

A DIPLOMATIC “RENAISSANCE MAN”: RICHARD B. PARKER

THREE-TIME AMBASSADOR RICHARD PARKER WAS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER FOR 31 YEARS, AND SINCE RETIREMENT HAS CONTINUED TO WRITE AND TEACH. LAST MONTH, AFSA HONORED HIM FOR A LIFETIME OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN DIPLOMACY.

BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

On June 24, Ambassador Richard Bordeaux Parker received the American Foreign Service Association's award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy, in recognition of a distinguished 31-year Foreign Service career and equally impressive academic and scholarly accomplishments.

Being born on July 3, 1923, in the Philippines, where his father was stationed with the U.S. Army, gave Parker an early, if brief, exposure to overseas life. But his initial professional goal was to become a chemical engineer. It was while he was studying engineering at Kansas State University (known then as Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science) that fate stepped in for the first time. The future ambassador had to take German as a prerequisite for chemical engineering, he recalls, “and it was clear that German came much easier to me than to anyone else in the class. I discovered a gift for languages that I hadn't realized I had.”

Then fate nudged him once again — much more strongly, this time — when World War II interrupted his studies and he went overseas as an infantry officer. Captured by the Germans after the Battle of the Bulge, he was eventually repatriated at the end of the war via Odessa, the Turkish Straits, Port Said and Naples. That first encounter with the “great wide world” left him determined to go back and see a lot more of it.

Soon after he joined the Foreign Service in 1949, his facility in languages steered him toward a specialization in

the Arab world. In 1961, he became the first non-native speaker in the Service to attain a 4/4 rating in Arabic, indicating full fluency in the spoken and written language, from the Foreign Service Institute. That facility paved the way for him to be a three-time ambassador, to Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco; earlier assignments included Australia, Israel, Jordan and Egypt, as well as several stints on country desks back in Washington.

Somehow, along the way he found the time to take up the study of Islamic architecture as a hobby and to write two “practical guides” on the subject — the first of seven books he has written or edited: *Guide to Islamic Monuments in Cairo* (American University in Cairo Press, 1974; now in its fifth edition) and *Guide to Islamic Monuments in Morocco* (self-published, 1981); *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns* (Praeger, 1984; a Council on Foreign Relations book); *The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle East* (Indiana University Press, 1993); *The Six-Day War: A Retrospective* (editor; University Press of Florida, 1996); *The October War: A Retrospective* (editor; University Press of Florida, 2001); and his latest, *Uncle Sam in Barbary: A Diplomatic History* (University Press of Florida, 2004; see p. 71 for a review). He has also served as editor of the *Middle East Journal*, and has contributed dozens of articles and book reviews to various periodicals.

Upon retirement from the Service in 1981, Parker became diplomat-in-residence at the University of Virginia for two years, and has also taught at several other colleges and universities. He served as the first president of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and is also a member of many other prestigious organizations, including the Advisory Council on Near East Studies at Princeton University, the American Academy of Diplomacy, the

Steven Alan Honley, a Foreign Service officer from 1985 to 1997, is editor of the Journal.

Council on Foreign Relations, the Middle East Institute, the Cosmos Club and Delta Tau Delta. His many honors and awards include the Department of State Superior Service Award (1967, for a rescue mission to Yemen), the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Cedars, Lebanon (1979); the Air Force Medal of Merit (1980); and the Foreign Service Cup (1989).

Little wonder, then, that many of Parker's peers in the Foreign Service over the years (even those who did not already know of his penchant for chemistry and math) have described him as a "Renaissance man."

Ambassador Parker is married to the former Jeanne Jaccard. They have four children and nine grandchildren.

Foreign Service Journal Editor Steven Alan Honley interviewed Parker at his Georgetown home on March 31.

FSJ: *Congratulations on your award for lifetime contributions to American diplomacy, which places you in the same company as George Shultz, Tom Pickering, Cyrus Vance, George Bush Sr., and Larry Eagleburger, among others. What would you say have been your strengths as a diplomat?*

RP: I think the fact that I've been able to maintain my sense of humor through some difficult times, first of all. Eisenhower once said, "Always take your job, but never yourself, seriously." But of course, if you don't take yourself seriously, no one else will, either. So you have to find some compromise there. But the important thing is if you don't take yourself too seriously, you can understand the humor in the situation in which you find yourself and you can relate much more easily to other people.

I would also say that I've always concentrated on doing whatever my job was to the best of my ability.

"The term 'Arabist' was no compliment even in the 1950s, but it was a fascinating world and language. And no one ever tried to warn me off from going into it."

— Richard Parker

FSJ: *You were born in the Philippines. How long did you live there?*

RP: We left when I was three months old. My father was stationed there as an Army officer; and they were just waiting for me to be born.

FSJ: *I understand you originally planned to be a chemical engineer. What drew you to the Foreign Service instead?*

RP: Well, engineering studies are very difficult, with a very heavy class load. The war was on, and I had sort of lost interest. I had one more semester to go at Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science (now Kansas State University), before I was going to be taken into the Army in 1943, and I said the hell with it, I'm going to have one fun semester before I leave. So I dropped engineering, much to the dismay of my faculty adviser, and took a semester of things like public speaking and Spanish, as well as German, which I'd already been studying — that was required for chemical engineers — and navigation math, which was very easy. That made 12 hours of

very easy courses. So I had a wonderful semester and a great time.

FSJ: *This was the fall of 1943?*

RP: The spring.

FSJ: *And you were already in officer training by this point?*

RP: Yes, I was in ROTC. We were told we would be sent to an OCS (Officer Candidate School) after we did our basic training. I was in coast artillery, or anti-aircraft, ROTC as befitting an engineer, but along with all my classmates, ended up being sent to infantry OCS — which, of course, was a good deal more dangerous.

FSJ: *And then you shipped overseas in 1944?*

RP: Yes, our division went first to England and then to France.

FSJ: *Tell me about your experience as a POW in World War II.*

RP: Well, our division was annihilated in the Battle of the Bulge, and I was among the thousands of men captured. I spent only 34 days under German control, ending up at a camp for American ground-force officers in Poland, near Poznan. When the Soviets finally began moving west from Warsaw, where they'd been stopped the previous September, the Germans started marching us back to Germany. About 200 of us, out of the thousand or so men in the camp, said after one day that we were too weak to walk any further. So they left us, and the Soviets arrived that night.

FSJ: *And then you were repatriated?*

RP: Yes, over a long period: it took over six weeks before we got back into American control down in Odessa.

FSJ: *I understand from one of the biographical sketches I read that you saw a lot of the world on the trip and*

that was one of the factors behind your decision to apply to the Foreign Service.

RP: Oh, yes. I'd had no idea many of the things I saw existed. I was also very concerned that we not have another war like World War II, and I thought maybe I could help by joining the Foreign Service. Pretty idealistic of me, but anyway, that's how I turned up.

FSJ: So then you went back to Kansas State? What was your degree in?

RP: I got a degree in general science. My major was mathematics, which was a mistake.

FSJ: Why was it a mistake?

RP: I had almost failed integral calculus because the war had diverted my attention, but I had more hours of mathematics on my transcript than any other subject. I was not a serious mathematics student, but I got through it.



Amb. Parker and his wife Jeanne at DACOR on April 14 at the launch of his new book, *Uncle Sam in Barbary: A Diplomatic History*.

Parker's first encounter with the "great wide world," as he later called it, left him determined to go back and see a lot more.

FSJ: When did you apply to the Foreign Service?

RP: I took the written exam in Tokyo in 1946, when I was still in the Army. I took it just to see what it was like, with no expectation of passing it, and much to my surprise, I passed. So they let me out of the Army and I went back to school. I got there in March 1947 and graduated in May; I'd had such a heavy schedule as an engineering student that there was no problem getting enough hours to graduate with.

I took the oral Foreign Service exam later that summer in Chicago.

The chairman of the board, a Mr. Eberhard, said to me, in effect, "We like your style, Mr. Parker, but you don't know anything. Go back to college for a year and study about history and economics." Which I did.

FSJ: That's when you earned your master's degree?

RP: Yes, in something called citizenship education, which was a "Great Books" program modeled on the one at the University of Chicago.

FSJ: Tell me about your time with the Kansas State UNESCO Commission.

RP: Well, it was brief but interesting. Milton Eisenhower, who at that point was the president of Kansas State, and changed its name to Kansas State University, was the chairman of the U.S. National Commission on UNESCO. UNESCO had its first international conference in Beirut in the summer of 1948, and he wanted to establish a UNESCO commission in every state. He started with Kansas and got three or four other states to follow suit, but all of the state commissions died on the vine not long afterward.

The commission was an early NGO, funded by the university. This

was at the beginning of the implementation of the Fulbright legislation and the resumption of Junior Year Abroad and that sort of thing. There had been almost no exchanges before between Kansas schools and schools abroad, and we were beginning that program. There was a good deal of interest throughout the state, but the program died after Milton Eisenhower left to go to Johns Hopkins University.

FSJ: *What did your job entail?*

RP: I did some local travel, doing things like showing educational films to groups. One of my favorite films was “No Place to Hide,” an *Encyclopedia Britannica* film about the implications of atomic warfare. Trying to bring that issue home to farmers in Kansas was interesting. They were ready to listen.

But the most exciting thing I did was to witness a festival celebrating the adoption of a town in Holland by a little town named Morganville, not far from Manhattan, where the university was. That was a great event. Everyone came from miles around and people performed on a stage set up in a vacant lot. It was a very rewarding grass-roots experience.

FSJ: *Did anyone from the town in Holland come?*

RP: No. It was a long way to go, and travel was difficult then.

FSJ: *You spent about six months with the commission?*

RP: Less than that, actually: August to December 1948. So about five months.

FSJ: *And you entered the Service in 1949?*

RP: Yes. After I completed my year of graduate school, I came to Washington and took the oral again in 1948 and passed. I said I was ready to work, but they said, “Oh, we’ll let you

“Beirut was the most fun of my postings. I served there three times, once as a language student, once as political officer, and once as ambassador.”

— Richard Parker

know some day, but we don’t have any work for you now.” So I went back to Kansas and took the UNESCO job until they told me to report for training, which was in January 1949.

FSJ: *Where was your first posting?*

RP: Sydney. I was the general services officer there, dealing with diplomatic pouches and customs clearances and things like that. And I did some consular work, as well.

FSJ: *You are perhaps best known as an Arabist. At what stage did you choose that area for your concentration, and why?*

RP: It was while I was in Sydney. I enjoyed consular and administrative work, but this was a period when we were saying no to everybody who wanted to come to the United States. I spent the day saying no to Australians who didn’t understand why they had to be taken under a quota of 200 immigration visas a year.

That was pretty dreadful and I had a perpetual headache. My replacement was much impressed when I casually reached into my desk drawer,

pulled out a large bottle of aspirin and popped a couple in my mouth and chewed them.

Anyway, I decided to become a political officer, which was supposed to be the road to glory. And I felt I needed to develop some specialization to get there. This meant studying a hard language.

My wife and I looked at the post reports and the possibilities around the world. My first choice would have been a specialization in Japanese or Polish, but neither one of those was open. Coming home from Odessa during the war, I’d been much impressed with the sight of Istanbul from the water. Then we stopped in Port Said, so I’d had a brief exposure to Egypt. Both places looked interesting, so we narrowed it down to Arabic or Turkish, and I wrote on my April Fool’s card that I wanted to specialize in one of those, but would like to have a post in the area first. So they sent us to Jerusalem in 1951, and I never looked back. It was so fascinating, I spent the rest of my career working in or on that area.

We started out on the Israeli side of the line and then we moved to the Arab side. I hired a tutor and paid for Arabic lessons for about a year before the department invited me to come and join an Arabic class in 1953.

FSJ: *In retrospect, it seems there has always been some stigma within the Foreign Service associated with becoming an Arabist. Did you feel that way at the time, and did anyone ever try to discourage you from making that choice?*

RP: Well, the term “Arabist” was no compliment even then, and I understood that. But it was a fascinating world and language. And no one ever tried to warn me off from going into it.

FSJ: *Which of your postings stand out in your memory?*

RP: Beirut was the most fun. I served there three times, once as a language student, once as political officer, and once as ambassador. The Lebanese are very hospitable, and you get to know a lot of people.

Even the last tour as ambassador in the late 1970s, which was a time of great danger — my predecessor had been assassinated — was much better than today in terms of security for our personnel. We were much freer to move around. Even so, it's no fun to have to go everywhere in an armored vehicle and not be able to stop and go into a shop or look at the sights without a bunch of bodyguards jumping out and standing around you, intimidating everybody.

The third time I went to Beirut, I should note, I was plucked out of Algiers and sent there on very short notice. Algiers was a tough post, although the security situation was nothing like what it is today. Back

then (1974-1977) I was the only U.S. ambassador accredited to an Arab country who didn't have a bodyguard. But I was the first ambassador to serve there after the resumption of diplomatic relations, which had been broken in 1967 and restored in late 1974.

So there was a lot of work to be done. I liked the Algerians, but the infrastructure there for diplomats and the possibilities were very restricted. Housing was a great problem, and my staff was generally unhappy with the fact that Algerians never returned telephone calls. It was a frustrating place to work in, but relations have improved a good deal since then.

Still, Beirut was a much easier place to work. I knew everybody, or had access to everybody, and people were willing to help. The only problem was, there was no functioning government; it was basically anarchy. Courts did not operate; judges were

afraid to sentence people for fear of reprisals. The president's power did not extend much beyond the presidential palace. But the Lebanese are very entrepreneurial and found ways to make things work.

FSJ: *Who were some of the people you especially admired or were inspired by during your Foreign Service career?*

RP: I liked all my chiefs but one, who shall be nameless. My first boss, the consul general in Sydney, was Orsen Nielsen, long since gone to his reward. His first post had been St. Petersburg, in 1917. It was 1949 when I met him, so that had been 32 years earlier: it was so unbelievably remote to me. It wasn't until I went back to Amman, I think in 1989 — 33 years after I'd left that post — that I realized how short a span that actually was.

Nielsen was old-line Foreign



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Service, very proper. His secretary said he had a way of pointing out to you that you were inferior. But still, he was a decent fellow, and an honest man.

My first ambassador was Lester Mallory, in Amman, in 1955-1956. A former agricultural attaché, he was a rough-hewn fellow, but I liked him very much. He taught me a good deal.

Next was Ambassador Armin Meyer, who's still around. He started out as a radio operator, along with Bill Porter, and was still a ham operator when we arrived in Beirut in 1961. He was our ambassador and I was political officer. He taught me many things.

Then there was Lucius Battle, who was ambassador in Cairo in 1965. I learned a lot from him, too.

I first worked with Stuart Rockwell in the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau back in Washington from 1957 to 1958, and later was his DCM in Rabat. He is the most competent Foreign Service officer I ever knew, but the problem

was that he did not leave much for me to do.

I could go on and on ...

FSJ: *You spent most of your career overseas, but you were in Washington for eight or nine years. Which Secretary of State do you most admire and why?*

RP: I would say John Foster Dulles. Not because of his personality — he was very much a cold fish, and he treated the Foreign Service like a public convenience — but because of his command and control of the department. He was running American for-

eign policy. President Eisenhower was the ultimate authority, of course, but Dulles had no real competition from anybody else in the structure. Everyone deferred to him. He was very competent and a good director; he understood international politics and American interests. I disagreed with many things he did, but I think only Henry Kissinger rivaled his control of foreign policy.

FSJ: *How would you assess Secretary Powell?*

RP: I think very highly of him. He is the first Secretary we've had in a long time who understands the qualities and principles of leadership.

FSJ: *Going back to your career — you were ambassador to three countries during the 1970s: Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco. What were some of the challenges you faced as chief of mission, and how did you handle them?*

RP: In the case of Algiers, we had significant American investment in the petroleum sector: prospecting for oil, building natural gas liquefaction plants, and so forth. That presence had stayed intact even during the break in diplomatic relations.

American firms had good working relations, in general, with the higher echelons of the Algerian government. But they had a lot of problems with the lower echelons: for example, the Ministry of the Interior requirement that their personnel obtain an exit permit to leave the country. Holding their hand and helping them with such problems was a preoccupation.

Trying to get something done in terms of cooperation in the cultural field was another challenge in Algiers. Having had open-heart surgery that left me needing a monthly lab test in a place where the hospital was sort of anarchical, I was very interested in getting some kind of exchange going with American doctors to try to



Above: The monument to American diplomat Joel Barlow in Zarnowic, Poland, erected after a campaign launched by Richard Parker. Below: Parker (second from left) at the dedication of the monument in 1998, with Francis Scanlan, Consul General, Krakow (center), and Polish dignitaries.

improve local health care. Doing that was a constant preoccupation, and I had not succeeded by the time I left. In fact, I don't think it's ever come to pass.

FSJ: *Was the problem getting institutions interested back in the States or there in the country?*

RP: It was both dimensions, and there were a lot of complications. For one thing, we didn't have a bilateral agreement in place on cultural and educational exchanges, and you had to get that done first. And once we located an American consortium that was interested in doing this, somewhere up in the north-central states, getting the Algerian side to cooperate was a problem. I think there was one brief exchange, and then the thing folded. Initiatives like that require constant attention from both sides, and if they don't get it, they stop.

Also, in contrast to Libya and Egypt and other states in the region — even during the break in relations, there were hundreds of Egyptian students in the U.S. — there had been almost no Algerian students here; just a handful. Algerians didn't travel to the States. But that began to change almost immediately after restoration of relations. We were very surprised to have a long line of visa applicants, one of whom was a man named Elias Zerhouni, who is now director of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

One of my problems was that USIA wanted to close its office there, which it had operated at a modest level throughout the break in relations, because of the lack of response from the Algerians. So I said, send an Arabist to run it and let's see what happens. They brought in Chris Ross, and immediately things started moving on the informational and cultural side.

FSJ: *How was your return to Morocco as ambassador? I assume conditions there were not as difficult*

as in your other two ambassadorships.

RP: Oh yes. I liked the country and the people, and the U.S. and Morocco have had good relations for some 200 years. But even so, I didn't want to go back there because of the way the king treated foreign ambassadors. He wanted them to be lackeys who played golf and went to parties and basically waited for him to tell them what to do. In addition, there had been two coup attempts when I was there before, and the king was never fully persuaded that we weren't involved in them somehow. So I only lasted about six months.

FSJ: *Were you "PNG-ed" from there?*

RP: No, he said he would not declare me persona non grata, but declared that relations would not improve as long as I was there. He was upset because I was unable to relieve him of the [exiled Iranian] Shah [Pahlavi]'s presence, but his principal complaint about me seemed to be that I knew too many people.

FSJ: *Always a dangerous quality in a diplomat.*

RP: Yes, indeed. I was also PNG-ed, in effect, while serving in Egypt in 1967. President Nasser himself ordered my departure because he apparently thought I was the real CIA station chief and was personally responsible for all the bad things he thought the Americans had done to Egypt. The Egyptians later explained that they thought I had not acted like a diplomat. I'm not sure what that meant, but have taken it as an unintended compliment.

Being PNG-ed twice is not a service record, however. I don't know for sure, but the man who holds the record may have been James Leander Cathcart, who was one of the American prisoners in Algiers in 1785 and rose to prominence in the hierar-

chy there. He was U.S. consul in Tunis at the time of the Tripolitanian War that began in 1801. And he was PNG-ed three times: in Tunisia, Algeria and Libya. This is obviously a subject that needs more research.

By the way, he also lived for a time in Georgetown, on P Street.

FSJ: *It's just a coincidence that you also live on that street, I take it? It's not an homage?*

RP: Oh, no. I had no idea of that when we bought this house.

FSJ: *We've already touched on your time in Lebanon, but how much did the deteriorating security situation affect your ability to do your job as ambassador?*

RP: We certainly had plenty of problems — constant fighting among the Lebanese militias, Israeli incursions and PLO infiltration along the southern border, and the invasion of 1978, plus an almost total absence of judicial activity. But that didn't really inhibit our work very much; we had contact with everybody, and the common danger generated a certain camaraderie among us all. But we did try to do something about the security situation, not for ourselves but for the country as a whole. One of the problems was that because of the State of Siege Law (which came about because of the movie starring Yves Montand that portrayed the U.S. as teaching the Uruguayan police how to torture and provoked Congress to pass a law limiting aid to foreign police forces), we couldn't give a single bullet to the gendarmerie, the rural police force, which was an essential part of the security structure in Lebanon. It didn't look very impressive to the outsider, but it was very influential in the countryside.

One of my first assigned tasks after getting there was to try and arrange a ceasefire between the Chamounists and the PLO in southern Lebanon,

where a firefight was going on. I succeeded, and received a telegram from Roy Atherton, the NEA assistant secretary, congratulating me on this. But by the time it arrived, they were fighting again!

That was the way it went, though. You'd work and work to hammer out a ceasefire or an agreement and get everyone on board, and then somebody would fire a shot and it was all over again.

I have a framed cartoon showing a group of Lebanese politicians standing around in a state of embarrassment, while a hand is sticking out from behind a curtain — holding a Parker pen that was labeled "The Godfather." I'd persuaded this group of traditional political leaders — Sunni, Shia and Maronite — to agree on an informal compact by urging that if they agreed to stop fighting each other, the Israelis and Syrians would not be able to exploit them the way they had. And they agreed and signed, but five days later, the fighting started back up.

Some of this is discussed in my book on diplomatic miscalculations, *The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle East* (Indiana University Press, 1993) and in an article I did for the *Middle East Journal's* Autumn 1996 issue.

The most frustrating thing was trying to get the Lebanese Army to move into southern Lebanon to take over security. We thought we had it arranged, but then it was blocked by the Israelis and their local puppet, who really didn't want them down there.

FSJ: *Speaking of Israel: did you ever have occasion to meet Ariel Sharon?*

RP: No; I did see him twice, once speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations and once in the Kremlin, in 1990, when we both happened to be visiting Moscow. But we've never spoken.

“In the old days, when an assistant secretary came out to your post, that was really something. Today, someone at that level visits every three months or so, and they sneak in and out.”

— **Richard Parker**

FSJ: *Do you think Ariel Sharon will ever make peace on terms acceptable to the Palestinians?*

RP: No. Any peace will come in spite of Sharon, not because of him.

FSJ: *Were you frustrated by the ban at that time on American diplomats dealing directly with the Palestinian Liberation Organization?*

RP: Not really; the ban was on formal contacts only. Our CIA folks in Beirut — Robert Ames, in particular, who was later killed when the embassy was bombed in 1983 — dealt with the PLO all the time. At times we saw them as a positive influence in the civil war; they were more responsible than some of the Lebanese factions. But there wasn't much they could do, so there wasn't much substance to our dealings with them.

FSJ: *Did you disagree with the Bush administration's initial reluctance to become engaged in the Middle East peace process?*

RP: Yes, I did.

FSJ: *And do you think the administration's "road map" is still viable?*

RP: Well, the ink is still on the paper, so I suppose it could be revived. But it looks pretty dormant now.

FSJ: *Are you a pessimist about a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?*

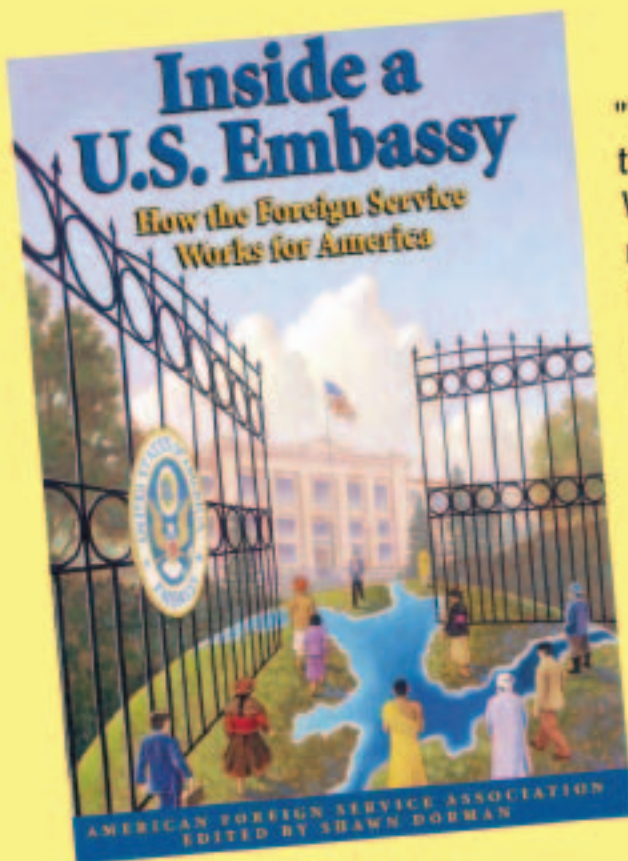
RP: You know, Adlai Stevenson said that "Optimism is to a diplomat what courage is to a soldier." Pessimists don't make good diplomats. I am professionally optimistic that there is going to be a solution, but I must say that when I look at the details, I don't see how it will come about.

FSJ: *Do you think the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative has promise?*

RP: No, I don't. I may be wrong, but the whole idea, it seems to me, is that we're preaching to the natives, as though the problem is reform. That isn't the problem: it's people and land. Where do we draw the borders and what do we do about the refugees? There will be little American-sponsored progress on democracy until we do something effective about Arab-Israeli peace. The initiative doesn't deal with that; we've just sort of put that aside, but it's the 900-pound gorilla in the room. Now, I'm out of touch: I haven't been out there since 1997. And I haven't talked to any Palestinians on the ground, so I may not know what I'm talking about, but I doubt it.

FSJ: *Do you see signs that Arab societies themselves are starting to recognize the urgency of reform and are willing to pursue that process?*

RP: Yes, I see some modest signs, even in Saudi Arabia. And that's the only way reform will happen — from within. The idea that we're somehow going to teach them the way is non-



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sense. For us to push them actually makes it less likely to come to fruition.

FSJ: *In your view, has our intervention in Iraq been successful?*

RP: I felt at the time that it was a tragic mistake to go in there, that we were going to have a great deal of difficulty in the aftermath, and that it would engender a good deal of hostility toward us in the region. I think all those assumptions have been vindicated.

I also think that if we are safer today than we were on Sept. 11, 2001, it's because of the security measures we've taken, not because we went into Iraq. That action has actually made us less safe.

FSJ: *If there should be a stable, democratic government in Iraq, do you think it will help pave the way for democratization in the region?*

RP: Oh, yes. Anytime you have a successful change, and the result is beneficial, that's going to have an effect on others. And I hope that is the result in Iraq, but I don't think we can count on it. We are a long way from a stable Iraq today.

FSJ: *How serious do you think Libya is about moving closer to the West?*

RP: They've been talking in those terms for some time. Martin Indyk (formerly NEA assistant secretary) published an interesting commentary on this in the March 9 *Financial Times*, pointing out that the Libyans were talking about breaking out of their isolation back in 1999. And I think that desire is the real cause of the change. Iraq may have increased somewhat their fears of American "cowboyism," but they were already moving in that direction on their own.

FSJ: *So this is an evolutionary change, then?*

RP: Yes. Qaddafi is so unpre-

dictable that one never knows for sure, but it looks like he is serious about coming clean and restoring ties.

FSJ: *Have you met him?*

RP: Not to my knowledge.

FSJ: *How successful do you believe we have been in getting out the message that the war on terrorism is not a war on Arabs or Muslims?*

RP: I don't think we've been successful at all. The restrictions we've had to introduce on travel and so forth inevitably create the appearance of discrimination against Muslims. I don't think there is anything we can do about that other than be as tactful and careful as possible in implementing the policies.

FSJ: *You've had a wide-ranging career with several phases — you've been a soldier, a diplomat, a teacher, an administrator, an editor, and an author. Have the transitions been difficult, or have you always seen yourself as pursuing several different interests at the same time?*

RP: Aside from my desire to maintain the world's peace, what really motivated me and my wife to go into the Foreign Service was a desire to live abroad and meet other people and learn about foreign cultures. I've been fascinated by these things ever since we started. Also, I've always been intellectually curious about why people are doing certain things and what it means. And that has led me to write, and read, and study. I've been too busy to worry unduly about shifting from one thing to another.

FSJ: *When you retired from the Foreign Service in 1980 after 31 years to become the diplomat-in-residence at the University of Virginia, was that transition particularly difficult?*

RP: Yes, going from being an ambassador to a college professor was the hardest transition I made. After being in a situation where every day was divided up into 15-minute intervals during which I'd see visitors, and people were constantly asking me for answers to their questions, suddenly my telephone was no longer ringing. And nobody cared what I was doing, not even my fellow professors, as far as I could tell. That took a real adjustment; I think it took me five or six years to deprogram myself and stop talking like an NEA officer. Maybe I still am!

FSJ: *How long were you at the University of Virginia?*

RP: I was at U. Va. for two years, during which time I also held down the job of editor of the *Middle East Journal*. And then I decided there wasn't enough going on regarding the Middle East in Charlottesville to keep me busy, so I moved back to Washington. I kept working at the *Middle East Journal*, but not quite full time.

FSJ: *And you were the first president of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, right?*

RP: Yes, [former FSI director] Steve Low hired me for that. But I stayed at the magazine for another year or so before leaving to devote more time to ADST.

FSJ: *And then what?*

RP: I'd been thinking for years about the theme of miscalculations in diplomacy and wanted to write a book on the subject. And I thought the way to do it was to get a fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson Center at the Smithsonian, which I did. And I've been a casual laborer ever since. For example, during the 1992-93 academic year, I was the Stephen Scarff Distinguished Visiting Pro-

fessor at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisc. (a fellowship set up by the parents of a student who had been killed in an accident; I don't know where he was killed or how). I taught courses on the Middle East there, which was fun. Then I came back and for one semester taught a course at the School of Advanced International Studies (part of Johns Hopkins University) in tandem with Bill Zartman.

FSJ: *Tell us about your new book, Uncle Sam in Barbary: A Diplomatic History (University Press of Florida), that is about to come out. You've been working on that for what, six years?*

RP: Even longer than that: since 1990. It's really been a retirement project, but during that period I did three other books before concentrating on this one.

FSJ: *What in particular drew you to writing about America's early diplomatic relations with North Africa two centuries ago? Is it the fact that the topic isn't well known?*

RP: Well, a lot of American historians have written on it, particularly the war with Tripoli, but not much has been done from the point of view of an area specialist. Only one of these historians, to my knowledge, has ever been to the area, and that briefly; most of them have known almost nothing of the local language and culture.

So Carl Brown at Princeton suggested that I write the history of those early relations from the perspective of a practitioner who is knowledgeable about the area to see if it made any difference in the interpretation.

FSJ: *In your introduction to the book, you write that, to the extent anyone does know about that episode, they've drawn the wrong lessons from it.*

RP: Yes, they do not understand what really happened. They think that "Millions for defense, not one cent for tribute," is what it's all about. They don't realize that we paid almost a million dollars to get our men out of Algiers in 1796 — which would be about \$15 million in today's money — at a time when our total annual federal revenues were about \$6 million or \$7 million. And force did not settle anything there, at least initially; one could argue that it did later, in 1815, but these initial problems with Algiers were solved by negotiations.

FSJ: *But wasn't that at least partially because we didn't really have any navy to speak of at that stage?*

RP: Well, yes, but even if we'd had greater forces to bring to bear, what difference would it have made? All our prisoners there would simply have been sacrificed; we would not have been able to rescue them militarily. In the end, we still would have had to negotiate.

My other preoccupation has been Joel Barlow, an American diplomat from that period. In fact, I was up in his hometown of Redding, Conn., last weekend to give a talk on him. I helped raise funds to erect a monument to him in 1998 in Zarnowic, Poland, where he died. It's near Krakow.

FSJ: *As someone who has written extensively about U.S. diplomacy and taught it, in addition to being a practitioner, you've obviously seen a good many changes in it over the course of your career. How has diplomacy changed over the past 50 years or so? Are you optimistic about the future of the profession?*

RP: In the old days, 50 years ago, when an assistant secretary came out to your post, that was really something. The trumpets would blare. Today, someone at that level visits

every three months or so, and they sneak in and out.

Communications have so multiplied that I sense we no longer have the control we once did. Dean Acheson talks about this in one of his books: when he was Secretary of State, there was a woman named Mrs. Halla who ran the correspondence review branch up in S/S. She looked at every telegram that went out of the department and corrected the grammar — "You can't do this, Mr. Parker." Those days are long gone, and I'm sure our writing has gotten a lot sloppier as a result. E-mail also encourages sloppiness.

The deterioration in the security situation has really affected diplomats' ability to do their jobs, as well. In places like Beirut, personal contact is so important. And if you're sitting up on a hill and you can't go out without a guard, even for junior personnel, I think that's decreased our ability to influence events.

But diplomacy is still necessary. Sometime back, I heard Newt Gingrich speaking at Georgetown about how the Foreign Service was becoming irrelevant. But I don't think he understands anything about how diplomacy is conducted, or how important it is to have people on the ground in these places. Personality is everything.

FSJ: *Whenever you talk to bright young people today, college graduates, do you recommend the Foreign Service to them as a career?*

RP: Yes, I have given talks on that quite a bit. And I always tell them that I can't think of anything I would rather have done with my life than be in the Foreign Service. There was never a dull moment. I was sometimes troubled or unhappy with what I had to do, but I never wished I were doing something else.

FSJ: *Thank you very much. ■*