

# AAFSW NEWS

Association of American Foreign Service Women

November 1984

## Proposal for Establishment of a Program of Foreign Service Associates

The AAFSW Board has studied a proposal to establish a program of Foreign Service Associates. This would provide a framework within which a spouse can participate in a wide range of activities undertaken in the US interest as determined and monitored by the post. Under signed agreement with the mission, she would be paid at a fixed rate for an agreed number of hours per week. At its October meeting, the Board discussed and approved the draft proposal.

When it was presented to the State Department Management Team at their Wye meeting on October 14, the proposal was welcomed as an idea whose time has come and which has the potential for being translated into a viable program. The Department will publicize the proposal through circular telegram to all posts for comments and suggestions and will move to address the practical problems involved in formulating and implementing the program.

The text of the proposal follows: It will be discussed at the Open Meeting of the AAFSW Forum which will be held at 9:30 (note hour) on Tuesday, November 20, at the Guy Mason Center, 3600 Calvert Street, N.W. Please plan to attend or send your views and recommendations to the AAFSW Forum, Box 8068, Washington, D.C. 20024. Your input will be timely and welcome.

### Background

The 1972 Directive on Wives abruptly ended an era in which spouses were integrally linked with the Foreign Service. The relationship centered on their participation in embassy activities and community affairs within a hierarchy determined by their husband's position and their performance was monitored by an official evaluation in his annual efficiency report. The decision to abolish such an evaluation and to view wives as private individuals was widely welcomed as ending a rampant abuse. But the consequences of shattering the framework which had incorporated the Foreign



Service spouse as an integral part of the system were not foreseen. The relationship was set adrift with little awareness of how profoundly disequilibrating this move would prove to be.

What became obvious very soon was that many of the services which Foreign Service wives had provided still needed to be done and that no other arrangement had been worked out to accomplish this.

An onerous situation was thus created in which senior wives still bore tacit responsibility for a broad range of their husband's representational activities while, no longer viewed as part of the system, their contribution was neither recognized nor compensated in any way. And, ironically, being precluded from enlisting the assistance of more junior wives, their representational load was even heavier than before.

An even more corrosive effect of the Directive, one which affected all wives, was to exclude them from any meaningful role within the context in which they lived their lives. To accompany their husbands abroad Foreign Service wives had no choice but accept a peripheral relationship to a system which increasingly treated them as irrelevant. This presented uniquely difficult problems since the Foreign Service lifestyle is necessarily built on ongoing sequence of moves to foreign places in which the individual has no roots and, except through the US mission, no readily available means of making meaningful local contact within the truncated time frame. Moreover, the increase in the number of hardship posts in Third World countries and the rise in international violence created conditions under which even more was required of Foreign Service spouses than in the past.

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## Spouse Compensation — A Choice

by Marlene Eagleburger

Like all new ideas, spouse compensation has raised questions. Most of the questions can be put into two categories: 1) whether or not representational activities are and should continue to be "volunteer" work, and 2) how would the proposal be implemented, and would it be implemented fairly.

There is a significant difference between volunteer work when living in the United States and living overseas. According to Webster's Dictionary, volunteer work is activities done on one's own initiative, without persuasion or compulsion. When living in the U.S. this definition of volunteer work applies to the community work we all do such as the Red Cross, P.T.A., etc. The impact and significance, if you will, does not reflect on the United States Govern-

ment. Representational activities abroad are a different kettle of fish. Even the Department of State recognizes this difference: "Information for Married Applicants",

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At the same time affirmation of woman's role in her own right was gaining momentum in the U.S. and American society was adjusting to this new reality. For Foreign Service wives returning home to this changed context, the shock was great and the message strong. Seeing friends and neighbors who had made the transition to meaningful careers and who had achieved both the attendant satisfactions and the income (which could help with such family projects as college tuitions) cast a disquieting light on their own circumstances. They saw the young women in contemporary America growing up with a view of college and career as an unbroken path whatever else life might hold for them in terms of family commitments.

The manner in which women are incorporated into contemporary US society does not mesh with Foreign Service realities where finding a meaningful job abroad is difficult at best and a coherent career almost impossible. Building professional seniority is frustrated by repeated moves so that a spouse finds herself at the foot of the job ladder over and over again. With the best of good will, embassy efforts to utilize spouses in filling job needs within the mission are unable to handle a problem of this scope even with widening PIT opportunities, Executive Order 12362, and programs to train and hire spouses in administrative and consular positions. Bilateral agreements permit spouses to seek jobs in the host country but are of limited utility since the job-hunting remains to be done by the individual and may exhaust much of the tour-of-duty time frame.

Department of State efforts to handle constructively the career/employment dimension of the Foreign Service spouse dilemma, a situation now further complicated by the growing number of male spouses, are of great importance. They are addressing a major cause of unrest. But, essential as that component is, a viable solution to the basic problem cannot be found at that level because the underlying disjunction of the Foreign Service spouse from the Foreign Service has not been addressed. The proposal which follows is viewed as a first approximation to providing a framework within which the spouse can opt to participate as a full-fledged member of the Foreign Service team and which she/he is enabled to make a valuable contribution that is recognized as such by the system.

### *Purpose of Proposal*

In a nutshell the Foreign Service Associate (FSA) concept involves a wide range of activities undertaken in the US interest, as

determined and monitored by the post, in which the spouse can choose to participate under a signed agreement with the mission for an agreed number of hours per week at a fixed rate of pay. This proposal for an FSA program seeks to incorporate into the system the spouses who want to participate in a way which will utilize their skills and experience, encourage and fulfill their reservoirs of good will and energy, and thus further rather than frustrate their efforts at building a satisfying life in long-range terms. Properly constructed, such a program can make a valuable contribution to the US presence abroad. Furthermore, not only will this strengthen the Foreign Service through removing a major source of dissatisfaction, but only through such a thorough-going reassessment and reform can the Foreign Service function fully in the contemporary world.

### *Program*

Four principal strands of activity emerge as areas in which Foreign Service spouses can make significant contributions to the functioning of the post and the furthering of US interests. The first three listed here are extensions of the types of services which Foreign Service spouses traditionally performed and which have been shown by their decline since 1972 to have been of considerable value. Each of the three is highly relevant to the contemporary Foreign Service. They should be viewed as necessary functions which require skill and experience and they should be appropriately remunerated. The fourth area is only now clearly emerging as an element of the picture as an increasing number of spouses acquire professional skills. This component would provide a framework, somewhat analogous to the Peace Corps, in which their expertise could be well utilized.

1. *Community Building.* Included here are all the functions that go into building morale within the official US community at post such as the welcoming function, programs for children of various ages, the strengthening of the school community. To this should be added the assistance given in welcoming and servicing visiting groups of official Americans such as Congressional delegations. Two new elements have added further dimensions to traditional concerns. One is increasing awareness of the needs of children who spend extended periods abroad and of the stresses on them, especially on teenagers. This is not to suggest drawing them into an American enclave but rather helping them initially to find a place for themselves in the host country and later preparing them for return to life in the US. The second is the rising reality of international violence with the resultant need for families to prepare them-

selves for difficult circumstances and to build a community equipped to handle whatever exigencies they may be called upon to face. The Community Liaison Office Coordinator alone cannot begin to cover adequately the full range of community-building needs although she/he can give focus and direction to many projects. A further dimension in which spouses have a role to play lies in building contacts with the larger American community, especially at posts where conditions are difficult for all.

2. *Outreach to the Host Country.* Constructive engagement with a wide variety of cultural and community activities in the host country would contribute to the effectiveness of the post's functioning. Depending on the country, much of this might center on women's affairs, that half of a society which official embassy activities scarcely perceive but which the U.S. would profit from understanding in greater depth. Contact might take many forms and ideally would involve meaningful exchange with a variety of key sectors of the society—professional women's groups as well as homemakers, rural perspectives as well as urban, both traditional and contemporary lifestyles and outlooks.

3. *Catering and Management.* Given the utility to the diplomat of making meaningful contact with members of the host country through social occasions, the organization and execution of representational events—from small lunches to expansive receptions to formal dinners—continue to play an important role in the functioning of the Foreign Service. Handling the arrangements for such events requires skill and experience and is remarkably time-intensive. Tandem couples with representational responsibilities would find the availability of someone with this capability of great help as would a DCM whose wife was absent from post or an Ambassador whose wife, while filling her hostessing function, would prefer to use her time in directions other than catering the preparations for her parties. A related type of function which requires management skills is the running of the ambassador's residence so that it is always well-groomed and smoothly functioning. This, too, can be very time-consuming in those parts of the world where staff needs constant supervision.

4. *Utilization of professional skills.* While first efforts have been made to catalog and reference those at post who have relevant skills, this realm urgently requires definition and focus. This may well be the key element in an effective program to involve Foreign Service spouses in a meaningful, fulfilling way in the second half of this decade and beyond. It would expand apprecia-

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bly the resources at the disposal of the mission in representing the U.S. abroad.

This component of the FSA program is somewhat analogous to the Peace Corps in that it identifies certain professional skills and matches them with locally-perceived needs and projects in the host country. A lawyer might work with the Legal Aid Society, an urban planner participate in the upgrading of a shantytown, a librarian help set up a municipal library in the capital city of a Third World country.

From the point of view of the host government, these skills are supplementary to their own efforts, are channeled through local organizations, and are essentially cost-free. The US spouse would undoubtedly be viewed as official—but that happens to be the local perception of Foreign Service spouses wherever they turn. From the point of view of the US government, as with the Peace Corps, those making a contribution through this channel are serving the broad US interest. The cost to the U.S. is that of salary alone (see below) because the principal expenditures of sending spouses abroad and housing them are already provided. From the viewpoint of spouses who have professional training, this would provide an opportunity to utilize their skills and enhance their credentials in the area of their expertise as well as to participate in what is going on rather than remaining frustrated bystanders. Participation in such a program would be strictly voluntary. Spouses' careers would have an opportunity to develop — in directions different from those of their peers in the U.S. but meaningfully and usefully. Even more important than the incremental additions to job qualifications might be the intense personal satisfaction of functioning as a complete person and as part of the team.

## Implementation

*Framework:* Under the direction of the Chief of Mission and operating under FSA program guidelines from Washington, a post committee would:

- Determine activities which would serve the US interest at that post at that time.
- Consider the qualifications of specific individuals and the specific circumstances.
- Negotiate agreements with spouses.
- Monitor performance under those agreements.
- Where applicable negotiate with the host government and provide an inter-

face between the host government and a spouse working in a Peace-Corps type of activity in the local community.

An appeal procedure would be provided which could be invoked by the spouse, e.g. in cases where proposed projects had been disallowed.

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Open Forum Meeting  
Tuesday, 20 November 1984  
9:30 A.M.  
Guy Mason Center  
3600 Calvert St., N.W.

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*Agreements.* At the option of the spouse and mission, an agreement would be signed, specifying the job(s) to be done, the number of hours per week, and the terms in which work would be monitored.

*Payment.* A standard rate of pay per hour would apply to all components of FSA activity plus an additional fixed sum for each year the participant has spent in the Foreign Service. This arrangement would:

- Remove the need to set different pay scales for different jobs.
- Prevent friction from arising about the relative worth of different functions.
- Simplify the procedure and administration of payment.
- Permit a package of different functions by an individual spouse, such as inclusion of both a community-building project and a catering function or a professional job with residence management.

In many instances psychic income would be an important and acceptable component of payment. For a spouse with professional qualifications, such a job would also provide an opportunity to keep moving ahead in her/his field.

*Training.* Participation in the FSA program would entitle the Associate to training with payment at the standard rate. Training in Washington would include:

- Language and area courses.
- Courses covering the contemporary US scene.
- Training appropriate to the specific fields to which the agreement would apply, such as community skills or a catering course. ■

A Choice—continued from page 1

1982, page 3, first two paragraphs: Representational entertaining is an important diplomatic tool and an activity required of most employees with diplomatic status. Spouses are exempt from having to assume the same responsibilities for representational entertaining as may be required of a Foreign Service employee; however, *given the realities of diplomatic life, most married couples find it difficult to restrict the representation aspects of a Foreign Service employee's career to the employee alone.* (Emphasis added.)

"Foreign Service spouses have a long and honored tradition of participating in activities overseas which involve them in the local community and *which can contribute favorably to the image of the United States* (emphasis added); however, such participation is purely personal and voluntary. The foreign affairs agencies believe that spouses should decide for themselves how they would like to spend their time abroad."

One's own initiative? Without persuasion or compulsion? Baloney!

Some would have us believe that the world would be a better place to live if we all "volunteered" our labor. This view seems to suggest that doing a job without pay makes one a better person, and perhaps because it is unpaid a better job is being done.

One could also argue that there is equal virtue in doing a good job for compensation; a day's wage for a day's work has long been part of our economic system.

I believe there is room in our Service for individuals of both persuasions. This is what the spouse compensation proposal is all about—choice. Each may choose which road they wish to follow. Those who wish can continue to volunteer their services without constraints or limitations. Those who choose to be compensated for their work can sign a contract with an Embassy agreeing to the constraints, limitations and discipline *which are part of every paid job.* Of course there is a third alternative which a few courageous souls may decide to take: to do nothing at all.

How will the spouse compensation proposal be implemented? Will it be equitable? When the Career Service was first organized I am sure these same questions were raised. One can argue that they didn't do such a hot job then, and are not doing too terrifically now. The point is that when people of good will put their heads together they can arrive at an equitable implementation that will meet the needs of the Service as well as those individuals who choose to participate in the program. Hopefully the Department would seek the help and advice of the AAFSW, FLO and other interest-

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## AAFSW Low-Interest Adult Education Loan Program

In an effort to assist AAFSW members acquire marketable skills or bring up to date professional and/or volunteer competencies a low interest loan program was established this past year by the AAFSW (Association of American Foreign Service Women).

The ongoing program is administered by a three-member committee. The loans of up to \$1,500 are repayable at an interest rate of 4%. The recipient must be an AAFSW member.

The April 1984 issue of *AAFSW News* has an article with profiles of the first two recipients of the loan. Further information about the loan program and application forms can be obtained by writing to: Adult Education Loan Committee, AAFSW, P. O. Box 806, Washington, D. C., 20024. *Reprinted with permission from FLO UPDATE.*

## Rising Number of Two Income Families

A report prepared by the Census Bureau based on the year 1981, shows that 62 percent of the country's 42.4 million married couples had two incomes. This reflects an increase of 50.1 percent over a decade ago and 40 percent since 1960. Apparently the good life in America increasingly requires a household financial team of two workers according to the *American Demographics Magazine*.

According to the Census Bureau, 95 percent of the husbands and 67 percent of the wives were employed. The average income for married couples in 1981 was \$25,550. However, when both spouses were working the figure was \$28,560 — and when both of those jobs were fulltime and year-round, the couple's income was \$34,560.

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ed parties so that all could help formulate a plan that everyone could live with. If the Department of State can manage the foreign policy of the United States, it seems to me they should not have too much difficulty working out an equitable implementation of the spouse compensation proposal. In the last analysis, to fail to introduce a program aimed at meeting a broadly felt need because of fear of the difficulties of implementation is a prescription for never doing anything.

Representation is the business of the United States Government. The spouse compensation proposal offers an opportunity for all who wish to participate in representational activities—to volunteer or to be paid. It is past time for the United States Government to stop exploiting spouses and to allow true freedom of choice.

## Give AAFSW Publications for Christmas

AAFSW is offering many items for sale this year. All of the books and cards were produced by and for members of the Foreign Service community. Especially at this time of year, they can be excellent ideas for gifts; the Publications Committee hopes that you will find them useful and interesting.

The order form below can be used for requests by mail. If you are in Washington, the publications are also available at the AAFSW Information Desk in Room 1254 at the Department.

Publications available are:

The colored poster chosen to commemorate the Department of State's 200th Anniversary. "The City of Washington from Beyond the Navy Yard" is a lovely moment of early Washington.

Diplomacy: The Role of the Wife, a collection of essays edited by Martin F. Herz of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, is an excellent book which explores the complex problems of Foreign Service wives.

The colorful note cards are always very popular. There are five different views of the eighth floor diplomatic reception rooms in this box of ten cards and envelopes.

The Hostess Book helps to keep track of guests, menus and party expenses. There are several pages of planning tips, ranging from table seating to a party check list.

The Eighth Floor Guidebook to the Diplomatic Reception Rooms is intended to present a brief description of the furnishings and to give some information regarding historic items.

The collection of stories that compose *Tales of the Foreign Service* gives the reader an armchair trip around the world. These are selections from the Jack K. McFall Manuscript Contest that was published in 1978.

*Foreign Service Families in Crises* is our original report from AAFSW's Forum Com-

mittee, July 1983. Based on experiences of Foreign Service families abroad, this comprehensive report addresses the question of preparation for handling international crises as they relate to family members.

Hazel McIntyre Kassebaum  
Publications Chairman

### PUBLICATION ORDER FORM

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