

MORE CEREMONY, MORE HISTORY, MORE THANKS

THOSE OF US IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF FORMALLY
ACKNOWLEDGING OUR DEBT TO MENTORS AND COLLEAGUES.

BY MARC GROSSMAN

I am at that point in life where I go to more funerals and memorial services than weddings and bar mitzvahs. As I get ready to go to each of these sad events, I feel uneasy. Will I say the right thing to the family? Will it be hard to see the older generation looking frailer?

When the gathering is over, I leave grateful that the family wanted a ceremony, and glad that I had a chance to acknowledge my debt to predecessors. But I also find myself wishing that the Foreign Service showed a greater appreciation for the importance of ceremony (an area where our military colleagues have much to teach us).

This past June 18, I attended a memorial service for Ambassador Morris Draper, who was my first boss in the Foreign Service. (For an obituary, see p. 70.) I recall sim-

Marc Grossman, who reached the rank of career ambassador, retired from the Foreign Service earlier this year. His last assignment was as under secretary of State for political affairs. He is now vice chairman of The Cohen Group, a consulting firm.

ilar events for Ambassadors Roy Atherton, Peter Constable, David Ransom and Arthur Hummel and Under Secretary Joseph Sisco. Each of those gatherings reinforced my belief that we need to work harder to bring more history, more ceremony and more acknowledgement of our debts to mentors and friends into the regular life of the Foreign Service.

We are doing better. The Diplomatic Security Color Guard opens important events at the department. State's senior leadership swears in new employees and presides over more meaningful retirement ceremonies. But there is still more to do.

• We go to great lengths to make sure that a departing ambassador and an arriving ambassador are not in their country of assignment at the same time. Why? Let's adopt a version of the military's change-of-command ceremony. Let the outgoing and incoming chiefs of mission stand together in front of their "troops." Let them acknowledge the past and look forward to the future as the flag passes in front of everyone to recognize the importance of the event.

• Let's take each A-100 class to the Foreign Service

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section of Rock Creek Cemetery, or to Arlington National Cemetery, where some Foreign Service members are also buried, to recognize that we stand on the shoulders of others. While there, the new entrants could hear a presentation on what some of these departed colleagues accomplished for our country.

- The Bureau of Human Resources could list the accomplishments of those honored at the State Department's retirement ceremonies so that people could leave that event with a booklet which recorded some of the contributions their service made to the United States.

- The Historian's Office could send a note to those leaders taking on new assignments describing the people who served in those positions before them. This might encourage them to seek out a predecessor for advice and emphasize the chain of

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American diplomacy.

- The Director General's office, working with the Historian's Office, could offer to provide photographs or news clippings at memorial services

for Foreign Service decedents to supplement family photographs and memorabilia and honor service to country.

- Regional assistant secretaries should keep an eye out for memorial services of those who had served in their region and then send someone to represent the bureau at the service. The person assigned this important task might not even know the person being honored, but that is not the point. The job is a different one: to acknowledge the debt to those who went before.

A Foreign Service career is like being in a relay race. We are given the baton by those who came before us and we hold it for our time of service. We then pass it to the next generation. It is the moments when the baton is passed that we need to do more to remember, to acknowledge and to celebrate. ■

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