

AFSW Forum

Members of the Association of American Foreign Service Women (AAFSW), as the name of the group implies, are women who have served abroad as wives of US Government officials or as officials themselves. In 1975 the AAFSW established the Forum. Composed of AAFSW members, this group was given the assignment to study topics identified as matters of concern for Foreign Service (FS) women.

A questionnaire was sent worldwide by the Forum Committee to all FS spouses. The information received on concerns relating to families was compiled. The resulting report was delivered to the Secretary of State in 1977. The report has formed the basis for a continuing dialogue by FS wives and State Department officials. (Attachment 1, the Forum report)

Women in Transition

One area of study by the Forum concerned the problems of transition as FS women passed from one phase of their lives to another--through divorce or widowhood, or by the retirement of their officer husbands. As the result of this study, a group called Women in Transition was established, primarily to provide a peer support network for divorcees and widows. Wives of retirees did not seem to feel the need for such a group; they could continue to rely on their husbands for emotional and financial support. Women accompanying their husbands in retirement often left the Washington area.

Widows and divorcees, on the other hand, had many similar problems--learning to manage their homes alone if they were fortunate enough to keep their homes, establishing credit in their own name, purchasing medical insurance, seeking employment to augment their reduced income, and coping on their own with their children. As single women they found that they were excluded from many of the recreational and social

activities they had enjoyed while married. At the same time many of the
Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/17 : CIA-RDP10-00750R000101140001-3
women found that their neighbors in suburbia were neither under-

standing nor sympathetic. Acquaintances who had always lived stateside were ignorant of, and thus did not understand, the challenges that the FS wives had faced daily while living abroad: disruptions in schooling for children, exotic medical problems, the devastation of culture shock, the difficulties of maintaining adequate hygiene and nutrition in backward countries, the frequent loss of established friendships, the turmoil of frequently moving homes and families to new and sometimes frightening environments.

The Transition Group provided a new assortment of acquaintances, all of them supportive and understanding, some who would become loyal friends.

Foreign Service Act of 1980

While the Transition Group was organizing and holding its first meetings, AAFSW members were conferring with Congressional staffs responsible for drafting a revised Foreign Service Act. The AAFSW representatives asked that the new Act's provisions include assistance for divorced and widowed FS wives.

The AAFSW women argued that FS women needed and had earned financial support in their old age. It was possible for a FS wife to spend most of her adult life following her career officer husband around the world, loyally supporting his assignments by maintaining a healthful and gracious home, representative of the American way of life. Either upon direct instruction of US Government officials (including her spouse) or through her willingness to serve voluntarily, she performed a wide variety of official and unofficial duties, while continuing to tend to her family's welfare. She had no possibility of earning her own livelihood, of establishing a career and retirement benefits on her own.

- 3 -

When divorced, a FS spouse found that all retirement and survivor benefits accrued to a new wife. The first wife and her children, at best, were left to cope on minimal child support and alimony that ceased with the death of the career officer. A FS widow sometimes found that without her knowledge, her husband had eliminated her as beneficiary from survivor annuity forms. As a result, she was left shocked and hurt, unprepared for employment, and without regular income in her old age. (Statements by past and present AAFSW Presidents at Congressional hearings for the Foreign Service Act of 1980, attachment 2) (Statement by Congresswoman Schroeder, Attachment 3)

When it was signed into law in February 1981, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 established that retirement and survivor annuity benefits were earned by FS wives and could be court awarded at the time of divorce. FS wives could not be excluded from survivor and annuity benefits unwittingly. (Attachment 4, State Department communication to retirees concerning these benefits.)

CIA Wives in Transition

STAT

[REDACTED]

Benefits for CIA Wives

Despite the fact that like their FS sisters they had served loyally abroad, the CIA wives found that the benefits of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 did not apply to them.

In an attempt to remedy this situation, a group of concerned CIA wives--married, divorced, and widowed--encouraged a member of the Transition Group, who is herself a former CIA wife, to draft a letter explaining the plight of former CIA dependent spouses. The letter argued that CIA wives serving abroad did as much and sometimes more than their FS peers to earn some form of retirement security. The letter asked that benefits similar to those given to FS wives by the 1980 Act be provided to CIA dependent spouses who served abroad. (Attachment 5, copy of letter) Because the Transition member is an employee of CIA and because all former CIA wives in the Transition Group wished to continue their cooperation with and support of the CIA mission, the letter was sent through official CIA channels for security clearance. Upon receipt of approval to distribute the letter without security classification, copies of the letter were sent to each member of the Congressional Select Committees on Intelligence in September 1981. Other copies were sent to several Congressmen thought to be especially concerned for the welfare of women.

Congressional response to this letter indicated that the Select Committees had queried CIA for more information. (Answering letters were received from the House Committee, written by Representatives J. Kenneth Robinson, Robert McClory, and Edward P. Boland as Committee Chairman; from the Senate, written by Senator Daniel K. Inouye.)

- 5 -

AAFSW President Patricia Ryan sent a letter supporting the CIA query to each member of the two Select Committees. Senator David Durenberger responded for the Senate. (Mrs. Ryan also had written early in 1981 to CIA Director William Casey. His response stated that because most CIA employees retired under Civil Service any benefits to wives would be allocated when Civil Service regulations were so modified.)

Letters expressing concern and encouragement were received from Congresswomen Patricia Schroeder of Colorado and Marjorie Holt of Maryland, and Congressman Mike Barnes of Maryland. (The latter two represent the Congressional Districts in which the CIA employee lives.)

At the time that copies of the original letter were sent to the Select Committees, informational copies were sent to former CIA Director William E. Colby, to Mrs. George Bush, wife of another former CIA Director and an AAFSW member, and to Mrs. Frank Carlucci, wife of a former Deputy Director of CIA and also an AAFSW member.

To demonstrate his support, Mr. Colby volunteered his services as legal advisor. Upon his suggestion, a packet of materials was sent to CIA in December 1981. The packet contained 10 personal histories written by CIA wives--divorced, widowed, and married--and two letters drafted by Mr. Colby. The histories demonstrated the types of service given to support the CIA mission by dependent wives serving abroad. The two letters explained the nature of the wives' request, the legal precedents, and the possibilities for action under the CIA Retirement and Disability System (CIARDS). (Attachment 6, legal precedents prepared by Mr. Colby.) One letter was addressed to the Chairmen of the two Congressional Select Committees on Intelligence; the other to CIA Director William Casey. The letter to Mr. Casey asked CIA to review the enclosed histories for possible security

- 6 -

classification and then to forward the packet--through secure channels, if deemed necessary--to the Select Committees.

A response written on 1 February 1982 by John McMahon, Executive Director of CIA, informed Mr. Colby that the personal histories were to be handled as classified material and that the packet of histories and Mr. Colby's cover letter to the Select Committees had been forwarded, as requested.

In a letter written on 18 January 1982 Mrs. Bush expressed her concern and indicated that she had written to CIA for additional information.

In February Senator Inouye wrote to say that CIA had informed him--as it had written to Mrs. Ryan--that CIA follows the lead of Civil Service in personnel practices since most CIA employees retire under Civil Service and that benefits to wives could be assigned when Civil Service regulations were appropriately modified.

(Note: Legislation providing economic equity to displaced homemakers has been proposed for the past several years by Congresswoman Schroeder, among others. There appears to be little prospect for passage of this legislation at this Congressional session.

(An argument can be made that the establishment of a separate retirement plan with higher benefits for officers serving at least five years overseas indicates that service abroad has particular value to the US Government, while demanding extra effort and dedication on the part of officers serving overseas.)

The CIA women have received strong support from Patty Ryan and Leslie Dorman of the AAFSW; Marilyn Holmes, Director of the Family Liaison Office, US State Department; and Edith Fierst, attorney, formerly with the Department of Labor as an expert in pensions and now in private practice. Ms. Fierst served as counsellor to the AAFSW in its

successful effort to have the Foreign Service Act amended to benefit FS women.

For the Future

This group of concerned CIA wives believe that consideration should be given by the Congressional Committees to providing benefits for CIA wives already divorced or widowed. (FS spouses divorced or widowed before the effective date of the 1980 Act are excluded from coverage. Attachment 7, statements drafted on the exclusion decision.)

These women, like FS wives need unique help in providing a financial base for their old age. They were unable to provide on their own for their retirement years because of the years dedicated to serving the US Government abroad--by supporting the assignments of the CIA officers to whom they were married. Divorced and widowed spouses come late to the job world. They find that they have too few years of employment and too low job status and corresponding pay scale to earn their own survival-level retirement. If the retirement benefits the former dependent can earn on her own when she begins stateside employment, however, can be added to a government annuity, the former dependent can hope to end up with an adequate income, sufficient to keep her in her own home. (Alimony generally is not given if the court believes the woman can work, at any job level.)

CIA women believe that rights to the government annuity should be vested, rather than left to court discretion. In a divorce court, CIA spouses face multiple handicaps. Bound by secrecy requirements they cannot explain their cases adequately. Like FS dependents they find that their peers who might provide emotional support and guidance are scattered throughout the world. Generally, these women who have served abroad have little money of their own; their lawyers are well aware that they cannot pay for intricate and lengthy legal maneuvering. Some

former CIA dependents have reported that lawyers and judges seemed swayed by the reputation of the Government Agency employer--to the benefit of the employees and the detriment of the divorcing wives.

Some provisions should be made to ensure that CIA wives are represented fairly in court. At present, secrecy limits them--either self-imposed through loyalty or established through official instructions--in presenting their side of the story, of explaining their roles as CIA wives abroad and thereby establishing themselves as loyal and uniquely valuable servants of the US Government. Possible methods include: official guidance by CIA to individual wives, a prepared CIA statement to be read at court hearings, and greater and more direct accessibility to official government records pertaining to the wives' years abroad.

Financial assistance for costs of illnesses and other physical infirmities caused or exacerbated by service abroad should be provided to former dependents; wives and children.

Attachments

1. The Forum Report
2. Statements by past and present AAFSW Presidents
3. Statement by Congresswoman Schroeder
4. Benefits for spouses under the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as explained in a State Department message to FS retirees
5. a. Copy of letter sent to Congressional Select Committees by a former CIA spouse
b. Outline of experiences in common by former CIA wives
6. a. Legal precedents for modifications to CIARDS
b. Extract from compilation of Intelligence Laws
7. Statements on exclusion of already divorced and widowed FS spouses from coverage by Foreign Service Act of 1980

---February 1982

AFSW Forum

Members of the Association of American Foreign Service Women (AAFSW), as the name of the group implies, are women who have served abroad as wives of US Government officials or as officials themselves. In 1975 the AAFSW established the Forum. Composed of AAFSW members, this group was given the assignment to study topics identified as matters of concern for Foreign Service (FS) women.

A questionnaire was sent worldwide by the Forum Committee to all FS spouses. The information received on concerns relating to families was compiled. The resulting report was delivered to the Secretary of State in 1977. The report has formed the basis for a continuing dialogue by FS wives and State Department officials. (Attachment 1, the Forum report)

Women in Transition

One area of study by the Forum concerned the problems of transition as FS women passed from one phase of their lives to another--through divorce or widowhood, or by the retirement of their officer husbands. As the result of this study, a group called Women in Transition was established, primarily to provide a peer support network for divorcees and widows. Wives of retirees did not seem to feel the need for such a group; they could continue to rely on their husbands for emotional and financial support. Women accompanying their husbands in retirement often left the Washington area.

Widows and divorcees, on the other hand, had many similar problems--learning to manage their homes alone if they were fortunate enough to keep their homes, establishing credit in their own name, purchasing medical insurance, seeking employment to augment their reduced income, and coping on their own with their children. As single women they found that they were excluded from many of the recreational and social

women found that their neighbors in suburbia were neither under-

tanding nor sympathetic. Acquaintances who had always lived stateside were ignorant of, and thus did not understand, the challenges that the FS wives had faced daily while living abroad: disruptions in schooling for children, exotic medical problems, the devastation of culture shock, the difficulties of maintaining adequate hygiene and nutrition in backward countries, the frequent loss of established friendships, the turmoil of frequently moving homes and families to new and sometimes frightening environments.

The Transition Group provided a new assortment of acquaintances, all of them supportive and understanding, some who would become loyal friends.

Foreign Service Act of 1980

While the Transition Group was organizing and holding its first meetings, AAFSW members were conferring with Congressional staffs responsible for drafting a revised Foreign Service Act. The AAFSW representatives asked that the new Act's provisions include assistance for divorced and widowed FS wives.

The AAFSW women argued that FS women needed and had earned financial support in their old age. It was possible for a FS wife to spend most of her adult life following her career officer husband around the world, loyally supporting his assignments by maintaining a healthful and gracious home, representative of the American way of life. Either upon direct instruction of US Government officials (including her spouse) or through her willingness to serve voluntarily, she performed a wide variety of official and unofficial duties, while continuing to tend to her family's welfare. She had no possibility of earning her own livelihood, of establishing a career and retirement benefits on her own.

- 3 -

When divorced, a FS spouse found that all retirement and survivor benefits accrued to a new wife. The first wife and her children, at best, were left to cope on minimal child support and alimony that ceased with the death of the career officer. A FS widow sometimes found that without her knowledge, her husband had eliminated her as beneficiary from survivor annuity forms. As a result, she was left shocked and hurt, unprepared for employment, and without regular income in her old age. (Statements by past and present AAFSW Presidents at Congressional hearings for the Foreign Service Act of 1980, attachment 2) (Statement by Congresswoman Schroeder, Attachment 3)

When it was signed into law in February 1981, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 established that retirement and survivor annuity benefits were earned by FS wives and could be court awarded at the time of divorce. FS wives could not be excluded from survivor and annuity benefits unwittingly. (Attachment 4, State Department communication to retirees concerning these benefits.)

CIA Wives in Transition

STAT

- 4 -

STAT


Benefits for CIA Wives

Despite the fact that like their FS sisters they had served loyally abroad, the CIA wives found that the benefits of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 did not apply to them.

In an attempt to remedy this situation, a group of concerned CIA wives--married, divorced, and widowed--encouraged a member of the Transition Group, who is herself a former CIA wife, to draft a letter explaining the plight of former CIA dependent spouses. The letter argued that CIA wives serving abroad did as much and sometimes more than their FS peers to earn some form of retirement security. The letter asked that benefits similar to those given to FS wives by the 1980 Act be provided to CIA dependent spouses who served abroad. (Attachment 5, copy of letter) Because the Transition member is an employee of CIA and because all former CIA wives in the Transition Group wished to continue their cooperation with and support of the CIA mission, the letter was sent through official CIA channels for security clearance. Upon receipt of approval to distribute the letter without security classification, copies of the letter were sent to each member of the Congressional Select Committees on Intelligence in September 1981. Other copies were sent to several Congressmen thought to be especially concerned for the welfare of women.

Congressional response to this letter indicated that the Select Committees had queried CIA for more information. (Answering letters were received from the House Committee, written by Representatives J. Kenneth Robinson, Robert McClory, and Edward P. Boland as Committee Chairman; from the Senate, written by Senator Daniel K. Inouye.)

- 5 -

AAFSW President Patricia Ryan sent a letter supporting the CIA query to each member of the two Select Committees. Senator David Durenberger responded for the Senate. (Mrs. Ryan also had written early in 1981 to CIA Director William Casey. His response stated that because most CIA employees retired under Civil Service any benefits to wives would be allocated when Civil Service regulations were so modified.)

Letters expressing concern and encouragement were received from Congresswomen Patricia Schroeder of Colorado and Marjorie Holt of Maryland, and Congressman Mike Barnes of Maryland. (The latter two represent the Congressional Districts in which the CIA employee lives.)

At the time that copies of the original letter were sent to the Select Committees, informational copies were sent to former CIA Director William E. Colby, to Mrs. George Bush, wife of another former CIA Director and an AAFSW member, and to Mrs. Frank Carlucci, wife of a former Deputy Director of CIA and also an AAFSW member.

To demonstrate his support, Mr. Colby volunteered his services as legal advisor. Upon his suggestion, a packet of materials was sent to CIA in December 1981. The packet contained 10 personal histories written by CIA wives--divorced, widowed, and married--and two letters drafted by Mr. Colby. The histories demonstrated the types of service given to support the CIA mission by dependent wives serving abroad. The two letters explained the nature of the wives' request, the legal precedents, and the possibilities for action under the CIA Retirement and Disability System (CIARDS). (Attachment 6, legal precedents prepared by Mr. Colby.) One letter was addressed to the Chairmen of the two Congressional Select Committees on Intelligence; the other to CIA Director William Casey. The letter to Mr. Casey asked CIA to review the enclosed histories for possible security

- 6 -

classification and then to forward the packet--through secure channels, if deemed necessary--to the Select Committees.

A response written on 1 February 1982 by John McMahon, Executive Director of CIA, informed Mr. Colby that the personal histories were to be handled as classified material and that the packet of histories and Mr. Colby's cover letter to the Select Committees had been forwarded, as requested.

In a letter written on 18 January 1982 Mrs. Bush expressed her concern and indicated that she had written to CIA for additional information.

In February Senator Inouye wrote to say that CIA had informed him--as it had written to Mrs. Ryan--that CIA follows the lead of Civil Service in personnel practices since most CIA employees retire under Civil Service and that benefits to wives could be assigned when Civil Service regulations were appropriately modified.

(Note: Legislation providing economic equity to displaced homemakers has been proposed for the past several years by Congresswoman Schroeder, among others. There appears to be little prospect for passage of this legislation at this Congressional session.

(An argument can be made that the establishment of a separate retirement plan with higher benefits for officers serving at least five years overseas indicates that service abroad has particular value to the US Government, while demanding extra effort and dedication on the part of officers serving overseas.)

The CIA women have received strong support from Patty Ryan and Leslie Dorman of the AAFSW; Marilyn Holmes, Director of the Family Liaison Office, US State Department; and Edith Fierst, attorney, formerly with the Department of Labor as an expert in pensions and now in private practice. Ms. Fierst served as counsellor to the AAFSW in its

successful effort to have the Foreign Service Act amended to benefit FS women.

For the Future

This group of concerned CIA wives believe that consideration should be given by the Congressional Committees to providing benefits for CIA wives already divorced or widowed. (FS spouses divorced or widowed before the effective date of the 1980 Act are excluded from coverage. Attachment 7, statements drafted on the exclusion decision.)

These women, like FS wives need unique help in providing a financial base for their old age. They were unable to provide on their own for their retirement years because of the years dedicated to serving the US Government abroad--by supporting the assignments of the CIA officers to whom they were married. Divorced and widowed spouses come late to the job world. They find that they have too few years of employment and too low job status and corresponding pay scale to earn their own survival-level retirement. If the retirement benefits the former dependent can earn on her own when she begins stateside employment, however, can be added to a government annuity, the former dependent can hope to end up with an adequate income, sufficient to keep her in her own home. (Alimony generally is not given if the court believes the woman can work, at any job level.)

CIA women believe that rights to the government annuity should be vested, rather than left to court discretion. In a divorce court, CIA spouses face multiple handicaps. Bound by secrecy requirements they cannot explain their cases adequately. Like FS dependents they find that their peers who might provide emotional support and guidance are scattered throughout the world. Generally, these women who have served abroad have little money of their own; their lawyers are well aware that they cannot pay for intricate and lengthy legal maneuvering. Some

former CIA dependents have reported that lawyers and judges seemed swayed by the reputation of the Government Agency employer--to the benefit of the employees and the detriment of the divorcing wives.

Some provisions should be made to ensure that CIA wives are represented fairly in court. At present, secrecy limits them--either self-imposed through loyalty or established through official instructions--in presenting their side of the story, of explaining their roles as CIA wives abroad and thereby establishing themselves as loyal and uniquely valuable servants of the US Government. Possible methods include: official guidance by CIA to individual wives, a prepared CIA statement to be read at court hearings, and greater and more direct accessibility to official government records pertaining to the wives' years abroad.

Financial assistance for costs of illnesses and other physical infirmities caused or exacerbated by service abroad should be provided to former dependents; wives and children.

Attachments

1. The Forum Report
2. Statements by past and present AAFSW Presidents
3. Statement by Congresswoman Schroeder
4. Benefits for spouses under the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as explained in a State Department message to FS retirees
5. a. Copy of letter sent to Congressional Select Committees by a former CIA spouse
b. Outline of experiences in common by former CIA wives
6. a. Legal precedents for modifications to CIARDS
b. Extract from compilation of Intelligence Laws
7. Statements on exclusion of already divorced and widowed FS spouses from coverage by Foreign Service Act of 1980

---February 1982