



LETTERS

One of a Kind

I was pleased to see the recent profile of Ambassador Thomas D. Boyatt (“A Tireless Advocate for the Foreign Service,” July-August). I had the honor of working for him while serving as a Marine security guard in Bogota from 1981 to 1982. In those days, the M-19 guerilla organization provided the embassy with daily security challenges and nonstop death threats directed at Amb. Boyatt. He never complained of the additional security we Marines provided. He even carried a nickel-plated .38 caliber “Detective Special” and knew how to use it.

Embassy Bogota had only one security officer at the time and a few Marine security guards who’d been trained to form a personal protection detail. We rode in the back seat of the trailing car with an Uzi. Trying to retain our balance while facing out the back window and fighting carsickness became a routine challenge. Additionally, we provided nightly security patrols at Amb. Boyatt’s residence. We all admired and appreciated his courage, his kindness and his support of the Marine security guard detachment and the security program in general.

Everyone knew who ran the embassy, no question. His straight-talking, no-nonsense style, combined with “Monte Carlo” nights, cigars and humor, made Amb. Boyatt truly one

of a kind in the Foreign Service. As a fellow southern “Buckeye,” I am proud to have had the opportunity to work with an outstanding example of what President Theodore Roosevelt called the “iron fist in a velvet glove.”

E. Alex Copher

Information Management

Officer

Embassy Rangoon

The Importance of Dissent

I thought the July-August issue was first-rate. The FS Heritage piece, “Grace Under Pressure: John Paton Davies,” by Bob Rackmales, is an example of *Foreign Service Journal* writing at its finest: engrossing, evocative of the era and, possibly most important, timely.

Who can read this article, including the sidebar excerpt from Barbara Tuchman’s 1973 address to AFSA, “Why Policy Makers Do Not Listen,” without seeing strong parallels to our invasion of Iraq and the fight against Islamic radicalism? Once again, we have ideologues in power unwilling to accept a reality at odds with their worldview.

It would be interesting to debate the question, “Which has done more lasting harm to the vital interests of the U.S.: the isolation of the China hands in the 1950s and the branding of their analysis and reporting as treason, or the total rejection by this administration of the State Depart-

ment’s “Future of Iraq” project in shaping U.S. policy?”

Rackmales reminds us of a lesson we never seem to learn: In a democracy (or any other form of government, for that matter), demonizing dissent ensures that the worst ideas, not the best, prevail.

Arthur S. Lezin

FSO, retired

Bend, Ore.

The Plane Truth

I really enjoyed the July-August FS Heritage article on John Paton Davies. It prompted me to reflect on the institutional dysfunctions that he and his colleagues experienced, and on how little they have changed in the last half century.

However, I would like to report two factual errors. First, Davies, Eric Sevareid and their fellow passengers bailed out of a C-46, not a C-47. (The majority of the dangerous flights “over the Hump” were carried out by crews in C-46s.)

Second, Rackmales says that the C-46 was “a DC-3 in civilian life,” but this is also incorrect. Curtiss-Wright manufactured the larger C-46 “Commando,” first as a passenger aircraft in the late 1930s and then as a freight hauler during World War II. Douglas Aircraft manufactured the smaller DC-3, for which C-47 was the military designation. I have been in both planes and know the difference.

LETTERS



Over 10,000 DC-3/C-47s were manufactured and many are still flying. The C-46 served as a cargo aircraft during and after the war but, because only about 3,300 were built, just a few have survived into modern times. In contrast, the DC-3 became one of the all-time most successful aircraft, a tribute to Donald Douglas' vision and ingenuity.

That said, I again offer kudos to the author and the *FSJ* for a most enjoyable profile of Davies.

Bruce Byers
FSO, retired
Reston, Va.

Managing State

Congratulations to John Naland on his July-August President's Views column setting forth work requirements for the new Secretary of State. It is an important contribution for the next administration.

I wonder if someone is keeping an eye on the involvement, if any, of career officers — Foreign Service and Civil Service — in plans for management of foreign affairs in the new administration. Secretary of State Colin Powell was especially sensitive to the importance of career officers in managing State, and his effectiveness in policy implementation and resource support was due in some measure to the support of the professional staff. (The *New York Times* recently did a piece on the foreign affairs advisers to the Obama campaign and there wasn't a single career Foreign Service officer named, current or retired.)

Hats off, as well, for publishing Bob Service and Dana Deree's letters about Jack Service. The Bob McMahan review of M. Stanton Evans' book was an unwelcome reminder of a tragic era. It happened that my own father (our families were in China together) — who knew and admired

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Jack Service, as did all of the ‘China crowd’ — had his own run-in with McCarthy, but was “saved” by the intervention of Rep. Walter Judd, R-Minn.

*R.T. (Ted) Curran
FSO, retired
Frankfort, Mich.*

Foreign Service 2010

I enjoyed reading John Naland’s June President’s View column, “The Foreign Service Act of 2010,” as well as Shawn Dorman’s article, “Who Is the ‘Total Candidate’? FSO Hiring Today.”

We may get a revamp of the Foreign Service Act in 2010, but probably not along the lines suggested by Mr. Naland. His suggestions make too much sense. More area and language training are the keys to making a good Foreign Service officer who can give the department the type of onsite analysis needed to make good foreign policy decisions, which the Secretary can then convey to the president for his approval. We all know the problems resulting from foreign officials telling us what they think we want to hear and the concomitant problems of the inexperienced FSO passing it along as “gospel.”

Concerning the establishment of a training complement to enable more area and language training, I fear that the first time there is a budgetary problem it would be eliminated — assuming we could ever convince Congress to create it in the first place.

Regrettably, the idea of a 10-percent limit on the appointment of non-career ambassadors is a non-starter. The Constitution gives the president full power to name ambassadors, and I cannot imagine any president allowing that power to be limited.

Concerning the FS exam, I believe the department is placing too much emphasis on minority and gender hir-

ing. Given the small number of candidates who pass the orals and are offered employment, I believe we should take the best candidates regardless of race and gender. I am reminded of the statement former Secretary of State Colin Powell made about his career — he preferred to think he rose to his high rank through merit and ability rather than through an affirmative action program.

*Robert A. Bishton
FSO, retired
Albany, Ga.*

We’ve Got Guys

As a 1998 graduate of Presbyterian College who worked as an admissions counselor for my alma mater for two years before joining the Foreign Service, I was pleased to see your June 2008 sidebar on the *Washington Monthly* ranking of schools that placed PC (as alums call it) atop its list of liberal arts universities. However, I did raise an eyebrow when I saw it described as a women’s college.

Undoubtedly, the 48 percent of male Blue Hose (our mascot) currently enrolled at PC would be similarly surprised. More information about this excellent institute of higher education, including articles where its president, John Griffith, downplays the methodology used in such rankings, can be found at www.presby.edu.

*Matthew Miller
FSO
Embassy Yaoundé*

Remembering Barbara Johnson

Thank you for the thoughtful obituary for Barbara Johnson (July-August *FSJ*), which sparked fond memories for us. We started out with Barbara, in Bangkok in 1963, and knew her as a beloved colleague and friend throughout our careers and in retirement.

Barbara’s capacity for deep and

lasting friendships was indeed remarkable. At the memorial brunch for her on March 30 at Ft. Myer in Arlington, Va., more than 40 people, friends from all walks of her life, shared warm and humorous tales of their relationships with her. One could not possibly include all of these in an obituary.

But there is one tale that we feel needs to be told to make her memory complete: it is a true love story.

Kjeld Hansen and Barbara met and fell in love some 45 years ago in Bangkok. Their friendship lasted for some time, but as their careers diverged they eventually drifted apart. Five years ago, Kjeld was in the D.C. area visiting friends and phoned Barbara, not knowing whether she would even see him. They agreed to meet at the Dupont Circle Metro.

He waited and waited there, thinking she had changed her mind. At last, he asked someone if there was another entrance to the Metro. As it happened, Barbara had been standing at the other entrance, thinking that he had, perhaps, changed *his* mind. They both started walking to the other entrance and met in the middle.

It was as if they had never been apart! They renewed their friendship, Barbara visiting Denmark and Kjeld spending time in Washington. They spoke almost every day when separated, and he traveled from Copenhagen to be by her side as often as possible during her illness.

Kjeld and Barbara related this story to us, and Kjeld repeated it at the memorial gathering. He asked that it be included here for Barbara’s many loving friends to read. ■

*Joyce Blackmon
FSO, retired
Mineola, Texas
Kay Youngflesh
Former FSR
Alexandria, Va.*