

Educational Counseling Now at FLO

Educational counseling services formerly provided by the Foreign Service Educational and Counseling Center (FSECC), which closed in April, are now available to Foreign Service personnel through the Family Liaison Office in the Department of State. FSECC clients are being contacted directly to determine the disposition of their files.

The Family Liaison Office will be able to provide assistance in the following areas:

- D.C. area schools; public, private, and special education
- Boarding schools in the United States
- American and non-American day and boarding schools abroad
- American colleges
- Correspondence schools and colleges
- Career awareness, interests, and aptitudes
- Educational evaluations
- Secondary School Admissions Test (SSAT), Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and Achievement Test (ACH) information and registration forms and individual administration of these tests for handicapped students
- Summer programs; schools, camps, volunteer opportunities
- Liaison between family at post and dependent in the U.S. school when there are problems
- Application to a school or college when there is no time for the standard application procedure.

For counseling services in any of these areas contact the FLO, 632-1076, to set up an appointment.

PRESIDENT DORMAN TESTIFIES FOR CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE

AAFSW President Lesley Dorman presented the following statement before the Subcommittee on Retirement Income and Employment, Select Committee on Aging, United States House of Representatives, May 7, 1979.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee;

Thank you for the invitation to testify today. I am Lesley Dorman, President of the Association of American Foreign Service Women. We feel that our experience as Foreign Service women can throw light on the unfavorable impact of geographic mobility on mid-life women. Millions of wives are struggling to cope with dependence on a mobile breadwinner whether in corporate, government or military life. The loss of our support systems — family members, friends, work colleagues and fellow church members — helps create feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, anger, and its handmaidens, guilt and depression.

Extended overseas service exacerbates these stresses and adds more. We experience the alienation of culture shock, the isolation of language inadequacy, the hazards of rigorous climate and endemic disease, the trials of evacuation, and the pervasive fear of terrorism. Considerable energy and effort has been spent by the foreign affairs community and by the women themselves in finding creative responses to these hardships. May we at this point ask to have included in the record the *AAFSW Forum report on the Concerns of Foreign Service Spouses and Families* and our recent study on employment?

Many Foreign Service women in mid-life today are neither secure nor fulfilled. They have sacrificed the earning potential of their most productive years in cultural adjustments, family support responsibilities, and in the creation of a favorable social ambience for the conduct of American foreign policy.

Whatever her inclinations, the Foreign Service wife has been shoehorned into a clearly defined traditional role. Although she was never paid, her contributions to mission activities were evaluated on her husband's performance report until 1972. In addition, government policy was to discourage her from seeking employment for profit. Local work laws, language problems and lack of appropriate job opportunities have precluded any real possibility for her to establish her own economic base, and she is completely dependent on her husband.

While life in the Foreign Service is stimulating and has undeniable rewards of personal growth, travel, and world-wide friendships, the attractions of these desirable facets are fading as more and more wives realize that they may pay for these benefits by penury in their later years.

The skyrocketing rate of divorce among couples whose marriages have endured more than 15 years is as apparent in the Foreign Service as in society at large. Few courts recognize marriage as an economic partnership. We have seen the tragic unpreparedness of the Foreign Service displaced homemaker who re-enters the United States and is disoriented by the changes in American society that have occurred during her absence. International mobility has prevented her from establishing an employment record or from taking advantage of continuing education to modernize her skills. She finds herself without health insurance, Social Security, or any share in her former husband's annuity, and with little prospect of acquiring any of these.

Therefore, the aware Foreign Service wife is questioning whether she can continue being a "Dependent." Furthermore, Foreign Service wives need and want the same kinds of recognition which have spurred women

cont'd p. 5

BOARD NOTES

Monday, April 30...The Board voted to award an additional \$500 in honor of the International Year of the Child to the Area B Mental Health Center for their summer program. AAFSW is Area B's only support for its very successful program during the summer months....Christiane Cutter, Community Relations Chairperson invited the Board to a reception at the Area B Mental Health Center May 16 for volunteers and friends....Jean Davies, BOOKFAIR '79 Chairperson, announced that so far 1,024 cartons of books have already been processed and stored for the up-coming BOOKFAIR....The Board voted to sponsor three AAFSW members at a Women's Legal Defense Fund function.... President Lesley Dorman read a letter from Sally Pitts giving notice of her resignation as Forum Chairperson as of June 1....Lesley Dorman announced that the AAFSW briefed all four of the AFSA slates in an effort to establish better communication and better support between the two associations. She urged all those eligible to vote in this election to do so, since this election is of vital importance to keeping that association strong, especially as the revised Foreign Service Act goes to Congress....Lesley Dorman reported that several members attended a showing of the full 4½ minute television segment prepared by Mary Tillotson on the special problems of divorced Foreign Service spouses. It was reported that the full segment, which was sold to independent television stations across the country, was excellent. Unfortunately it was badly cut and misrepresented on Channel 5's showing in April.



Left to right: Ambassador and Mrs. Alfred Atherton, Jr., and Under Secretary for Political Affairs David Newsom.

On Tuesday, May 22, Betty Atherton was presented with a certificate that stated: *On the occasion of her departure (from Washington) we wish to recognize the dedication and vision with which she has so generously given of her time and talent. As Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Community Mental Health Program, "The Kabul Experience," and most recently her organization of the Iran Evacuees Support Network, she has made major contributions that have benefited us all. Through her steadfast leadership in these humanistic concerns she has shown us a new direction and renewed a spirit of cooperation between the Department of State and family members of the Foreign Service community; signed Cyrus R. Vance.*

AAFSW adds a hearty "Hear, Hear!"

AAFSW Testimony/cont'd. from p. 1

all over the country to seek a place in the world of paid employment. In addition, the mid-life "empty nest" leaves us with soaring college bills. Many American women must work to help reach minimum family goals. Because the Foreign Service wife has spent a substantial part of her adult years abroad where jobs are few in number, of limited variety, and low salaried, she must usually begin at the bottom of the rung each time she is transferred. Local work laws overseas often mean she must look to the U.S. Mission for employment opportunities. All such jobs are temporary, low in pay, carry no promotion potential, earn no credit toward government status and offer no retirement program.

We of the AAFSW feel that independent women represent the best in American society. Alternatives to independence are a waste of human resources. We need Congressional help in dismantling the barriers to women in the workplace. The talents of our women can only be utilized in a more flexible system.

The personnel regulations of the Foreign Affairs agencies are not now capable of solving the problems of spouse employment.

Basic changes must be made. We must be allowed to accrue credit for Civil Service status on a month-by-month basis while working in part-time, intermittent, or temporary jobs abroad or at home. Without this, it is impossible for a Foreign Service wife to develop and maintain a marketable work record.

We must also establish earned rights for wives and former wives to shared pensions and survivor annuities. This would recognize the homemaker as a vital community resource, while protecting her as she moves in and out of that role at different stages of life.

Now that legislation and Congressional interest is moving along, it is of vital importance that the AAFSW have as much documentation as possible to support the legislation now under consideration concerning the plight of displaced Foreign Service homemakers.

Anyone having personal knowledge of someone in these circumstances is urged to have their friend contact Patricia Ryan, Chairperson of the Forum Committee on Women in Transition, 244-2669.

Welcome New Members

Constance Adler (Robert)
Julia Albrecht (Anthony)
Elizabeth Allen (Robert)
Claire Brooks (Thomas)
Jacquelyn Ewing (Richard)
Virginia Femminella (Bernard)
Constance Jones (Clyde)
Caralmae Knickmeyer (Robert)
Helen Lamb (Denis)
Claire Langham (George)
Ann LaPorta (Alphonse)
Hui Kyong Yu Latasa (Philip)
Monica McKnight
Kathy Milford (Norman)
Lois Modic (Paul)
Lorna Ramsay (William)
Karlene Saenz (Paul)
Rika Schmidt (Carl)
Laura Shapiro (Goodwin)
Nancy Smith (Walter)
Anne Starbird (Linwood)
Jody Voth (Leland)
Ann Wrampelmeier (Brooks)
Faith Wuensch (William)