorful world.  
They looked beautiful and not at all menacing,  
like they belonged.*

and a few other things. My husband went down to get me some money from the embassy and I stood on the balcony looking out at the ocean. I saw the dressmaker's brother when he walked up the road from the village. He looked up and waved and pointed to a package in his hand. I went out to the gate to meet him, and he told me softly that his brother heard I was leaving and had sent me a present. He handed it over gently, as if it were a baby. I shook his hand and then gave him the customary *dash*, or tip, but he wouldn't take it. He patted my hand and walked away.

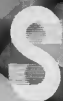
I rushed upstairs to open the package. It was a voluminous dress made in the African style. It had puffy sleeves with ruffles and a long, ruffled skirt that

brushed the floor. The neckline, which was square, swept down my back, and in front, it barely touched my breasts. But it wasn't too big. He had made it for me. The fabric was bright purple with a batik pattern of large yellow sharks. Where the purple and yellow dyes had mingled, the fabric became a luminous brown. The sharks seemed to swim in this colorful world. They looked beautiful and not at all menacing. They looked like they belonged just where they were.

I packed the dress in my carry-on, but once the airplane took off, I took it out and held it to my face. It smelled of wood smoke and baskets and hot palm oil. It smelled like home, a secret home that I could carry in my head and that I didn't have to share with anyone. ■

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# HE SLEPT HERE

BY MARY CAMERON KILGOUR

I was enjoying a rare quiet evening at home in Costa Azul City with Mozart's 5th violin concerto and my cat when I was startled by urgent tapping on the door. It was late. My whole workweek had been awful and I didn't need any visitors. Maybe Pedro, the embassy's night watchman, wanted something. I peered out and was amazed to see that Pedro had my neighbor, who lived through the woods and over a wall, with him. My neighbor was the vice president of the country, the Honorable Nathan Counts.

"Please, señor, come in." I ushered the vice president, his wife, three children and mother-in-law into my living room. Pedro came in, too.

"What's happening?"

"Thank you kindly, madam."

The vice president addressed me more formally than I had him. He embraced Pedro and whispered something. Pedro left.

"Have you heard the news of the arrest and wounding of the president?" The vice president spoke with a tremor. I had never seen him up close before. He was much more attractive than in his pictures, almost like Cary Grant without the dimple.

"No, sir, I have not. Is it on television?" I felt stupid. I didn't have much experience conversing with vice presidents.

As we sat in my living room, I noticed that the whole family appeared disheveled and dusty. Señora de Counts' hair was coming loose from her French

twist. The mother-in-law was wearing only one shoe. The vice president was tense, trying hard to remain calm and dignified. I could see sweat beading on his forehead and seeping through his shirt, though the evening was cool.

His wife's eyes followed mine. "You must forgive us. We smell of chickenshit," she mumbled. I was taken aback by her language. She was one of the country's premier fashion plates and known for her elegance. But it was true, I could smell it and could see little whitish-green nuggets of it clinging to their clothes and to my government-issue sofa and carpet.

The vice president came quickly to the point: "I must talk with your ambassador immediately. The situation is very dangerous. Rebel forces are heading toward my house. That's why we had to come here."

He explained that at first he had fled with his family to the chicken coop at the edge of their property. For several hours they hid there hoping that the first reports that they had heard were exaggerated. When they realized the situation was even worse, the vice president decided to come over the wall and through some woods to seek refuge at my house. I asked whether Pedro could be trusted, and he replied that he and Pedro were from the same part of the country and, therefore, allies.

I got the vice president's family some Coca-Colas, then excused myself to telephone the embassy security officer. I tried to refresh my memory about embassy



Loel Barr

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she mumbled. I could see little  
whitish-green nuggets of it.*

---

rules in such cases, something about not giving anyone refuge unless there was a mob chasing him or her.

The line rang to the embassy. When the Marine guard answered, I asked him to put me through to Jim Black, the regional security officer. “It’s urgent,” I said, trying to remain calm.

“Can you leave a message?” asked the Marine. “He’s in a meeting.”

He probably couldn’t think of any good reason why a mid-level AID officer would want to talk to the head of security at 10:00 p.m.

I lowered my voice half an octave in order to sound more authoritative. “It relates to the topic of the meeting. Please interrupt him.”

“Hold on,” he said.

A minute later Jim was on the line.

“Jim, this is Molly Fraser. I have someone at my house, a neighbor, who needs to talk with the ambassador immediately.” There was silence on the other end. “It relates to what is happening,” I added.

I heard voices, but could not make out what was being said. Then Jim came back on the line. “Are you familiar with U.S. government policy under these circumstances?” he asked.

“More or less. But this is a bit out of my line, you know.”

“Well, does your visitor qualify?”

“Yes, I think so. At least psychologically if not physically. Or hypothetically if not actually, if you get my drift.”

The ambassador took over the telephone and asked me to put my guest on the line. He must have figured out who my neighbor was. I fetched the vice president, handed him the phone, then left him sitting on my bed talking to the ambassador and went back downstairs.

Mrs. Vice President was leaning down from her seat

on the sofa trying to scrape some of the chickenshit off the carpet in front of her.

“Please don’t worry about that, señora,” I said.

She was about to respond when her husband came downstairs and told me that the ambassador wanted to speak with me. I ran back up the stairs again. In a crisp, military voice, the ambassador asked whether I could put the family up for the night. He said he would come the next morning to see about getting them to a safer place. He instructed me to tell no one about the arrangements and to keep my houseguests away from the windows and household help.

“Yes, sir,” I responded in what I thought was the proper martial tone. After we hung up, I wondered what he meant by “get them to a safer place.” My house wasn’t safe? This was exciting.

Back downstairs, I described the sleeping arrangements I could offer my guests: two extra rooms, three beds and four sleeping bags. Señora de Counts grasped my hand with both of hers.

“You are too kind. Thank you very much.” Her hand was cold and wet. She was afraid and trying to hide it from her children, her mother and her husband. I put my other hand over hers and smiled reassuringly.

“You are safe here,” I said. “This is United States government property. No one can enter.” *Ha*, I thought. But at least it was supposed to be true. I showed the vice president’s family where the bedrooms and guest bathroom were. I got them linens, soap, even four toothbrushes, then asked if they needed anything else. They smiled, shaking their heads, clearly exhausted.

Señora de Counts took my hand again, “Please, call us Marina and Nathan.” Her husband’s name came out sounding like “Nothin.” Nothin’ Counts?

I went back downstairs and put Mozart back on the CD player, picking up the Rondeau just where it had stopped earlier. The music was calming, the violin tones pure and beautiful, but I couldn’t keep my mind on the music. Pretty soon I, too, went off to bed to toss and

---

*Mary Cameron Kilgour is a retired FSO who served with USAID in Pakistan, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Philippines, Liberia and Bangladesh. This is her first published fiction.*

*"The president is dead. They may try to come  
after the vice president. We need to protect him,"  
said the ambassador.*

---

turn all night, dreaming about, or maybe really hearing, deep booming gunfire and distant shouting.

In the morning I was out of bed like a shot. I needed to get to Marta, my maid, before she discovered my houseguests. I didn't see any way to keep them apart short of refusing to let her in. I needed her help to take care of six people. Besides, I could trust her, since she supported the party in power. She was opening the back door when I reached the kitchen.

"Sus, María y Josep!" she exclaimed, startled to see me up so early.

"Buenos días, Marta. I need you to do something special for me without telling anyone. Can you do that?" I asked.

"Sí, señora. What is it you need?"

I told her what had happened and who she would find in the upstairs guest bedrooms. "You know, it would not look good if it appeared that the Americans were getting into your politics," I explained. "But the family came to me in need, and I had to invite them in. Don't you agree?" I knew she would.

"Sí, señora," she said, nodding. "The streets are filled with soldiers. I almost did not come here today. All night there was much shooting. It is very dangerous. They say El Presidente is dead." Her eyes filled with tears.

This was serious. I felt an odd sense of exhilaration that surprised me. "Well, they will soon be wanting breakfast. Can you make something good?"

"Sí, señora."

By the time the family emerged 20 minutes later Marta had a full American breakfast on the table. While we were eating cereal with milk, juice and coffee, a white panel truck like the ones used by the embassy plumbers pulled into the driveway. As it edged close to my side door, my first thought was that I must have put in a repair order. How could I cancel the job now, when the last thing I needed was a nosy local plumber? As I opened the side door to ask him to come back some other time, the ambassador jumped out. He was inside my house in a flash. I had not expected him to emerge from a plumber's truck.

"Welcome, Mr. Ambassador," I said. He brushed by me and greeted the vice president with an embrace.

"I am so sorry to learn of these events, Nathan." The ambassador's voice was gentle and solicitous. "You and your countrymen have the sympathy of the United States government and people. We shall do what we can to be helpful."

The vice president smiled and sighed at the same time. I thought I saw the glint of a tear. "I appreciate that, Peter," he said. "This is very trying. Things could still go the wrong way. What news do you bring?"

Both men glanced at the children. The vice president motioned the ambassador up to my bedroom where the two of them could talk in private. I thought about my unmade bed. When they emerged 15 minutes later, the ambassador pulled me aside and said he would try to move the family to a safe house. He said the arrangements would have to be handled carefully, for everyone's safety.

"Can you keep them for another night if necessary?"

"Of course. But what is the situation?"

"Not good. The president is dead. They may try to come after the vice president. We need to protect him and his family. And we need to be careful not to jeopardize the American community while we're doing it. So you should not share this information with anyone. Is your household staff trustworthy?"

"I just have the one maid, and she's trustworthy. The vice president and the night watchman are province mates, so he's okay."

"Good. I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

With that, the ambassador jumped back into the panel truck. I saw that the regional security officer was the driver.

I decided to go to my office to check in. There were soldiers everywhere, and very few civilians on the streets. Orange and purplish red bougainvillea flowers still hung from white-washed garden walls and from tin cans on wooden window sills, and the air was cooled by

*His skin was smooth and tanned.  
He looked strong, intelligent, presidential, which he was,  
unless an assassin beat him to the inauguration.*

---

Atlantic sea breezes, as usual. But the city felt eerie and threatening. Soldiers eyed me coldly as I drove carefully through the rutted streets. I realized that having the country's only legitimate leader hiding in my house was no laughing matter.

There was no one at the office except the guards. Hadn't I been informed that all but those in the core group of essential senior staff were to stay home? No. My phone must have been busy. I was not in the core group and hoped I never would be. I turned around and went home.

The Counts family was scattered throughout my small house. The mother-in-law was in the kitchen supervising my maid; at least that's what the look on Marta's face told me. Señora de Counts and the children were in the living room listening to some godawful mariachi music on the radio. Marta must have done some laundry for them, since their clothes looked the same, but smelled fresher. The worst of the stains were gone. The vice president was ensconced at my bedroom desk, conducting state business over my phone. I backed out awkwardly and went downstairs.

Señora de Counts was again composed. She thanked me again for my hospitality.

"You have no idea how grateful we are that you welcomed us last night," she said. "It was terrible, cowering in the dark, waiting to be arrested, or worse." She stopped when she saw her oldest child looking at her with big, somber eyes.

"Not to worry. Hopefully, the worst is over," I assured her, though I wasn't as positive myself. "The ambassador and your supporters are working on a solution right now. In the meantime, just make yourselves at home. Is there anything I can get you?" I thought about the four toothbrushes that I had given them for six people.

"No, we are fine. Thank you so much."

I could see, now that the worst of last night's anxiety had left her, that her reputation as glamorous was deserved. Her hair was again in an elegant twist and her make-up had been applied expertly. Still, I doubted I

would ever eat chicken again without thinking of her spending half the night in a chicken coop.

Just then her husband appeared. He, too, was striking. His dark hair was silver at the temples and neatly combed. His skin was smooth and tanned. He looked strong, intelligent, presidential, which I guess he was, or soon would be, unless an assassin beat him to the inauguration. I banished the thought for fear it could appear on my face and excused myself to see about lunch.

The rest of the day passed uneventfully, as we ate, chatted and came and went from the few private spaces my house offered. Pedro arrived with a package for the vice president. I turned on the two-way radio, which the embassy had provided me, but heard nothing out of the ordinary.

The local radio reported that there had been a military confrontation, but the details were still unclear. People were advised to stay inside. The radio was playing a range of musical selections from Sousa marches to *Oh For a Thousand Tongues to Sing* in Spanish to *La Bamba* to *Silent Night* in Spanish. To occupy the children, I got out my cards, checkers and puzzles. Señora de Counts whizzed through my American magazines, flipping pages at a fast clip. The phone kept ringing. It was always for Señor Counts, who would answer it, then go to my bedroom to talk. Soon the whole city would know my phone number and that he was staying in my house. We were all waiting for something to happen, something unknown and scary.

My career had brought me other adventures: an earthquake, a coup attempt and several street riots. But this was different. This time I knew the people the bad guys were after, and they seemed decent enough. Worse, the bad guys could even be after me.

Not too long after the evening meal, we all said good night and went to our rooms. At 3:30 a.m. the phone awakened me. It was the ambassador.

"We've arranged a safe house for your guest," he said, without preliminaries. "Can you ask him to be

*The ambassador couldn't have known  
that I was totally naked and would  
need a few minutes to dress.*

---

ready in 15 minutes? Just him. I want the family to stay with you for a bit longer. He's the one they're after, so it's best to move him now."

"Do you think they know he's here?"

"I don't know, but the faster we get him out of there the better. Please put him on the line."

The ambassador couldn't have known that I was totally naked and would need a few minutes to dress. I quickly pulled on jeans and a sweatshirt.

I tapped on the vice president's door, first softly, then louder. I could hear snoring and nothing more. I knocked louder. "Señor Vice Presidente, Señor Vice Presidente," I said, "the ambassador is on the phone."

"¿Qué? Qué? Quién es?" I heard panic in his voice. Then I heard shuffling. The door opened. He stood before me in white skivvies with a bare, hairy chest.

"The president is on the phone," I blurted. "I mean, the ambassador is on the phone. He wants to move you to a safe house in 15 minutes, but first he needs to talk with you. Please come." I smiled, forcing my eyes to stay fixed on his face, even though I really wanted to look at his chest. *Into my boudoir, if you please*, I thought.

Fifteen minutes after that the panel truck was again at my door with the ambassador in it and the CIA station chief at the wheel. The vice president emerged from his room dressed in a dark suit. As we walked toward the door, he turned to me and stopped. I thought I heard the click of heels. Then he gave me an abrazo, a hug.

"Your help has been invaluable," he said softly, "Mil gracias."

"Buena suerte," I whispered back.

I didn't see the rest of the family until breakfast. Marta, thank God, not only showed up, but brought with her the ingredients for a traditional Latin rice-beans-eggs breakfast. *Nice touch*, I thought, *as good as her past votes for him*.

Señora de Counts turned the radio on while we were still eating. The same motley mix of music, scratchy and

distorted, seemed to be playing forever. Suddenly there was silence. It lasted for a minute, maybe two. We sat silent, waiting. Then, a somber-toned voice said: "We interrupt this program to bring you an urgent and important announcement. We regret to inform you that the president of the Republic, Dr. Edward Beltran, has died as a result of wounds received on Monday during a confrontation with the renegade forces of the former minister of defense, Roberto Salter. Forces defending the republic in the same confrontation fatally wounded Señor Salter. The nation grieves for the family of President Beltran and for us all." There was a short silence. Then the voice continued:

"The vice president of the republic, His Excellency Nathan Counts, has been sworn in as president by the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the Honorable David Chan. President Counts will address the nation at 10:00 a.m. this morning. The country is now calm. All renegade troops have been returned to barracks under arrest. The streets are safe. You may go about your daily business. Viva el Presidente Counts! Viva la República de Costa Azul!" The familiar tones of the national anthem filled the airwaves.

"Wow!" I said.

"Dios mío," said the new First Lady.

The lines in the mother-in-law's face deepened. The children's eyes widened, but they said nothing. We all stood up while the music played.

I put the lid back on the sugar bowl. The family began to gather up their things. A car came for them. I walked them to the door and we all hugged and said farewell. I watched them being escorted to the silver Mercedes and driven away. Then I sat down with my neglected cat and turned on Mozart. This time a violin concerto wouldn't do. Instead, I put the restless and stirring 40th symphony on the CD player. My days of international intrigue were ended. I would go back to being a development worker.

Nathan Counts might never stack up to George Washington, but he *had* slept here. ■

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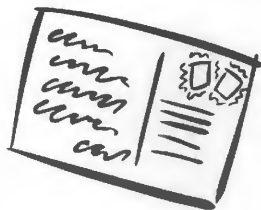
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# BABY BLUES

BY MILDRED SECOR

**T**wenty-six-year-old Jenny Williams woke up the morning of March 8 feeling oddly uneasy. *I guess this is it*, she thought. *I have finally succumbed to the madness of this place.* The joke around the embassy in Port-au-Prince was that temporary insanity, not culture shock, awaited Foreign Service officers assigned there. The country's unrelenting heat, constant street noises and ever present threat of upheaval more than justified its hardship differential.

The day lay ahead, ordinary, predictable, boring. There were no embassy events scheduled that evening; no romantic date with Craig either, since he would be on guard duty. She heard the welcome sounds of her maid preparing breakfast in the downstairs kitchen. The smell of strong Haitian coffee and sizzling bacon found its way to her room. *So, okay there are perks*, she thought.

Jenny rolled out of bed, showered and dressed for work in a short yellow summer dress that complemented the tan she'd effortlessly acquired. In deference to the heat, she now kept her hair short and used very little makeup. Her legs were bare and she wore open-toe sandals. Only last night CNN had reported that a late season blizzard had hit the entire north-eastern United States. *Perks. Definitely.*

Then she went downstairs. Her dining room table was set with the usual flower arrangement: pink laurels and red hibiscus from her backyard garden and

multicolored bougainvillea from the overflowing hedge outside the fence. The display was unorthodox, its appeal puzzling, a perfect reflection of this unfathomable country. Mona, her live-in maid, was in the kitchen. Her usually engaging face appeared drawn this morning. Jenny could see her gripping the kitchen counter at times. Four months ago, Mona had confessed to Jenny that she was pregnant. The child's father was a scoundrel, she'd said. He couldn't be counted on for anything other than drinking rum and playing borlette, the local lottery, all of which he did with Mona's money.

"You are a good person, one of God's angels, really," Mona had wept, "for not firing me as most people here would. I will pray to God every day to bless you and your children's children."

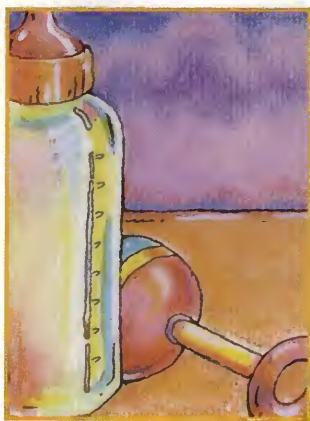
Jenny had found herself caught between feelings of sympathy for Mona's plight and embarrassment at her lavish praise. "As long as you are healthy and willing to work, there is no reason you can't stay here," she'd assured Mona.

Keeping Mona had been a good decision. The maid was reliable, discreet, meticulous to a fault and a great cook besides. She slept in the servant's quarters

behind the pool house and seemed happy about her upcoming motherhood. This morning, however, Mona did not look good.

"What's wrong, Mona?" Jenny's Creole had gotten quite good after 15 months in Port-au-Prince.

"God be praised, Mademoiselle Jenny, I'm doing just fine," answered Mona.



Loel Harp

"Mona, are you sure the baby's not due before mid-June?"

"It's bad luck to talk about dates," Mona pronounced. "Lord, it upsets me so that you'll be gone before my time comes. I wanted you to be godmother."

Jenny wasn't sorry she wouldn't be around for the birth, having no desire to become more involved in Mona's life than she already was. However, she kept that sentiment to herself and continued her probing.

"You see your midwife regularly, don't you, Mona?"

Mona grunted.

"The midwife says everything is okay, doesn't she?" Jenny persisted.

"Everything is just as God willed it, Mademoiselle Jenny. The Great Master, the Eternal will take care of me and my baby."

Jenny felt a familiar need to flee. Nothing frustrated her more than Mona's bizarre religious pronouncements. They were a mixture of Catholic doctrine, voodoo fetishism and blatant superstition, with no apparent logic to anyone but Mona.

"Well, I've got to leave for work now," she said. She wondered at the amused smile and the mischievous twinkle illuminating Mona's face.

As she got into the four-wheel-drive Jeep Cherokee that she'd purchased to conquer Haitian potholes and dirt roads, Jenny was glad that she would miss the big event in her maid's life. Having to drive Mona in the middle of the night during curfew to a Haitian hospital with inadequate emergency service was not the kind of overseas experience for which she'd volunteered. Oh, she'd be sure to leave Mona some money and a good recommendation so that she could find work with another American family, but it was a good thing that she would be gone by June 1. Mona and her baby could then become someone else's responsibility.

Jenny's day went by without incident. Her current assignment to the embassy's administrative section was a breeze. The local employees knew their jobs well. Administrative work, which ended promptly at 5 o'clock, was a welcome change after months of interviewing visa applicants at the consulate all day.

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*Mildred Secor lives in Paris with her husband, FSO Peter Secor, and their three children. The Secors have also been assigned to Port-au-Prince; Ottawa; Adana, Turkey and Seattle.*

As Jenny pulled into her driveway that evening, she sensed that something wasn't right. It was too quiet, too still. She cautiously unlocked the front door. A faint noise was coming from the kitchen. Jenny stood for a moment and listened. Warily, she proceeded toward the kitchen. There, on the kitchen table in a laundry basket, *her* laundry basket, was a newborn baby. The infant had been wrapped in two dishtowels, *her* dishtowels. The newborn was crying in spurts, as if it had little strength left.

"Mona!"

Jenny raced through the rooms, with only the baby's cries responding to her calls. She ran outside to Mona's rooms. The bed linens had been rolled up and left in a corner. The recess in the back wall that had served as Mona's closet was empty. The suitcase Mona had kept on a shelf was gone.

Jenny went back to the house. For the first time noticed a note propped against the laundry basket. *Dear Mademoiselle Jenny: The French was dubious, the handwriting hard to make out. My boy was born at noon. It is a good sign. I gave birth to him myself, just like my Mamma did me up in the mountains 20 years ago. I am sorry I lied to you about the date. Mademoiselle Jenny, please keep my baby. You can give him a good life. God has put you in my path for this purpose. I will pray for you both always. Your maid, Mona.*

Jenny collapsed in the kitchen chair. Was this some kind of joke? Various thoughts raced through her mind in no logical order. I have to get food. Let the embassy security deal with this; let them find Mona. She could be bleeding in the streets somewhere. I need baby clothes, diapers. What if Mona dies? Why is this happening?

She forced herself to breathe calmly, then called the embassy security officer, Dave. He told her to stay home as he was on his way. She thought: *And where would I go?* She called Joe Stanton, a colleague who lived up the hill and had a 14-month-old.

"Do you still have baby bottles and formula?" she asked when Joe's wife, Karen, answered the phone. "Something crazy has happened."

An hour later, Jenny's house was filled with people from the embassy. Joe and Karen joined her, as did Dave and his assistant, Andy. Her boss, the administrative counselor, made an appearance, as did two Marines. Dave had also called the local police. They would not normally bother with such a case, but since the American Embassy was involved, the deputy assistant chief of the Casernes

*The investigation into Mona's disappearance was still open,  
but Jenny had stopped thinking about her.  
Oliver had filled a void that hadn't even existed before.*

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Dessalines, Captain Jacques Lejeune, took charge of the investigation. He, like everyone else, did not have a clue about how to proceed.

"So this maid, Mona Labonté, has lived with you for the past 15 months?" he asked Jenny. "Do you know anything else about her?"

"I inherited her when I moved here. She used to work for my predecessor who lived in this house before me."

"Has she ever talked about her family, her native village?"

"She always referred to her village as 'the mountains.' I've never even seen her boyfriend."

"The mountains? Do you know how many 'mountains' there are in this country, Ms. Williams?"

"No, Captain. Do you?"

Dave jumped in before things could escalate. "Listen, Captain, she couldn't have gone far. She only gave birth a few hours ago. The embassy will offer a reward of \$500 to whoever brings her back."

Captain Lejeune liked that idea. "We could use the radio to announce it. Five hundred dollars will get you fast results in this country."

"I don't want that kind of publicity," Jenny objected. "Can't you make discreet inquiries?"

Jenny was relieved when Dave agreed with her. "As an American diplomat, she needs to keep a low profile, Captain," he said.

Captain Lejeune understood. He promised to conduct a discreet, yet thorough investigation and to keep the embassy informed. He was confident that the whole situation would be resolved within 24 hours. He agreed with everyone that the baby should remain at Jenny's house until Mona was found. They all concluded that it was likely that Mona was simply suffering from some sort of postpartum unbalance and would soon come back to her senses.

Karen, who worked as a part-time nurse at the embassy, examined the baby and pronounced him healthy despite weighing only a little more than 5 pounds. He was alert, with normal reflexes and a stable temperature. Karen gave the infant a sponge bath, clothed him in an

outfit that had belonged to her own child and fed him some infant formula. She tried to show Jenny how to care for his umbilical cord.

"This isn't my problem," said Jenny, trying to avoid looking at the child's navel. "I can't do this. I don't want to do this."

"We'll take it one step at a time." Karen's voice was soothing. "Mona is bound to come back. Or the police will find her. You'll see."

But the next morning brought no news of Mona. At 10 o'clock, Dave called to report that the police had no leads. He had also called Jenny's predecessor, now in Oslo, who could not remember the maid ever mentioning a particular village or hometown. Shortly before noon, Craig showed up.

"Oh, baby!" he said, engulfing Jenny in a sympathetic hug. "I am here, honey. This is so unreal! What are you going to do?"

"Karen Stanton is hiring a nanny so I can go back to work. Aside from that, all I can do is wait for news of Mona."

The nanny Karen hired was a heavyset, middle-aged woman, with a kind and honest face. Jenny was relieved to relinquish the care of her new charge to someone more competent. Unfortunately, the nanny went home to her family every night and did not work on Sundays. During those times, Jenny was left to care for the baby. And, as if he was trying to make up for all the trouble he'd caused, the tiny boy always behaved like an angel. He slept six hours straight into the night and when he was alert in the evenings, he made sweet gurgling noises and blew spit bubbles. He had the biggest brown eyes Jenny had ever seen. He would stare at her as if memorizing her face.

Their second week together, Jenny got tired of referring to the infant as "the baby." She named him Oliver. She didn't know why she had picked that name. He just looked like an Oliver. By week four, she started looking forward to coming home to him. Oliver's fist would clutch around her finger in the sweetest little grip. She loved his baby smell and the soft weight of

him in her arms. She loved the way his eyes drooped when he fell asleep and the way his lips kept suckling even without a bottle. She did not notice when she began spending weekends at home instead of at the Marine House or at the other expat hangouts. She did not notice that Craig had stopped coming over. Baby paraphernalia took over her house. There were baby bottles covering her kitchen counter and a baby swing on loan from Karen sat in a corner of her dining room. Freshly laundered baby clothes covered her coffee table. Caught up in the newness of it all, Jenny did not notice that she had become a mother.

The investigation into Mona's disappearance was still open, but Jenny had stopped thinking about her. Her life had fallen into a new routine. It was as if Oliver had filled a void that hadn't even existed before. She was first jolted back to reality when her boss reminded her that June 1, her departure date, was fast approaching. The General Services officer who was arranging for the moving company to come to her house was awaiting word from her.

Oliver was six weeks old. How could she leave him? If she left, what would become of him? Jenny had seen enough poverty around her in the past 17 months to know that, without someone to take care of him, little Oliver did not stand a chance. Even more compelling, she had fallen in love with the little boy.

She called the consul general to talk about adoption. He tried to talk her out of it. But no one could sway Jenny: not Karen, with her wise, levelheaded concerns; not Dave, who was too blasé and saw trouble everywhere; not Craig, who was dating the deputy chief of mission's secretary, but who had remained a friend.

The paperwork was completed without a glitch. There was no one to contest her right to raise Oliver, and neither the employees at City Hall nor the judge who approved her adoption petition could have cared less about the little boy's fate. Ten days after Jenny had declared her intention to keep Oliver, she held in her hands the signed adoption papers that officially made her a mom. Her new assignment in Jakarta did not start until July 18, so she planned to spend her home leave outfitting Oliver, making sure he had the necessary shots and introducing him to her parents in Chicago.

On May 21, the movers came and packed all her belongings. Since the U.S. government provided basic furnishings for embassy housing in Port-au-Prince, she

was not much inconvenienced. Most of Oliver's baby furnishings consisted of borrowed stuff that would remain after the movers had left.

Six days later, reality, or was it fate, finally caught up with Jenny. She woke up that morning with the same feeling of uneasiness she'd experienced the day Oliver was born. *It's just melancholy because I am leaving*, she told herself. Her last day at work had been the day before, so she decided to take Oliver for a drive into the mountains. The air in the mountainous Kenscoff area above the city was pure and cool and reminded her of home. She always felt better after a visit to Kenscoff. She parked her Jeep by the side of the road and bought wild flowers from a little boy wearing rags and a contagious smile. She bargained down the price of sweet and sour "quenepes," the tropical grape-like berries that were found everywhere in the islands that time of year. One merchant tried to entice her into buying more, but Jenny shook her head, and, strapping Oliver in front of her in a baby carrier, hiked up a nearby hill. She sat there, soaking in the peace. By mid-afternoon, Oliver had fallen asleep and Jenny drove back home.

As she neared her house, the morning's uneasiness assailed her once again. Carrying a sleeping Oliver in his car seat, she opened the door to her kitchen carefully, as if sensing that some kind of reckoning awaited on the other side. There, at her kitchen table, sat Mona. She seemed much thinner than before. She wore a calico dress with a white sash; a bright, multicolored scarf wound around her head and was secured by a small bow, in typical Creole fashion. She looked at Jenny, her eyes soulful and poignant.

"I had a dream," Mona said. "My boy was crying for me."

Jenny stood as if in a trance, incapable of speech, as the beautiful dream world she'd created for herself and Oliver disintegrated. Should she fight to keep Oliver despite the threat of bad publicity and the bigger threat to her career? *American diplomat steals poor maid's child*. Should she beg, plead, reason with Mona? Mona's logic knew no reason. Should she merely cry, mourn, and then move on?

She did it all. When it was over, she held her baby together with the shattered pieces of her broken heart, then kissed him goodbye. On June 1, she boarded an American Airlines jet to Miami with a connecting flight to Chicago. She would never forget her first tour. ■

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# MARRIAGE ACROSS THE MILES

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FOR FOREIGN SERVICE FAMILIES, ABSENCE SOMETIMES DOES NOT MAKE THE HEART GROW FONDER. HOW DO OFFICERS AND THEIR SPOUSES COPE WITH PROLONGED PHYSICAL SEPARATION?

By FRANCINE MODDERNO

**T**he Foreign Service community now has proportionally more female officers, more tandem couples and more professional wives within its ranks than ever before. In part, this is due to the elimination in 1974 of the requirement that any female FSO resign from the service upon her marriage. But more significantly, these ongoing changes in the makeup of the Foreign Service reflect the happy fact that American women are achieving steadily greater levels of professional responsibility in most fields.

These opportunities do not come cost-free, however. More and more Foreign Service families are grappling with the age-old truth that balancing two careers sometimes requires extended periods of physical separation, with one or both partners living, perhaps with children or other relatives, under dangerous physical or political conditions.

How do FSOs and their spouses cope with the stresses such separations inevitably create? Are there ways to minimize their impact on marriages?

## The Traditional Wife

"I was a traditional wife," says Rita Wysong. The author of *Packing Up and Moving On: Life in the Foreign Service*, (North Country, 1995), Rita began writing only after her husband Robert Clayton retired in 1967 after 20 years in the Service. She and Bob had to live apart twice. "I didn't want it," she says. "It just happened." Rita says that in her day, spouses didn't question separations. "You just went where you were told. As far as discussing it — never. ... I almost felt like I was an extension of my husband, felt almost as if I didn't have an identity of my own. ... Now the Foreign Service wife's life is so different. I just took orders."

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*Francine Modderno is a freelance writer living in Virginia.*

Rita and Bob were first apart in 1955 when Rita returned to the States from Jeddah to have their third child. "Our daughter was three and a half months old before he saw her. We didn't have the telephone and communications like nowadays; and toward the end, when things were so up in the air and our furniture hadn't been sent yet — well, I had been a pretty good Foreign Service wife up until then, but I guess I felt almost abandoned. I remember thinking, 'They can take this State Department thing and do what they want to with it.' It was easier for Bob than me — he was in his element; he was in an Arabic country, doing what he liked."

"We've been happily married for a long time and we don't like to be separated. ... But there are times when jobs and opportunities and responsibilities are such that there's very little choice." The wife of an ambassador as well as a high-ranking FSO herself, Phyllis E. Oakley, currently assistant secretary of State for intelligence & research (INR), has certainly wrestled with the dilemmas posed by such situations.

A year after she joined the State Department in 1957, she married fellow FSO Robert B. Oakley and was therefore required to resign from the Foreign Service, though she reentered it in 1974. As she and her husband have pursued their careers over the past 40 years, they have lived apart on five occasions, twice for a period of almost two years each.

Their first separation came after seven years of marriage, when Mr. Oakley was assigned to Vietnam, and the previous policy allowing families to accompany FSOs there was suddenly reversed. Having just returned from Africa, Oakley decided it would be good for her and her two small children to be near family and in a small community, so they moved to Mr. Oakley's hometown of Shreveport, La.

Their second separation occurred under considerably different circumstances more than two decades later. Both Oakleys were in Washington; Phyllis was deputy spokeswoman for State and Robert was working in anti-terrorism.

Then he was tapped as the new ambassador to Pakistan in 1988 following the tragic death of Arnie Raphael in a plane crash, and quickly left for Islamabad.

"Our children were in college and needed a home base. It was simply better at that point that one of us be here. We never would have chosen this, but it was just the way it happened. We then tried to shorten the assignments and make arrangements so that we could stay in closer touch." Eventually, Phyllis was able to join her husband in Pakistan, where she worked with the Afghanistan cross-border humanitarian assistance program on loan to USAID.

### Giving Birth Alone

"I didn't come into the Foreign Service expecting to be away from my husband," says Bobbi Brown. Brown was introduced to long-distance marriage right off the bat, when her husband Phil's first USIA tour in 1966 took him to Africa. Pregnant with her first child, she remained at home to have her baby before following him. "That was the first time we were separated," she says. After the birth of her second child, Brown was medically evacuated several times for postpartum problems. "When my mother came to be with me in Paris, I wondered what kind of a job this was when my husband couldn't be with me at such an important time. There was a great deal of tension. At that point, I was ready to give it all up."

"[But] we felt not only that it was a challenge but that it was something that was very, very well worth doing — in fact, terribly important to do. So it never occurred to me to say, 'Oh, are you going to leave me home?'"

After that bumpy beginning, Brown learned to love the Foreign Service lifestyle and, with a master's degree in education, patched together a career by teaching where she could, in Russia and at the Sidwell Friends

School in Washington. Then she and Phil lived apart in 1995, when Phil served his last Foreign Service tour in Vienna. Although she spoke better German than Phil and was tempted to accompany him, she decided to stay home because she'd just finished a course on learning disabilities in order to work at the Kingsbury Center in Washington, D.C. "I just said, 'No, I wasn't going to do it again.'"

### Splitting The Kids

Mette Beecroft stayed in Washington during her first separation from her husband because she'd been named the first deputy director of the Family Liaison Office. "I helped establish it in the department and then proceeded to set it up worldwide. My husband went to a good job in Bonn in 1978, but I felt that mine was just a fabulous job and it was terribly important to give it some sustained effort in the beginning. My husband accepted this readily and we actually split the kids: he took our son and got him started in school, while our daughter stayed with me. It worked very well; we each had a child and each had company. We did this for a year and then [my daughter and I] followed and were at post in the normal way."

A successful business venture kept JoAnn Piekney home after 15 years abroad with her husband. She and FSO Bill Piekney had been married for 22 years when they chose to live apart in 1989. During their years overseas they had raised two sons and JoAnn had worked intermittently as an elementary school teacher and in other part-time positions before getting involved in real estate. She later got her license and worked for a respected Washington-area real estate firm whenever they were Stateside.

In the late 1980s, believing that Bill would not be assigned overseas again, JoAnn opened a real estate and property management company in Northern Virginia. Her business was

getting off the ground nicely. She had a good client base and felt a great commitment to her work. Then Bill was offered an important position in Cairo, a job too good to pass up. "The business was at a point where I either had to commit or just walk away. We had to make a choice: Would I sell my accounts and leave the States or would I continue the business and live apart from Bill for at least a portion of the year?" For the next four years, until her husband's tour ended, JoAnn managed her business in Virginia during peak business season, March to September, and spent the remainder of the year with Bill in Cairo.

### A Tandem Couple

Like the Oakleys, Barbara and Earle Scarlett are a tandem couple. They joined the service as a team in 1976, one of the first married couples to do so. Wed in 1971, they both took the Foreign Service exam in 1974, were put into the same entry class and took the oath of office together. Yet Barbara recalls that the Foreign Service recruiter who interviewed Earle told him, "We're looking for people like you — and by the way, what does your wife do?"

The Scarletts' first priorities when considering postings are whether they would be good for their family as a whole and whether tandem positions are available. Individual career enhancement takes a back seat to these prime issues. "Perhaps our careers could have moved faster," says Barbara, "but we've enjoyed what we had to do." This strategy also spared the couple any lengthy separations for almost 20 years, until 1995, when Earle accepted a three-month TDY to Bosnia which stretched out to a year.

Barbara Scarlett found herself acting as a go-between, relaying detailed briefings over the phone between Earle and his office in Washington. "In addition to my own work, I had to take on his," she notes.

But the biggest strain came when the late Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown died in a plane crash near Tuzla. She had just talked on the telephone with her husband, who was very excited about seeing his old friend Ron again. When she saw the news report of the crash, she immediately assumed Earle was on the plane. She tried to reach Sarajevo by phone, but couldn't get through. And State couldn't tell her who was on the plane, much less who'd been killed. "There were two hours when I was very, very angry. ... I don't know how I would have responded if Earle had been on that plane."

One of the major hardships of separation is the drain on finances due to the costs of maintaining two households, plus phone bills and travel. Mette Beecroft recalls, "Before I started working at the department, I was running around getting my husband's danger pay and travel allowances straight. He was never here long enough to do anything about them and, of course, someone had to take an interest." She suggests that the Stateside spouse contact the Family Liaison Office or the Association of American Foreign Service Women for their assistance in obtaining a frequent visitor's pass to the spouse's office. It's also useful to meet the FSO's office colleagues who may be very helpful in passing on messages and providing information on the circumstances under which the employee is working.

### **We Became Independent**

It seems natural that a lifestyle so hard on marriages would produce a high rate of divorce. No statistics on Foreign Service marriages are collected, so it's impossible to determine the divorce rate. While most FSOs and spouses believe that the divorce rate in the service is quite high, Terry Williams, who runs the family briefing program at the

## *Despite suspicions to the contrary, one observer suggests that the divorce rate among FSOs is no higher than the national rate.*

Overseas Briefing Center, believes that the rate of divorce for Foreign Service marriages is similar to the national rate. However, the perception among diplomatic security agents that their divorce rate is considerably higher than the national average may well be true, since law enforcement officers as a group have a significantly higher divorce rate than the national average.

Many FS employees are attracted to assignments they perceive as career-enhancing, despite the prolonged separation from family that they may entail. A diplomatic security officer who joined the Foreign Service in 1986 and prefers to remain anonymous reflects on his experience with this situation:

When he and his wife had been married for a year and a half, he accepted a challenging TDY in Moscow. His wife was finishing a master's degree in international business, so it seemed like a reasonable time to be away. They missed each other a great deal and he even tried to get a visitor's visa for her to come to Moscow, but this was against policy for temporary employees.

When the agent returned to Washington eight months later, he found that they had both established patterns of day-to-day activities that were incompatible with each other. Six months later they formally separated. "But I told her that I wanted to begin marriage counseling immedi-

ately." They came to realize that during the time they were living so far apart, each had developed a level of independence from each other such that "... when we came back together there didn't seem to be much common ground. But the marriage counselor gave us tools to work with and we put them to use: more communication and understanding that marriage is not easy, that it takes a lot of hard work to keep it going."

Married now for 14 years, they consider themselves very happy. His wife has accompanied him on two overseas assignments and they have two children, both born abroad. The agent's wife, a telecommunications senior manager in the metro Washington area, has found life abroad satisfying in all respects except employment. Nevertheless, she says, "I would never do that again. What is the point in being married if you are not going to live together? Put first things first. Couples should determine their priorities. Is it job over marriage or marriage over job? Know your priorities."

### **Coping Strategies**

According to Dr. Karen Shanor, a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist who specializes in the problems of long-distance marriages and the author of *How to Stay Together When You Have to be Apart* (Warner Books, 1987), "[Successful] couples have decided they are willing to put an effort into staying together and are independent." Her research indicates divorces actually appear to be rarer among couples who have chosen a lifestyle of separations because most such couples try harder to make their marriages work. They also have relationships in which each partner has a high level of respect for the other and there's a good level of trust.

There are, however, special concerns related to women in the Foreign Service labor force. "The need to com-

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pete to succeed in the service can make separations particularly difficult for women in senior-level positions," says Dr. Esther Roberts of the State Department's Mental Health Services office. As the prime domestic managers of most families, women often have more demands on their time than men. And even with help from partners and household employees overseas, they often carry the added emotional baggage of traditional societal expectations for females.

As a practical matter, cooperation during separation may include a dramatic new division of labor. Mette Beecroft thinks that the most important thing in separation is to develop expertise in the financial and mechanical aspects of maintaining a household. "The stay-at-home spouse should start to manage all the financial aspects in the marriage long before the partner leaves. You can do all these — and I don't mean to sound facetious now — all these warm and fuzzy things like keeping in contact and communicating and e-mailing. But if you don't have essential things straight, the stress level you set up for yourself and for your family is tremendous. Take a strong interest in the way the house mechanically functions. If you own a house, you have to be able to garden, to cut the lawn."

There are other basic concerns to address, as well. The couple needs to have full, not limited, powers of attorney, bank accounts both parties can use and up-to-date wills. And don't forget that tax season rolls around once a year.

Ultimately, however, there are no short-cuts to protect Foreign Service couples against the pain of separation. As Phyllis Oakley observes: "At some point, all officers will have to face separation, and in their equation — involving job, opportunity, commitment to the profession and to the family — they will make some difficult choices." ■



## BOOKS

### *Dean Acheson and the Cold War*

BY WILLIAM H. LEWIS

**Acheson:**

**The Secretary of State Who  
Created the American World**

*James Chace, Simon & Schuster,  
1998, \$30.00, hardcover, 512 pages.*

**The American Approach  
to Foreign Affairs:  
An Uncertain Tradition**

*Roger S. Whitcomb,  
Praeger, 1998, \$24.00,  
hardcover, 149 pages.*

The current period in international affairs bears a significant resemblance to the late 1940s, contends James Chace in his monumental study, *Acheson*. In both eras, he writes, the U.S. and its allies proved victorious against a common foe, and a new global state of affairs emerged. Fifty years ago, the Cold War confrontation came into being. Now, with the Cold War a memory, the question is raised whether the choices made and institutions created at the onset of the Cold War remain serviceable.

The two books under review reflect very different views of the origins of the Cold War and the lessons to be drawn from that still-controversial period. *Acheson*, by Columbia University political sci-

*William H. Lewis, a retired FSO, is former director of security policy studies at George Washington University.*

ence professor James Chace, is a paean of praise for the tenacity and incisiveness of the secretary of State who sought to understand and cope with the conflicted international forces at work from 1945 to 1952.

Roger Whitcomb, a well known professor of foreign policy studies at Kutztown University in the Pennsylvania State System, argues that there was much to criticize in these efforts by Acheson. He points in particular to failed relations with the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War.

What remain undisputable are the many contributions that Acheson made in the realm of institution-building. He was a key player in establishing the Bretton Woods monetary system, the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and he orchestrated initiatives to foil Soviet aggrandizement in the eastern Mediterranean and in the Persian Gulf region.

#### **A Boldness of Action**

As Chace observes: "With Acheson at or near the helm, (U.S.) policies started to show a breadth of conception, a buoyancy, and a boldness of action that had not been seen in foreign affairs in peacetime in this country." Despite the urgings of George Kennan, the senior Russian-speaking Foreign Service officer in Moscow, Acheson initially sought accommodation with Moscow, inviting the Soviet leadership to participate in economic reconstruction and

in the sharing of atomic science for peaceful purposes. However, these efforts proved unproductive. In Chace's words, "The Russian desire for security, Russian suspicion of American motives if Washington made no effort to give Moscow a stake in controlling the atom, seemed to [Acheson] perfectly legitimate concerns."

According to Chace, the grand strategy adopted by the U.S. was the product of Stalin's truculence and the belief by President Truman that Stalin was bent on testing American will and resolve in Europe and elsewhere. Reflecting on this, Acheson acknowledged in his memoirs that neither he nor other American policy makers fully understood the far-reaching geostrategic changes that had occurred during and after the Second World War, and the significance of Soviet military power. "Only slowly", Acheson admitted, "did it dawn on us that the whole world structure and order that we had inherited from the 19th century was gone and the struggle to replace it would be directed from two bitterly opposed and ideologically irreconcilable power centers."

#### **America's National Myths**

Whitcomb, in his provocative book, *The American Approach to Foreign Affairs*, skewers the American foreign affairs community for its failure to fully appreciate Soviet post-war concerns. Part of the blame he attributes to America's

national myths of "separateness, exclusivity, and superiority" — used by policy-makers to build support for policies intended to ensure U.S. pre-dominance in the world. One is not surprised that Whitcomb, in an obscure footnote, identifies himself as a "post-revisionist" scholar, since the question "Who is to blame for the origins of the Cold War?" has intrigued revisionist historians since the 1960s.

Whitcomb contends that a post-1945 international adversary was requisite for the fashioning of a "sense of mission, historical necessity, and evangelist fervor." For such purposes, Stalin and the Soviet Union served the policy makers well. He endorses the mainstream revisionist view that American leaders of the period must be assigned heavy responsibility for the onset and intensification of the Cold War.

Once President Truman and Dean Acheson clarified their conceptual thinking, Whitcomb argues, a full panoply of traditional American beliefs, myths, and values were brought into play to secure congressional and public support for their emerging policies.

Chace acknowledges that occasional rhetorical excess did arise as the Truman team sought to rally support for its action programs. Occasionally, Acheson discarded scruples in seeking congressional support for administration legislation using anti-communist arguments "clearer than truth." These were, as Chace notes, Faustian bargains that ultimately did not protect the secretary from savage conservative attacks during the final stages of his tenure for being an appeaser of the Soviet Union.

Chace's evaluation of Acheson's effort to rally congressional and public support for new international commitments is grounded in a real-

istic appreciation of the give-and-take of Washington politics of that day. In this respect, Whitcomb's understanding appears underdeveloped.

### Law and International Order

Whitcomb contends that many of the weaknesses of the U.S. foreign policy establishment in the post-war period can be attributed to their education within the legal profession. Acheson had such a background. After his graduation from Yale Law School, he developed a special relationship with Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was later to clerk for Justice Louis Brandeis and was profoundly influenced by the latter's erudition and pragmatism.

The attraction of government service and offers of sub-Cabinet-level appointment by President Roosevelt kept Acheson in Washington. Nevertheless, he remained by training wedded to legal precepts as touchstones for the conduct of American diplomacy. When involved in negotiations, he often evinced the skills of a litigating attorney, albeit one governed by diplomatic rules of order and conduct.

Whitcomb takes strong exception to "legalist" approaches to negotiating, claiming that they have shackled strategic thinking and innovation. He claims that legalism straitjacketed policy — e.g., burdening international law with domestic American law principles, offering security pacts "heaped upon one another," and passing U.N. resolutions censuring international behavior without effective counter measures.

As with some of his more vehement confreres, Whitcomb fails to take into account the substantial gains that have been registered as a result of U.S. recourse to "legalisms."

Even he should be prepared to acknowledge the advances in human rights since the establishment of the Nuremberg tribunal, such as the recently created war crimes courts for Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Throughout his stewardship as secretary of State, Acheson did not suffer with good grace what he viewed as the banalities of "wooly headed" thinkers. As Chace notes, his acerbic reactions occasionally wounded adversaries.

### The Lion in Winter

Upon Acheson's departure from the Department, he continued to be influential in policy circles, being frequently consulted on critical issues in the role of elder statesman, or, in his own phrase, an "ancient mariner."

His counsel was not always welcomed, in part because his verbal rapier never lost its sting. When the Kennedy administration was planning the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, Acheson warned that the invading force would be outmatched. Once "the asinine Cuban adventure" collapsed, Acheson wrote to former President Truman that "brains are no substitute for judgment."

Chace observes in his excellent book, "The measure of greatness is the ability to seize the moment and to create out of chaos the enduring structure of success." Eternally loyal to President Truman, steely-eyed in responding to ill-informed or ideologically disoriented politicians, a staunch defender of the national interest, Dean Acheson proved the right man for the times. One can only agree with Chace that Acheson was the most important figure in American foreign policy since John Quincy Adams, and was the "American realist who most fully understood and mastered the exercise of American power in the American era." ■

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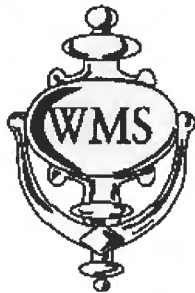


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# POSTCARD FROM ABROAD

## *The Drums Of Change*

By NANCY JOHNSON

As our Land Rovers traversed the verdant Dades Valley that extends 94 miles between the high Atlas Mountains in northern Morocco and the Sahara Desert in the south, we admired the small, river-irrigated fields of wheat and vegetables and the surrounding groves of fig, olive, date and almond trees. The green lushness contrasted sharply with the dusty paths and the sole roadway that passed through Ait Oudinar, a village at the edge of the deep canyons of the Dades Gorge that we reached at midday.

After unloading at the inn where we were staying, our small group walked slowly along the pathways above the river, past crumbling sand-colored walls and by the open doorways and windows of the adobe, flat-roofed houses of the village's few hundred inhabitants. The men and some younger women worked in the fields, but far enough away that we could not tell whether they were veiled. Walking through the city, we observed other women tittering behind their veils in doorways as we passed.

A parade of young children in sweaters and leggings soon followed us to the home of a local villager, where we had been invited to have tea. We watched as our Berber hostess filled the round, flat bread

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*Nancy Johnson, a former managing editor of the Journal, is a freelance writer and inveterate traveller. The stamp is courtesy of the AAFSW Bookfair "Stamp Corner."*

*The Berber youths,  
dressed in Levis,  
Reeboks and  
leather jackets,  
sat down to play  
their traditional  
drums.*



dough with a paste of cilantro, nuts and olive oil and baked it over a small woodfuel fire. She then passed the bread around and poured mint tea into small glasses as we sat on the floor of her carpet-covered living room.

Back at the inn, we shared a delicious meal of chicken and vegetables cooked in the ubiquitous Moroccan casserole, the tajine. We then gathered around the fire while our guide explained the art of henna painting. The painting of hands and face with symbolic motifs, at first used for Berber tribal identification, is now primarily decorative and worn for private and public celebrations and rites of passage. Several of us were happy to have a village woman apply this ancient art to our

hands; we carefully stood before the fire to dry the henna paste.

Suddenly there was a flurry at the door and several young village men appeared. Unlike the robed older men and women of the village, these young men, in their late teens or early twenties, were dressed in Levis, Reeboks and leather jackets. They carried what looked like ceramic pots but were actually Berber drums, with a hide stretched over one end of the various-sized pots.

After warming their instruments near the fire, the five young men sat down to entertain us with Berber drumming. The drums gave out a wide variety of sounds and the rhythms soon had us stamping our feet and nodding our heads in time to their enthusiastic music.

Handsome and assured, the youths enjoyed their jam session and the chance to play before an appreciative audience. Listening and watching, I couldn't help comparing them to young friends in America who played in local bands, hoping for a chance to play full time. What did these young men do during the day? Till the fields, build houses, trade in the Sunday market? Did they hope to make music in the larger city of Ouarzazate or even in Marrakesh? Or were they happy simply to entertain the foreign tourists in the local inn?

Music is a universal language, but to a sojourner in a foreign land, in an isolated village, there is much that remains a mystery. ■

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