



APPRECIATION

Hume Alexander Horan 1934 – 2004

Hume Alexander Horan, 69, retired Foreign Service officer and ambassador to five Middle Eastern and African countries, died of prostate cancer at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church, Va., on July 22.

A man whose conscientiousness and compassion were as deep as his prodigious intellect, Hume Horan was a fluent speaker of Arabic and spent most of his career in the Middle East during some of the region's most turbulent times. He spent six months in 2003 as a senior counselor with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, dealing with religious and tribal affairs — an experience he wrote about in the March 2004 *Foreign Service Journal* (“Restoring a Shattered Mosaic”).

Wide-ranging as Amb. Horan's career was, he is probably best known to the general public for the circumstances of his 1988 departure from his ambassadorial post in Riyadh, just nine months after arriving. In the spring of that year, the United States discovered that Saudi Arabia had bought and accepted delivery of medium-range ballistic missiles from China. Amb. Horan was instructed to make a strong demarche to King Fahd about the unacceptability of the missiles.

Ever since his previous tour as DCM in Riyadh (1972-1977), Amb. Horan had cultivated his own contacts throughout Saudi society. Knowing that this had already annoyed the ruling family, he called Washington to be sure officials understood how offended the king would be

by the verbal rebuke, and was again ordered to deliver the message. Soon after he did so, he received a telegram from the department informing him that “a message different in tone and substance” had also been communicated to the Saudi Embassy in Washington. “My goose was cooked,” he told *The Washington Post* in 2002. Adding insult to injury, State then directed Amb. Horan to personally present the U.S. request for approval of his successor, after which he was recalled to Washington.

Despite that experience, Amb. Horan retained an optimism and idealism about the diplomatic corps. In a 1992 article for *The Washington Post*, he wrote that Foreign Service officers “are the infantry of American diplomacy. We'll never be able to dispense with them. Consistently to work at our national purposes, someone has to be on the scene, speak the language, meet with the leaders, make the argument and report back — saying what he or she thinks we should do.”

Amb. Horan was a native Washingtonian whose mother, Margaret Robinson Hume, came from a prominent family and whose father was Abdollah Entezam, an Iranian diplomat who served as foreign minister long before the 1979 downfall of the shah. They divorced when he was 3, and his mother remarried Harold Horan, a newspaperman.

He served in the Army from 1954 to 1956, graduated from Harvard College in 1960 and joined the Foreign Service. He received a master's degree from Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies in 1963.

Mr. Horan requested a first assignment in Baghdad, a choice unusual enough that the under secretary for man-



agement remarked, "I don't get many volunteers for Baghdad." Mr. Horan studied Arabic in Beirut and later in Libya. From 1966 to 1970, he served as Libyan desk officer in Washington during Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi's coup and as a congressional fellow to Rep. Brad Morse, R-Mass., and Sen. Edmund S. Muskie, D-Maine.

In 1970, Mr. Horan was assigned to Amman as a political officer, and from 1972 to 1977, he was deputy chief of mission in Jeddah (then the site of the U.S. embassy in Saudi Arabia). After several years in Washington, culminating in an assignment as principal deputy assistant secretary of state for consular affairs, Mr. Horan was named ambassador to the Republic of Cameroon and non-resident ambassador to Equatorial Guinea in 1980.

His next ambassadorship (1983-1987) was to Sudan, a time that included the rescue of Ethiopian Jews and their transport to Israel, terror attacks against the embassy and the overthrow of President Gaafar Muhammad al-Nimeiry. After that assignment ended, he spent 1987 as a diplomat-in-residence at Georgetown University and then was assigned to Saudi Arabia. After the incident in Riyadh, he was recalled to Washington, where his assignments included service as president of the American Foreign Service Association from 1991 to 1992.

In 1992, he was named ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, which he described as "a pleasant and stable country, at least until the death of the country's founder." Upon returning to the United States, Amb. Horan spent a year at Howard University as diplomat-in-residence, directed the African training program at the Foreign Service Institute and then retired from the Service in 1998.

Amb. Horan was a longtime member of Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church and, more recently, the Georgetown Presbyterian Church. He was an enthusiastic cyclist who toured in France, New Zealand and many parts of the United States. His many other interests included French, German, Spanish and Arabic literature; he translated a novel and several short stories from Arabic into English. He was also the author of a novel about the Foreign Service, *To the Happy Few* (Electric City Press, 1996), and served as an analyst on Middle Eastern affairs for MSNBC, NPR, the BBC and FOX News.

For his work with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad in 2003, he received the Department of Defense's Distinguished Public Service Award, the Pentagon's highest honorary award for private citizens.

His marriage to Nancy Reinert Horan ended in divorce. Survivors include his wife, FSO Lori Shoemaker of Annandale; two children from his second marriage, Michael Harry Horan and Elizabeth Hume Horan, both of Annandale; three adult children from his first marriage, Alexander Hume Horan of San Diego, Margaret Bond

Horan of Annandale and Jonathan Theodore Horan of Boston; a sister; and four grandchildren.

A memorial service was held for Amb. Horan at Georgetown Presbyterian Church on July 30, after which he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

In response to an AFSANET message announcing Amb. Horan's passing, the *Journal* received many tributes from friends and colleagues, all of which have been forwarded to his family. In fact, we received so many contributions that we will run more next month.

— Susan Maitra, Senior Editor

HUMBLE YET GREAT

I would like to offer my condolences to the Horan family and the Foreign Service family in general on the death of a great officer and an experienced diplomat, the late Ambassador Hume Horan.

The passing of Amb. Horan marks an important chapter in the history of the U.S. Foreign Service. He took with him a wealth of information and experience that will be hard to replace.

I am a Foreign Service National employee in the political section of the U.S. consulate general in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. I have good memories of Mr. Horan, particularly his tenure as United States ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 1988, when I had the good fortune and honor of working under his expert guidance during several visits by the Secretary of Defense to Dhahran. While he was a real pro, Amb. Horan was also a humble man who led by example. I and my colleagues found him quite accessible, knowledgeable about his work, and willing to go the extra mile to help his staff.

I was also struck by his linguistic skills, particularly his fluency in Arabic. I do not believe I have met an FSO, or any American, for that matter, who spoke Arabic as fluently as he did. Nor do I believe that I will ever meet one. I recall that most of his conversations with me and others, among them several Saudi officials, including the Saudi ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar, were entirely in Arabic. In my book, that's an accomplishment that few people can ever hope to match.

May his soul rest in peace.

Ibrahim M. Nur
Political/Economic Specialist
American Consulate General
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

AMONG OUR BEST

Ambassador Hume Horan was among our legendary ambassadors. He had enormous intelligence, good humor, grace under fire and an incredible knowledge of Africa. He was a scholar, teacher and diplomat — an

exceptional leader and example for the Service.

Although I had often heard about Amb. Horan from many of my colleagues, I had not met him until he inquired whether Embassy Conakry would have any objections to a former ambassador coming to post with his Foreign Service spouse. I was surprised and touched that he would make the effort to ensure that the embassy was comfortable with his presence in Conakry. This kind of concern for others, however, was typical of Hume Horan.

Amb. Horan will long be remembered as among the best of our Foreign Service ambassadors.

Vicki Huddleston
Ambassador
Bamako

KITING IN KHARTOUM

I worked at USAID in Khartoum when Hume first came to Sudan as the U.S. ambassador in the early 1980s. One of his initial experiences was accompanying an embassy-organized outing to fly kites at a small hill south of the capital. We were all having a great time enjoying the wind and flying our kites from this “bump” in the dreary landscape when suddenly we were all arrested. It seems we were inadvertently adjacent to a military camp. (I doubt we would have been spotted except that one of the group went to answer the call of nature on the “other side” of the hill.)

We were all carted off to the base and placed in a large cell that must have been part of the base prison. Hume kept his cool! He did not announce to our captors that he was the U.S. ambassador; instead, he calmed everyone and just listened to what the Sudanese were saying about us. Being fluent in Arabic and surmising what the Sudanese planned to do worked to all our advantage and we were released,

minus our kites, and allowed to return to Khartoum.

I wonder if Hume ever put on his resumé that he once spent time in a jail cell in Sudan?

Gary E. Leinen
Interim CTO
USAID/Sudan Field
Office
Nairobi

A PHENOMENAL MIND

It's hard to be concise about an individual as multifaceted as Hume Horan, especially after knowing him 31 years, but I'll do my best.

Serving with Hume was like being in a nonstop graduate seminar. The intellectual stimulation was never-ending. His ability to see connections in facts and events that ordinary mortals would never notice was phenomenal. His linguistic abilities were equaled by few. His ability to coin the apt phrase, dipping into his internalized version of *Bartlett's Quotations*, enriched by a multilingual *Roget's Thesaurus*, never flagged. I have seen him launch instantly into energetic and entertaining conversation in French, Arabic or Spanish, either at receptions or on receiving visitors in the office, peppering his talk with proverbs and quotations to the amazement and amusement of his interlocutors. Added to this, he read German newspapers for pleasure when he could get them.

I first worked for Hume as pol-mil officer in Jeddah in the early 1970s, when he was DCM. The fact that he filled that position for five years, serving three ambassadors, testifies to how greatly his knowledge and his language ability were valued by the chiefs of mission he served.

Many years later he asked me to be his DCM in Abidjan. I jumped at the chance, despite my thought that sending two Arabists to a West

African post was a misdirection of State Department resources. But before I knew it, Hume was meeting with the imams and religious leaders of Cote d'Ivoire's Muslim community, amazing them with his knowledge of Arabic (sometimes exceeding their own), the Quran, and Arabic history and literature. His understanding of the importance of Islam in that country, I dare say, has not been equaled since in our Service.

Unfailingly optimistic, always polite, considerate and gracious to his staff, Hume Horan showed that one can rise to the peak of our Service with none of the aggressive, combative career instincts we sometimes see in those who rise to the top. Profound knowledge, insatiable curiosity, an incredible reading speed (combined with an equally rapid if undecipherable handwriting), and unending courtesy were the keys to his success. The Foreign Service will have few like him.

Charles O. Cecil
Ambassador, retired
Alexandria, Va.

PROBLEM SOLVED

I was USAID mission director in Cameroon during Amb. Horan's assignment there. While I certainly share the professional respect and personal affection sure to be expressed by others, I would like to comment on a little-known event that reflects his sensitivity and kindness.

As it happened, the American presence in Cameroon had an unusually large number of Jewish members during the early 1980s. Several were devout and wished to organize services for the benefit of the local Jewish community. In the course of one of my regular meetings with Amb. Horan, I mentioned that there was no Torah in all of Yaoundé, and wondered aloud how we might be

able to get one. He immediately offered to write to a colleague in Israel about the problem.

Within a few weeks, courtesy of Embassy Tel Aviv, a Torah arrived in Cameroon. Apparently made for traveling, it was about one-quarter the size and weight of a normal volume, but complete in every way. Services could be held with a proper Torah!

Ronald D. Levin
FSO, retired
Longboat Key, Fla.

A SOURCE OF INSIGHTS

Hume Horan was the most intriguing member of the 20th class of the Senior Seminar, 1978-79. Of obvious brilliance, he was always a source of wonderful insights, and he was capable of rolling off long, vivid monologues, as if they had been written in advance. One I will always remember occurred at a dinner party following the collapse of the Iraqi army, which brought an end to the first Persian Gulf War. We asked Hume, whose son was a tank commander in the Mother of All Battles, to tell us what the Middle East would be like as the scope of the defeat became known. I cannot quote his words verbatim, but without missing a beat he held us all rapt as he painted an unforgettablely vivid description of young men walking through dusty, unpaved streets under gray skies, kicking stones in sullen anger, cursing the day they were born, feeling the defeat as if it were their own, and looking forward to a future without hope. Every observation, in retrospect, was on the mark.

Hume was an uncommonly serious and reflective man who also had a well-developed appreciation for the absurd. In a bureaucracy in which that was not always a welcome attribute, he won the respect,

affection and admiration of his colleagues.

Stan Zuckerman
FSO, retired
McLean, Va.

REPAYING A DEBT OF GRATITUDE

Hume Horan's distinguished and varied career attests to his extraordinary dedication and commitment to the Foreign Service. Indeed, his profound understanding of the Arabic language and Muslim world is legendary.

Less well known are his service as president of AFSA from 1991-92 and as ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire from 1992-95 — the two assignments where our paths crossed. As AFSA president he recruited me to be a candidate on his slate. And on the eve of his assignment to Abidjan in 1992, we met over dinner to discuss the country where I had served some 34 years earlier.

In a June 1992 letter, Hume asked the fundamental question that arises often in a career: "Why does one join [the Foreign Service] ... or better put, why does one stay?" He answered his own question as follows: "An important part of that answer is the company and friendship of other Foreign Service people. It is they that make up the community we live in — that 'global village' we inhabited before Marshall McLuhan devised the term ... All that is good about our experience was there ... the discussion of exciting events and interesting people (past and present)." He concluded: "We are thankfully in your debt."

It's particularly appropriate that we now record our deep debt of gratitude to Hume Horan for the selfless dedication of his prodigious talents to the service of the country — and the world.

Donald R. Norland
Ambassador, retired
Washington, D.C. ■

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