



APPRECIATION

ARNOLD P. SCHIFFERDECKER
1935 – 2003

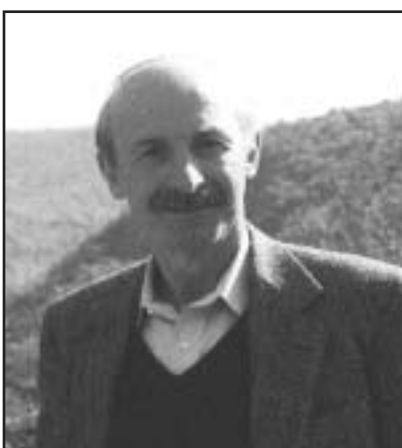
Arnold P. Schifferdecker, 67, a retired Foreign Service officer who was a consultant to the State Department and chairman of the *Foreign Service Journal* Editorial Board, died March 15 at George Washington University Hospital following a heart attack.

A consummate diplomat with a knack for appreciating the different cultures in which he worked and a perpetual twinkle in his eye, Arnie, as he was known to friends and colleagues, was also a marathon runner, a loving husband, father and grandfather, and a mentor and good friend who enriched the lives of all he touched.

A native of Missouri and graduate of the University of Missouri, Arnie served in the Navy as a carrier-based navigator.

In 1964, he joined the Foreign Service and served until 1995, mainly as a political officer, with assignments in Israel, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco and Washington. He spoke French, Turkish and Dari, a dialect of Persian that is one of the two official languages of Afghanistan and the link-language for the many different language groups in that country. He also studied international economic and political affairs related to the Near East at Princeton and George Washington Universities.

After retirement, Arnie worked for seven years as a State Department consultant, which took him to Bulgaria, Albania and back to Afghanistan.



Arnie at Harper's Ferry, W. Va., in 1992.

An Afghan Hand

Arnie will be perhaps best remembered professionally as 'an old Afghan hand,' as he described himself in a recent review of a book on Afghanistan for the *Journal*. Early postings as a political officer in Pakistan and Afghanistan first brought Arnie into contact with the Afghan people. He returned to Kabul as an adviser to the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan from 1997 through 1998, during the troubled reign of the Taliban.

In 1998 Arnie received a United Nations Peace Medal for his work in Afghanistan, for promoting a cease-fire between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. Following the U.N. assignment, he continued his involvement in Afghanistan's efforts to recover from the ravages of more than two decades of war as a volunteer working with the Afghanistan-America Foundation.

"Such were his contacts and friendships in Afghanistan," recalls friend and colleague Tom Eighmy, "that President Hamid Karzai directed that a special message be sent to Arnie's wife, Joan, the day before the memorial service." Indeed, Joan Schifferdecker recalls that Hamid Karzai was a regular visitor during Arnie's tenure with UNSMA in Islamabad. "When he was in Washington for the first time after becoming interim president of Afghanistan," she remembers, "Karzai spotted Arnie at a reception at the Ritz and called out across the room, 'Arnie, I see you have a beard now!' He was a good friend."

In the letter to Joan, President Karzai and National Security Adviser Dr. Zalmay Rassoul extend their condolences: "...Although sympathy is only a small consolation even from the hearts of us who share your pain, I want you to know how deeply Arnie's loss is felt here. He was greatly admired and respected by us for his assistance and continued interest in our endeavors to bring prosperity and stability to our country. We will always remember Arnie's kindness and thoughtfulness. We shall dearly miss Arnie's presence."

Mentor and Friend

A caring person, Arnie was also a strong, if unassuming, mentor — within his family and in his professional work. It was his unflinching kindness and gentle spirit that made his mentoring effective and his friendships lasting.

APPRECIATION



Arnie with stepdaughter Susanna Fajardo in 1994.

Arnie's stepdaughter Susanna Fajardo captures his warm sense of humor in her memories of 1979, the year she and her mother and brother, Matthew, embarked on their life with Arnie. "We were soon made aware that our life with this Foreign Service diplomat would have its own special 'Arnie' flavor, as the first leg of the journey [to Turkey] was spent driving from Chicago to Washington, D.C. in his dilapidated 1964 Dodge Dart — the Dartmobile," she recalls.

Arnie and Joan built and maintained a large network of relationships with people from all ends of the world and took great pleasure in hosting friends and new members of the Foreign Service community for dinners, weekends, weeks and sometimes even months at a time. On these occasions, Susanna recalls, Arnie thrived on going out of his way to make people feel comfortable and welcome, and they in turn were gratified by his hospitality and presence.

Most recently, Arnie delighted in the joys of being a grandfather to Isabel, Susanna and husband Anton Pav's daughter. "Given the wonderful father that Arnie was to me, it came as no surprise when grandparenthood came so naturally to him," says Susanna. "I was blessed to be able to see the joy that baby Isabel brought to him."

In the past 10 years, Arnie had taken up running seriously, completing two Marine Corps marathons and competing in many 10Ks and other races in the area. He had completed the 2003 St. Patrick's Day 10K race and was on his way home when he suffered the fatal heart attack.

Arnie Schifferdecker was a member of the American Foreign Service Association and the Foreign Policy Association.

Survivors include his wife, Joan Schifferdecker of Washington; two stepchildren, Matthew Fajardo of Makanda, Ill., and Susanna Fajardo-Pav of Casablanca, Morocco; two brothers; two sisters; and a granddaughter, Isabel.

A memorial service was held at the DACOR Bacon House on March 22. At the family's request, tax deductible contributions in Arnie's name may be made to the Afghanistan-America Foundation, 209 Pennsylvania Avenue NE, #700, Washington, DC 20003.

In response to an AFSANET announcing Arnie's untimely death, the *Journal* received many messages from friends and colleagues. We have only been able to publish excerpts from a few of them here, but all of the messages have been forwarded to the Schifferdecker family.

— Susan Maitra

THE ULTIMATE DIPLOMAT...

I knew Arnie Schifferdecker best when we were colleagues at the American Embassy in Kabul, where his special talent of identifying himself with the people and culture of the country in which he was serving was quickly apparent. He rejoiced with the rest of us when Kabul was liberat-

ed by the Northern Alliance and American forces. When many of us gathered here at home to celebrate that historic event, Arnie — true to form — appeared proudly in Afghan costume.

Arnie was the ultimate diplomat, but I remember him best for what he was as a human being — warm, decent and full of integrity. If there ever was a 'Mister Nice' in the Foreign Service, it was Arnie Schifferdecker.

— Bruce Laingen

A HEART AS LARGE AS HIS NAME...

Such sad news on my screen this morning. Arnie Schifferdecker was my supervisor in Rabat when I arrived in 1988. His affable, generous character set the tone for the office and I'm sure he will always remain one of my favorite FS supervisors. I did, however, have one complaint, which I voiced to him on several occasions: his name. How many times a day did I try to enunciate with my best French accent — "Scheef - err - deck - err" — over the phone to some hapless Moroccan who then would inevitably ask me to spell it for them? But for Arnie, a man whose heart was as large as his name was long, I would have done it for the rest of my career.

— Carol L. Scannell

MY INTRODUCTION TO THE FOREIGN SERVICE...

I hadn't actually seen Arnie in years, but he was in the most important ways one of my introductions to the Foreign Service. I arrived in Kabul in the summer of 1970 as a wet-behind-the-ears USIA junior officer. Arnie introduced me to Kabul, to life in an (old-style) embassy community, to what it meant to be a professional, and most of all, to what a

APPRECIATION

decent, kind human being he was.

Perhaps my most memorable experience in those long-lost, pre-conflict days in Afghanistan was a several-day trip by four-wheel-drive vehicle, with Arnie, my bride, an Afghan Foreign Ministry colleague and our USIS driver, from Kabul over the Hindu Kush to Mazar-i-Sharif, the ruins of Balkh (Bactria), and a small Turkoman outpost (Akcha). Arnie arranged the trip, and I think something of the romance and adventure of life out there in the "boonies" kept me going when the bureaucracy worked in the opposite direction...

Even after all these years, his absence now hits hard.

— Jack Harrod

THE CONSUMMATE POLITICAL OFFICER...

When we first arrived in Kabul some 30 years ago as USAID contractors, and rather timorously attended Ambassador Robert Neumann's "Hail and Farewell," this tall, good-looking chap bounded over, and addressed us by name, credentials and assignment, saying: "Hi, I'm Arnie Schiffer-decker!"

We came to know him as a friend, and we also sometimes observed him in action as the consummate political officer. While seated at the Kabul Hotel with Afghan and American colleagues from the Ministry of Planning, I would observe Arnie with a lone Afghan contact, doubtlessly discussing the politics of the day. We would avoid eye contact but share the hotel's plat du jour — fried sheep brains.

Our paths diverged and crossed — we were both in Morocco and Pakistan but at different times, and sometimes in D.C. at the same time. And during one of those times, Arnie met Joanie at a crab feast in our backyard. When we had both retired, we

were drawn again, by choice, to Afghanistan through volunteer work with the Afghanistan-America Foundation...

— Tom & Bev Eighmy

WHAT ARNIE TAUGHT ME...

I first came to know Arnie some 30 years ago shortly after arriving in Kabul, my second post. A brusque and fragmentary cable from MED announced that the medical clearance and travel orders of a dependent were cancelled as that person had been ordered into involuntary psychiatric observation by the police. Frantic and without reliable phone communication to the U.S., I cabled the Afghan desk officer — Arnie.

Over the next weeks Arnie dealt

on my behalf not only with the department's bureaucracy but with police, family members and hospital authorities, until I knew what had happened and how it could be remedied.

Arnie taught me that what makes a life in the Foreign Service possible is not the "system," but the quality, caring, and support of fellow FSOs and their families. Without Arnie's humane and energetic intervention at a critical moment, I would have left the Foreign Service in disgust.

— Lee Coldren

ARNIE'S WISE COUNSEL...

I was a second-tour economic officer in Casablanca when Arnie was the political counselor in Rabat.

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APPRECIATION

The economic counselor in Rabat — from whom I was supposed to get clearance on my reporting — could never get my name right, neither my first name (he called me Mark) nor my last name (he called me Vargas).

When I once complained to Arnie, who could recount his own horror stories about how others had mangled his name, he advised me that it was no big deal and I should not fret about it as long as my boss signed off on my cables.

After that, whenever I had to call Arnie about something, he would intentionally get my name wrong (“Is that Mark Vargas calling?”) to remind me of what was the crucial part of our work. I never forgot Arnie’s wise counsel.

— *Michael Varga*

A WONDERFUL MENTOR...

Arnie was one of my examiners when I took the Foreign Service Oral Exam. After I passed, he introduced himself and expressed his pleasure at my success: as he was retiring, he felt it appropriate that another graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism “take his place” in the Foreign Service.

I can only hope to emulate such a wonderful mentor. Arnie provided guidance and friendship. He invited me to shadow him at the U.N. in New York, as he worked on Afghan issues at a time when much of the world had given up on Afghanistan. He and his wife Joanie welcomed my family and me into their home and their hearts. They visited me and cheered me on at my first Foreign Service post in Mumbai, India.

I will cherish my memories of Arnie and work to live up to his example.

— *Heather Variava*

HE THRIVED ON FOREIGN SERVICE LIFE...

It was always wonderful to see Arnie when he appeared in my office doorway. He had a positive, genial way about him that always made him welcome. During the fall U.N. General Assembly sessions, he served as a senior adviser to the U.S. mission, consulting with other nations’ diplomats on the annual resolution on Afghanistan. To assist the U.N. Special Mission to Afghanistan, he volunteered for a three-month stint in Kabul, living under very austere circumstances.

Arnie never backed away from a challenge and thrived on the Foreign Service life, even in retirement. We have lost a giant, but gentle, spirit. He will be greatly missed.

— *Roberta L. Chew*

HE WAS NEVER TOO PROUD OR TOO BUSY TO HELP...

We met Arnie and Joanie Schifferdecker during our assignment to Morocco in the 1980s. We were all booked together for a tour of the game parks of East Africa and Zanzibar this coming summer. That was one of the few parts of the world Arnie had not yet experienced.

We remember the great times we had together, hiking and camping the Ait Bougamaz Valley of the high Atlas Mountains of Morocco, the annual post-Thanksgiving hikes along the C & O Canal path, fishing on the Shenandoah River, sharing meals together, shopping for carpets in the souks of Morocco, and much more.

We remember his willing and fine work, too. He helped America in tough spots from Kabul to Istanbul to Casablanca. He was never too proud or too busy to help others with his expertise. While we were in

Morocco together, when I asked each year for his input as the political officer for the Peace Corps country submission, he came through.

We miss him for his analytical mind, his good sense of humor, his wonderful sense of place and responsibility in community, his love of his wife and family.

Peace and blessings be upon him.

— *David and Merry
Fredrick*

A FITTING TRIBUTE...

I served with Arnie in 1986-1987 in Rabat. He was political counselor and I was the USIS information officer.

Arnie was a man who walked through life armed with a warm smile and a twinkle in his eye. Whether in the heat of a VIP visit, in a conversation with Moroccan contacts or mission colleagues, or even in weekend recreation, he was never without the smile and the twinkle. I believe his warm and calm demeanor put people at their ease — interlocutors shared easily with him and colleagues got a good listen and a supportive word or hand of help for a good idea.

His enthusiasm for the Foreign Service both as an active diplomat and in retirement was admirable and his contributions to maintain the excellence of the *Foreign Service Journal* were much appreciated. During a recent stint at FSI, I had the chance to mix informally with the scores of recently hired junior officers. Several mentioned the *Foreign Service Journal* as a product, a part of the corporate culture in a way, that they viewed with pride — that validated their career choice in an important way. In my view, that endorsement is a fitting tribute to Arnie’s great leadership at AFSA.

— *Peter Kovach* ■