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Foreign Service Spouse Series

MARLENE EAGLEBURGER

Interviewed by: Patricia Barbis
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Patricia Barbis interviewing Marlene Eagleburger at her home in Charlottesville, Virginia, February 17, 1993.

Marlene, you and your husband have had a long and very illustrious career in the Foreign Service. I think it would be of great interest to us to have your perspective on these many years in the Service, particularly since your husband became the first career officer as Secretary of State. What would you like to tell us about?

EAGLEBURGER: Well, first of all, I think that the 31 years spent in the Foreign Service has been, on balance, marvelous. I say that not necessarily because my husband became the first career officer to become Secretary -- even without that I would have to say, if someone asks me if I could go back and do it over again, would I do it differently? I would have to say "I would do it exactly the same."

That is admitting to some low spots in our 31 years with the U.S. Government, which leads me to the positive side of the Foreign Service: I feel it's the people. We were out of government for four years and we met many interesting, educated, really nice people. But I have to tell you I missed my Foreign Service colleagues. They are the brightest, the most articulate, fun. I missed them greatly. To me, that is the great strength that we bring to an agency of the U.S. Government.

The negative side, I would have to say, is the usual uprooting of children, leaving friends and family. We've all heard this before, and we all know the price in personal terms that we all pay. But if I were to speak to the negative side of the Foreign Service, I would mention these things: That the Foreign Service today is very different than the Foreign Service I knew for the majority of the career that we spent with the U.S. Government.

The negative is that, unfortunately, the people are changing. They now are interested primarily in "me." "What's in it for me?" "Is the education comparable to the wonderful school my child is in? Do I want to pay that price? Do I want to have to soak my vegetables in iodine?" Questions that sound small but when you add them up, it's people

who don't want to go to hardship posts any more, it's an unwillingness to accept the responsibility of making choices, sometimes difficult ones.

To give you an example, years ago an ambassador was killed while my husband was working for him and Secretary Kissinger. He had to be replaced quickly, and my husband asked a career Foreign Service officer if he would be prepared to go to this place that was highly dangerous. The answer was, "If the Secretary wants me to go, of course I will go." That quality is becoming less in the Foreign Service of today.

Q: More rare, I imagine.

EAGLEBURGER: Certainly more rare, and I find it disturbing. Perhaps I'm a traditionalist or whatever adjective you choose, but the idea of service I think is beginning to diminish. I think we as Foreign Service families are diminished by that idea and those feelings.

Q: Do you think it's justifiable change or some aspect of the recruitment process today?

EAGLEBURGER: I think probably it's a combination of those two. I know that for a very long time, now and in recent years, a FSO coming in has to wait a very long time before being assigned. This to me is ridiculous. I don't understand it, I know people have tried to fix it and I think we're now down to a year, which I still find outrageous.

I think that's part of it -- that it's that you haven't an enthusiastic person -- by the time the Foreign Service wants him, the enthusiasm has lessened. On the other hand, I feel that a lot of youngsters coming out want to go and work and make big money with Chase Manhattan in New York, they have spouses who are pursuing a career track of their own, the choices become more difficult.

And granting all that, I still maintain that it is a choice. And with all the difficulties you face in entering the Service, if you choose to do so, then you must accept the down side. And if you're not prepared to accept the down side, then perhaps you would be better off at Chase Manhattan Bank

Q: -- to choose another profession.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes.

Q: I know you've given a great deal of leadership within the last 10 years to the possibility of employment of spouses overseas. Before we get into that I would like to ask you if you would review the Foreign Service assignments that you have had. I know that you met your husband at post in Yugoslavia.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. Lawrence grew up in Wisconsin and I grew up in Illinois but we met in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Which sounds peculiar some way (laughter) but actually I

think if Lawrence had to put his assignments up against most Foreign Service offices, he would come out failing in service abroad. He always preferred to be in Washington "where the action was." I thought, actually, overseas life was preferable certainly from a family point of view. I think Joe Sisco is the only one who probably hasn't served overseas, and Lawrence is next in respect to assignments abroad.

Q: You mean number and duration of assignments -

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. Before I met him, Lawrence had an assignment in Honduras: he began his career with a two-year tour there. We met in Belgrade, a three-year assignment. Then we were in Brussels for two years, and in 1976 he began his four years as ambassador to Yugoslavia. That, actually, constituted our overseas experience; the rest of the time was in the Washington wonderful building "Mother State."

Q: But you know, sometimes it's what you actually do, not the actual duration of time, and I understand that your husband was known as "Lawrence of Yugoslavia," if I have that right?

EAGLEBURGER: "Lawrence of Macedonia."

Q: But he was an expert on earthquakes, it seems -

EAGLEBURGER: He became one. His first post, Tegucigalpa, had an earthquake and a revolution, so I guess they felt he had some talent for dealing with natural and man-made disasters. He was the liaison between the embassy in Belgrade and the U.S. Army Engineer Corps that came in to put up housing in Skopje, which had had a major quake. The Macedonians coined the term "Lawrence of Macedonia," which we still tease him about and call him, on occasion!

Q: I think it will be for us [interesting] to know some of your experiences during your husband's service in Washington. Perhaps you could describe for us the nature of some of his assignments here -- he certainly had some very important responsibilities under Secretary of State Kissinger, also in the Pentagon.

EAGLEBURGER: He was very fortunate in that he did have some unusual assignments. I think the first one that remains a highlight for both of us was when Dean Acheson was brought back into State when France pulled out of NATO, to sort of see what he could do, in the way of damage control, basically. Lawrence was the line officer up in the Secretariat for European Affairs at the time and they asked him to go work for Acheson. It was the most wonderful experience with this fabulous man, this articulate man, this funny man ,who -- I used to say to Lawrence, if I ever would leave him for another man, it would be Dean Acheson. That began a relationship with the Achesons that, unfortunately now only with Alice Acheson, lasts to this day. One of the high points I think for both of us during that period will remain that when Dean Acheson died, Alice called and asked Lawrence to be a pallbearer. We were both so touched and honored by

that that to this day we remember it and remember him with the greatest love and affection and respect.

From then we went on to the Pentagon, which was an experience, dealing with military people, and had a wonderful time. Learned a great deal, made many good friends -

Q: Melvin Laird was Secretary of Defense?

EAGLEBURGER: Mel Laird was Secretary of Defense and he had a number of his Wisconsin friends in the Defense Department. Since Lawrence's mother had worked on Mel Laird's first run for Congress, every time Mel gave Lawrence a medal for something, he always referred to Lawrence's mother in the fondest terms. So we never really could figure out whether it was that Mel Laird liked Lawrence or whether he really liked his mother.

Then Lawrence had some time at the White House when Lyndon Johnson was President, worked for a wonderful man from Harvard named Ed Bathor and spent some very good "learning time" there discovering how the State Department could deal actually a lot better with the White House with respect to communications. Then he came back to the Department and worked for the Under Secretary -- at least I think he was Under Secretary then, Nicholas Katzenbach -- and learned a great deal there. Katzenbach was a very good friend of the Kennedys, and when Bobby was assassinated Katzenbach was in charge of funeral preparations, so I remember that dreadful time. I was very pregnant and went into the office to help organize it, lit candles for those who were to be at the gravesite. It was a terrible time but certainly a time one doesn't forget.

After that of course came Henry Kissinger, whom both of us love and adore and will till our last breath. There aren't many people who will say that about Henry Kissinger, I have to add, but this man is one of the brightest, one of the most caring people that it's been my privilege to know.

Q: Was he National Security Advisor at this point?

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. In fact, it was through Lawrence's work with Ed Bathor at the White House that when President Nixon was elected, Ed called Henry Kissinger and said, "There's one guy you've got to get and that's Eagleburger." So one fine day when we were both down with Asian flu and I had a three-month-old baby, the telephone rang and it was Henry asking Lawrence to come up to New York for an interview. That started a relationship that exists to this day. I guess I sum up Henry Kissinger by saying that the years spent with him in the Department and at the White House, even though Lawrence dealt with very serious problems, very serious issues, we had a lot of fun, we laughed a lot.

Q: Kissinger is known as very demanding.

EAGLEBURGER: He's terribly demanding, but if you know what you're talking about and you're willing to argue -- knowing of course you'd better be right -- then you have no problems with Henry. It's only if you don't know you're subject -- or I would have to add in fairness, too easily intimidated.

Q: We did hear a story that perhaps you can confirm, that at one period Lawrence was in the hospital and Kissinger said, "I need him, get him." He was told "he's in the hospital" and Kissinger said, "Get him anyway!" Is that true?

EAGLEBURGER: I think since I wasn't there, and Lawrence wasn't there, I can't confirm it, but I would have to say probably that's true. Henry's reaction is always right off the hip, and I think that's why a lot of times people were intimidated by him. He certainly would not have dragged Lawrence out of the hospital bed under any circumstances, but you had to understand the humor that Kissinger had -- a lot directed at himself, which was, and still is, in my view his saving grace, this wondrous ability to laugh at himself and not take himself too seriously. But you had to get beyond perhaps the public Henry to find -- all I can tell you about him in the end is that if I ever needed him, all I would have to do is pick up the phone and say, "Henry, I need you." He wouldn't ask why, where, he would say "I'm on my way." There are very few people you can say that about.

Q: Very few. Did you travel quite a bit with the Kissingers on international-

EAGLEBURGER: Lawrence, of course, did more than I did, because I had small babies which sort of hampered my style as far as being a world traveler goes, but occasionally I would coerce my mother to come and take care of the kids so I could go with him now and then. I went on a couple of African trips, and on one Mid-East shuttle, and it was wonderful to watch Kissinger in action. He certainly does it with a flair and a knowledge that, I have to tell you, in my view is unsurpassed. I think it will be a long time before we get a Henry Kissinger again.

Q: Well, of course we did have a Lawrence Eagleburger as Secretary of State. It was perhaps for too brief a time. This might be the moment to ask how was your perspective changed from his period as Secretary of State? You did some traveling with him during these past few months.

EAGLEBURGER: Well, this is going to sound really peculiar, I think, but my husband is basically the same man today as he was 30 years ago. By that I mean, what you see is what you get. Lawrence has never changed his style, his manner, the way he operates. So when he became Secretary, life went on as usual as far as the Eagleburgers were concerned. He does not accept, if you'll pardon the expression, -- homage gracefully. In fact, he really doesn't tolerate it. So it ended up we had a larger State Department family, if you will -- the Security people became our friends, we didn't know them before. A lot of other people on the seventh floor who, because they accompany the Secretary and "do" for him, we hadn't known before, are now our good friends.

So, as for my perspective, it really didn't change, except that perhaps people came up and talked to me more than they had before. Of course, one always recognizes those reasons. (laughter) Other than that I would have to say that life went on. From Lawrence's point of view, I would have to say that being Secretary was easier than being Deputy, because he made the decisions. He didn't have to convince anybody, excepting, of course, the President of the United States -- within the building. Once he decided that a certain policy was the way he wanted to go, he didn't have to convince anybody, he could go directly with Brent Scowcroft to the President. In that respect life became somewhat easier, although without a deputy he sort of ended up being not only the policy person but also trying to be the administrative person. To say that "his day was full," is not exaggeration: it was a very full plate that he had to work off of. But since he's always been sort of "antsy," he managed it. Certainly I don't think I would have liked to see him without a deputy for another four years.

Q: For an extended period of time.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes, because it was just difficult.

Q: But he came to that position exceptionally well prepared, because I think before he officially retired from the Foreign Service he was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Had he not also been Under Secretary for Management?

EAGLEBURGER: Yes.

Q: So he was in an unique position to know the Department well.

EAGLEBURGER: Frankly, I think that's the only reason he could manage it -- because he knew the Department. And that of course gives anybody an inch -- that you don't have to sort of learn while you earn. That doesn't make decisions go away but perhaps it allows you to make them a little more quickly. You can rely on your information previously learned as to how it works. To me it was a fine example of what the Foreign Service individual coming up through the ranks gains, what it takes the political appointees a couple of years to learn. We learn it as we come up through the ranks, whether by osmosis or by intelligence. So I think when Lawrence became Deputy, there was no "learning process" that he needed to go through.

Q: Perhaps you could describe for those of us who might not know, when he your husband did officially retire, the Secretary of States was George Shultz.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes.

Q: -- and he retired, and you all moved to New York.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. We moved there because Lawrence became president of

Kissinger Associates. The former Secretary had started a consulting firm, and when Lawrence decided it was time to leave, Henry asked that he come with him. Which we did, and had a really wonderful four years of what Lawrence called "easy work" compared to what he had done before.

So we had a taste of the good life, I would say, not just from the point of view of money but of him being home for dinner at six o'clock, having weekends, which we'd never had before, taking a vacation, which we never had done before. In fact, I think our first vacation to anywhere other than a weekend in our cabin in West Virginia, which I never really considered a "vacation," was sort of a belated honeymoon, because we never had that either!

Q: Where were you married, in Yugoslavia?

EAGLEBURGER: No, we came home to get married, but then Lawrence was asked to work for Dean Acheson, so he didn't feel that he could report on Monday and on Wednesday tell the former Secretary that he was going off on a honeymoon, because we were married shortly before that. So we ended up having a picnic in Rock Creek Park. (laughter)

Q: So where did you go on your "honeymoon" eventually?

EAGLEBURGER: We went to Hawaii. I tease him about it to this day that he waited so long to take me to a decent place far away from home with no kids!

Q: And then President Bush asked him to come back to be Deputy Secretary of State?

EAGLEBURGER: Well, we sort of tease each other about this, because when the President Bush was elected, I saw in newspapers and magazines speculation that Lawrence would be asked to come back into the U.S. Government, which, he told me, there wasn't a chance he would be asked to come back. Of course, you would think one learns: I believed him, and went merrily on my way not considering this in fact would be the case. Then, when I heard that Brent Scowcroft was to be National Security Advisor-

Q: He was also at Kissinger Associates?

EAGLEBURGER: Yes, a very good friend, and a close friend as a matter of fact. That made me sort of nervous, because I thought if Brent was going maybe there might be some truth to all the speculation that Lawrence would be going. Again I was assured by my husband that he would not be asked, there was no way he would be asked to go back. The fateful day came when the telephone rang and it was Jim Baker asking Lawrence to come to Washington to talk about becoming Deputy. When my husband hung up the phone and looked at me I said, "I knew it, I KNEW it! You're going, you're going --" He said, "All I'm going to do is talk; he's not going to ask." Well, while he was in Washington I called my friend the real estate agent because I knew the handwriting was

on the wall, we were going back to Washington. And so we did.

Q: And when you came back you bought -- what do you call it, a farm? You bought a country place in Charlottesville. How did that come about?

EAGLEBURGER: Well, first of all I had acquired a horse, and as people who know me well will testify, when an animal joins the family it's for life. That was one consideration, but in all candor, I really didn't want to be part of the Washington scene again to the extent that I had been previously. And I wanted, frankly, was an excuse to be able to pick and choose when I would come to town and have to do what we all have to do, those dinners, et cetera et cetera. So, with my husband's support, I thought that from the point of view of having a child still in high school-

Q: Yes, you had two young sons.

EAGLEBURGER: Exactly. One was already out of high school, so it didn't matter where we lived. Jason was still in high school and I didn't want him part of the Washington scene. I wanted him to be Jason Eagleburger and who cares what his father did. So all of that added up to going a couple of hours' drive out of Washington and leading sort of a separate life, or a dual life perhaps would be a better term.

I have to tell you, I ended up having the best of both worlds because I'd hear birds singing, and horses nickering, and I'd look at mountains, and then I'd go up to Washington and see friends and go to parties and enjoy myself thoroughly.

Q: To the White House for official dinners and-

EAGLEBURGER: Whichever. But I have to tell you when I climbed in the car the next morning to drive back to Charlottesville, it was with great anticipation. Lawrence, unfortunately, would only be at home on weekends, and his "weekend" was from about four o'clock on Saturday to Sunday at four o'clock, so he didn't get quite the same benefit from Charlottesville as the rest of the family. For that I'm a bit sorry. I don't know whether it's selfish or not but I think we as a family are better off for having chosen Charlottesville as our main station in life, and having an apartment in Washington.

Q: You have touched on some other things that I know are of interest. As an ambassador's wife abroad, what were some of the activities that you participated in at post, and how heavy were the representational responsibilities?

EAGLEBURGER: Well, you know the old adage, you do what you do according to your own desires and with the support of your family and your husband. I basically had two small children then, so I became very, very involved in the international school in Belgrade and ended up, as I always do, as the PTA person, the board person, the room mother, et cetera, because I have always felt that this was crucial regardless of where I found myself with the children to become involved with the school.

So I did that to a very large degree. Secondly, we had a wonderful bazaar that we used to put on annually, all the embassies, and for some reason the Americans, whoever they were, always ended up in charge unless you left town in good time. So I ran that for the period I was there, and we ended up making almost \$100,000 a year.

Q: In Belgrade!

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. This was a very large operation, and we bought hospital equipment and fixed up orphanages and bought bandages and, you know, did the usual good works. Then of course there was the embassy family. Both Lawrence and I felt very, very strongly that the line between staff and officer should be as blurred as possible. We always had many luncheons and dinners with both, so that we got to know them as people, not just as jobs within the embassy. That took up a lot of time.

I tried to really know the spouses, because I felt that Belgrade had become sufficiently cosmopolitan, if that's the word, for people to sort of feel that everything was in place , that you didn't really need the kind of networking you did in the old days in Belgrade, where there wasn't much to buy, not much to do, things were a bit tough.

Q: Belgrade was not a hardship post when you were there the second time?

EAGLEBURGER: Unlike the first time, the second time it was not a hardship post. I have to tell you, serving twice at same post was very different, because Belgrade in the early 60s was very different than Belgrade in the late 70s.

Q: And you yourself were there in the Foreign Service, working in the embassy.

EAGLEBURGER: Exactly. And I have say, I believe the people were a much more cohesive group in the early 60s, partially due to the changes that have gone on vis-a-vis the women's movement, et cetera. Certainly I felt there was a need for more networking among the women.

Q: When did you come back from Yugoslavia?

EAGLEBURGER: In 1981, when Ronald Reagan was elected and appointed Al Haig as his Secretary of State. He called Lawrence and asked him to come back, so he left for home in January '81 and I followed soon afterwards.

Q: We've been talking a lot about your role as the spouse of a very accomplished Foreign Service officer, but I think we would also like to know, from your perspective, about the very strong movement you started to address some of the issues of Foreign Service family members, and in particular, spouse employment. Can you recall how that began?

EAGLEBURGER: Well, when I came home, having been overseas as an ambassador's

wife sort of gives you a somewhat different perspective, certainly for me, than I had had before. And you and I got together and were talking about some of the things we would like to see changed, improved, and so on. I think the focus that we eventually reached was -- for me in large part -- due to the fact that when I arrived in Belgrade, that embassy was divided in two camps: those women who decided for their own reasons that the only way their self-esteem could be enhanced or justified would be to do no representational activity at the post and that they were absolutely gung ho to be employed in some manner. The other group were the women, again for their reasons, that staying home with children, doing representational work and the like, was the way they wanted to go.

So far so good, in the abstract, but the trouble was they were making life very difficult for one another. The hurtful comments, the nastiness; it was like walking into an armed camp, with two armies facing each other. There was no empathy, no understanding, certainly at least from those who were talking in rather strong terms, on both sides, I must say.

I was rather floored to see this going on, and one of the first things I did was to call everybody together and say that I thought this had to be resolved, that there had to be understanding and empathy for everybody's position and beyond anything else, tolerance. That led me to begin thinking about the role of women in the Foreign Service both from the point of view of employment and from that of somebody who really felt that they wanted to do the representational work.

I started to think, not so much in concrete terms but about how this could be resolved, not to come up with concrete ideas at that point but only recognizing that there was a problem -- which I had not recognized before, I must admit. That sort of put me on the road, so that when we came home, and you and I got together and began to chat, I think from that point we became more focused as to, first, identifying what the problems might be.

Q: I don't remember exactly when the policy for SMAs' separate maintenance allowance began, but it certainly was along in that period that we began to see spouses were employed in the U.S. and some were, for family or financial reasons, were declining to go overseas. Obviously, it was a problem involving payments if you stayed in the States as against if you left your job and went abroad. We began to see fewer and fewer spouses willing to go to post.

EAGLEBURGER: I think that's true, and if my memory is correct, that policy was initiated during Henry Kissinger's time. When we went to Belgrade, we had examples of exactly what you're talking about. There were at least three officers who I recall offhand were there without wives. I'm not going to say even remotely that these officers did a poor job, but I would have to say I thought it was an abnormal kind of concept. To me, married people belong together, otherwise where was the marriage?

Q: And I'm sure it was hard for those men to concentrate completely on their job if they were concerned about their families at home.

EAGLEBURGER: Absolutely. At least in these cases they all were married and had children; it wasn't just the spouse they left behind. I am not saying this is good or bad, I'm only saying that this alerted my mind to something going on here that perhaps we needed to look at.

Q: Changes in society.

EAGLEBURGER: -- something that the Foreign Service, not being terribly adventuresome, had not really focused on. It struck me as being piecemeal rather than looking at the problem as a whole and coming up with solutions that might allow people to make choices that would have a wider range. I think this is one of the reasons that a small group of us got together (I think we were five or six at the very beginning.) to try and figure out what basically the problems were, and what, if any, solutions or recommendations we could come up with that might address the changing role of the spouse in the Foreign Service.

Q: And I think the Family Liaison Service had been established during the previous two years or so, and Marilyn Holmes, who was at that time director of FLO, participated in these early discussions.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes, she became part of our group.

Q: And there were the two issues. Initially, there were quite a few demands for just recognition of the work that Foreign Service spouses were doing, and that led to the recognition that in the United States if you were going to pay the mortgage and educate the children, in many cases there needed to be some provision for spouses to be employed. and compensated.

EAGLEBURGER: I think that's absolutely true, and as I recall, Gay Vance, wife of the Secretary, had started sort of a brown bag lunch once a month for wives of senior officers, to which I went. We began to touch on these issues. Some women were very uncomfortable, others were very angry that things were changing, and they didn't know how to cope with it. I remember being somewhat amused when one senior wife suggested that a pin might be nice to hand out to wives in recognition of their contribution; and maybe if we were lucky we could get a tea with the wife of the Secretary.

It was at that point, I think, that my feelings coalesced and I thought, "Wait a minute. These aren't answers. These are little gifts that are supposed to soothe." I felt that now we had to get to the point of making some serious recommendations and proposals. Whether or not we'd be successful was another issue, but we had to at least make the attempt.

Q: Yet, as I recall, -- and I think Patty Ryan, the president of AAFSW, was also in the group then.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes.

Q: We did prepare an amendment to the Foreign Service Act of 1980 for spouse compensation allowance. Do you recall some of the details of that?

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. I think what sort of started us on compensation was to try and address that part of the problem that would help the women who really wanted to do representational work but who perhaps for financial reasons took a PIT position or felt that in this day and age their work should be compensated, and therefore felt they would only do the minimum. Or maybe nothing at all, that the husband should go to a restaurant. There was a case in Belgrade where when the husband gave a dinner at home, the wife hired a cook and she sat upstairs, she would not participate. Feelings were running very high, which I think now people forget, that it was a very emotional issue.

Q: I remember that one of the factors that did get included in the Foreign Service Act of 1980, and some of the language was in the Section 905 of the 1980 Foreign Service Act, stated that unfair as it is to ask the wife of a Foreign Service member to perform functions without pay, it's much more unfair to ask her to incur expenses without the possibility of reimbursement. As I recall, everything had to be the art of the possible- (end of tape)

We were alluding to the provisions in the 1980 Foreign Service Act to try to reimburse members of the Service for the expenses they incur on behalf of the U.S. Government. As I recall, that led Patty Ryan and you and me to visit a deputy assistant secretary of the Treasury to discuss possibilities of having an IRS ruling that would allow Foreign Service families to deduct their justifiable expenses from their income tax.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes, that's true. What also led us to it is that with a lot of embassies -- the Canadians come to mind -- the wife receives an allowance for getting her hair done, buying dresses, things you normally wouldn't do on a Tuesday night at eight o'clock. The Canadian Government felt that since these were expenses incurred on behalf of the Government, they would pay for them... When I heard this, it stayed in my memory. We all know that normally we don't go dancing in long dresses and black tie to the local pub: these clothes are examples of expenses strictly related to the business we are in. So we decided to try the IRS. The first step, we learned, was getting an okay from the Treasury Department, which fortunately we did. To shorten the story, the IRS granted us the right to deduct these expenses -- babysitting, for instance, which I like many of us in Washington in those early years could ill afford to pay for four nights a week, or buy my wonderful long dresses and go traipsing out to wine and dine. So at least if there was some relief on the tax return, though it wouldn't compensate you 100%, it was better than nothing.

That is still on the books now, and since there was a ruling for us, though not a general one, nevertheless it is the groundwork, and people can put this in and IRS is very likely to agree to it. So I would suggest that all Foreign Service spouses, male or female, buying a

black tie or a long dress or hiring babysitters, take advantage of this.

Q: Yes. I have seen that as of March 14, 1984 the Department of State sent a Department notice to all posts throughout the world informing them that the Department has learned that the Internal Revenue Service has issued a private letter ruling. The IRS notes that the 1946 Foreign Service Act authorized representation allowances to employees only. However, we succeeded in getting into the 1980 Act the authorization to pay representation expenses of adult family members.

I think that encouraged us that we didn't have to be passive, things happened to us, but that we actually could make a difference in our lives and in those of Foreign Service family members. That led us to grapple with the issue of representation of senior wives.

EAGLEBURGER: Yes, exactly. I think that sort of gave us a "high," if you will, to take on bigger and better problems. You're right: in the beginning we rather focused on senior wives, but it became evident very, very quickly to all of us that to address only compensation for senior wives was not the way to go.

Q: I believe we had started this grassroots programs because one of the dilemmas always is that the Department, or the foreign affairs missions, because we included all foreign affairs missions, did not have the constituency in the United States. But I remember that you used your contacts and name recognition and that as a group a few of us called on every member of the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees.

EAGLEBURGER: To back up just slightly, the impetus came sort out of left field for me in getting this into public awareness. And it was that we were at a dinner party one night at the home of Kay Graham, publisher of The Washington Post, and sitting at my table was Meg Greenfield, [key editorial writer of The Post]. I can't tell you exactly what led to our conversation but all of a sudden we were talking about wives in the Foreign Service and how they worked and got nothing for their work, recognition, money, zilch. And Meg looked at me and said, "Why don't you write an article?" "I'll write it."

Q: And Meg was editor of the editorial page of "The Post."

EAGLEBURGER: So, there was my challenge. Needless to say, I ran home, got out the yellow pad and the ballpoint pen and started. I must tell you, it was a labor of love, but it was labor, and I sent it off to Meg. Much to my great surprise, not one word was taken out, and she ran it as it was, and it was pretty long.

Q: That article, I think, was called "Mrs. Foreign Service: Two for the Price of One."

EAGLEBURGER: Yes, "Two for the Price of One." That started the public reaction to the whole idea of the role of the wife in the Foreign Service. I say "wife" because I must say it may be generational but for the most part we are talking about wives.

Q: I think at that period there were very, very few male spouses, so we did use that term.

EAGLEBURGER: Well, I try to be modern and say “spouses” but I slip and say “wife.”

Q: I remember that article. Representative Tom Lantos, Democrat from California, on his own initiative introduced that op ed piece and editorial into the Congressional Record on March 8, 1984, with some favorable remarks of his own. He said that he wanted to introduce a proposal in the House of Representatives, and Sen. Charles Mathias, Republican of Maryland, planned to do the same in the Senate. Do you remember what the next developments were?

EAGLEBURGER: I have to tell you the next developments were money. When you go up to the Hill you not only have to talk to the people and get them all lined up on your side but you have to get the money people on your side. So one of the very first persons I was to call on was Henry Hyde, Republican from Illinois. I approached him with great trepidation, not that I don’t like him personally, I do, but he’s a very conservative man, and I thought I would have a very hard sell and perhaps end up with a “no.”

I will never forget that day. I walked in ready for battle, trying to be charming to try and get this man on my side, because he was the House member who held the purse strings. Much to my surprise, he graciously escorted me to his so far, sat down, and before I could say a word he looked at me and said, “Marlene, I know why you’re here. You don’t have to go through it all.” And I thought, “Oh Lord, I’m dead, it’s going to be a big fat no.” He looked at me with his eyes twinkling and he said, “The women in the Foreign Service do the most wonderful job. Anything you want.” I couldn’t believe it! I just sort of sputtered, “Thank you” and he said, “Be in touch, you’ve got my support. If you need a co-sponsor of the bill, I will be happy to do so.” Needless to say I danced out of his office.

Life is funny... Those you think aren’t going to support you are the ones who come through. Senator Biden is a very good friend, I like him enormously, and when I called on him I anticipated a resounding “yes.” I did not go in with battle in my eyes, charm on my lips, I spent an hour with him and I got a “no.” So you never know. That’s why you have to go up the Hill and you have to hit all the bases and be prepared to be surprised. But on balance I would say we got a lot of support.

Q: Yes, I think we did, and I would just like to quote from something your husband said regarding this, in an address before the American Association of Foreign Service Women in January 1984. He was asked how he felt about this proposal to pay Foreign Service spouses overseas. He called it “the next logical step” and “something that is going to happen.” It was a few weeks after that that you endorsed pay for “Mrs. Foreign Service” in an op ed column in “The Washington Post.” So throughout this process you had your husband’s support?

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. I’m not going to tell you I told him my proposal and he jumped up and clapped his hands with glee. He had to think about it, but not terribly long, and I

must say he came out with complete support for the proposal. Not that it would have deterred me but it certainly made it easier for me.

Q: Well, I think mainly because we valued his judgment. He always had a very keen political sense, and that was very important because this was a period, as we're experiencing again, of hard economic times and the difficulty was a question of priorities. In fact, as I recall, this proposal was introduced by Sen. Mathias and legislation passed establishing a pilot project and directing the Secretary of State to implement this pilot project. But a very few weeks later, Gramm-Rudman was voted and there never were any funds provided to implement the pilot project, it's still on the books but unappropriated.

EAGLEBURGER: What I'm about to say is somewhat controversial but I will have to say, again being as candid as I can, that while we were in government, the process that we were following, namely, compensation for spouses, not just jobs but compensation for those who decided that rather than do a particular job already existing in a U.S. embassy, that representation would be viewed as a job worthy of pay.

This was adulterated, if you will, when we left. Again, I shouldn't be surprised, I know this town very well, but when you leave office, be it State Department or any other agency, you leave your power behind. And it became evident to me very quickly that the direction I had hoped we would continue to move in was being diluted and changed. This is not to point any fingers, it's merely to state the obvious.

Frankly, had I known what was going to happen I would have pushed much harder for a resolution before we left government. Unfortunately, you live and learn. I'm not going to say that I think the Foreign Service Association proposal that was finally submitted is bad; I don't. But to me, there was an intellectual arrogance in the proposal. In other words, there was this underlying premise, in my view, that only a "job that existed in a U.S. embassy that was recognized as a job" would be good enough for the spouse. In fact this implied that anybody who wanted to do the crummy work of representation wasn't good enough; it was a stepchild rather than a legitimate child.

And I understand it, because this is a cultural thing we're talking about here. I don't mean to hurt anybody's feelings but I would have to say that for me the whole thrust of the pilot program was entirely in the wrong direction, because it did not address the underlying fact that however you slice it, representation is here to stay, and whatever other pilot projects you put in, as far as jobs are concerned has nothing to do with the issue I was talking about. So I, frankly, was not disappointed when the pilot project was not funded.

Q: That provided for, contracts them to-

EAGLEBURGER: With existing job. In other words, if the budget and fiscal officer was leaving post and there was a wife there who could fulfill the job description, she would get the job. Well, that should be part of any embassy as far as I'm concerned, but it

doesn't address the issue that I was addressing -- namely, that whether or not you're the budget and fiscal officer and have that job, you still have representation; and that was ignored.

Q: That's true. I think there was a sector that just couldn't figure out how to justify that activity. And if you'll recall, during the first few months of 1984 we devised a very active media strategy that the way to get responsible people in the Department and also in Congress to understand what we felt were the needs and problems needing solution, was to set up quite a few media interviews to educate these important target audiences. At that time you were on the "Today Show," "Good Morning America," "Nightline," and in fact this generated an extensive discussion, because in one case you were on with First Ladies Mrs Ford and Mrs. Carter and in other instances you were on with two Congressional wives, Mrs. Philip Sharp and Mrs. Stephen Solarz, and it generated a great deal of public discussion of what are the roles of wives of university presidents, of members of Congress, First Ladies, Vice Presidents. I think it was revealing of all the discussion that was going on in our society of how you address this; and it's not just "a job in an office."

EAGLEBURGER: I couldn't agree with you more. I was grateful for all the public discussion it generated, and I don't mean to belittle the contribution of the Congressional wives or First Ladies or whomever. But I have to say to some degree it diluted our message: I don't think you can equate a spouse who goes overseas and spends a career overseas with one who essentially spends most of her career, be it as corporate wife or whatever, here in the States. The options are greater here no matter how you slice it. I'm not asserting they have perfect choices but they certainly have more choices than the spouse abroad has.

Q: Yes. I think, looking back on it historically, I also recall that during that period in the early 80s, that was also when legislation was considered to provide a pension for divorced wives, some of whom had spent their entire career overseas never having opportunity to be employed in the States or to earn Social Security credits, and so had neither pensions nor Social Security, so they could not provide for their old age. This provided another motivation, as I recall, for having some way that these spouses or wives who were serving abroad working for the U.S. Government could have some provisions for their old age.

EAGLEBURGER: Again, I think, it comes down in this day and age to be able to fend for oneself. That's the bottom line -- to be able to have, whether Social Security, pension, Medicare when you're 65 -- there's a long list of items you could include. But to me the bottom line is: even though you're married, you should be able if you so desire to be able to have something that belongs to you that no one can take away under any circumstances. That, of course, does not exist today.

Q: Yes. I remember that I responded to a letter to the editor in the Washington Post early in 1986 in which I commented that we were not looking for any sort of handout, we

wanted to be responsible for ourselves; and that this was an opportunity that as things existed we did not have and had to be offered to a broader universe of us.

EAGLEBURGER: During this period we had a certain number of wives who did not agree with our proposal. I'm not certain why, frankly. I've thought about it then and now, and I have to say that perhaps it seems like the idea that "I did it without any compensation, I went to Ouagadougou with seven children, no money, et cetera, and I managed. Now here you come and seem to imply that I was a fool to do it."

You know, this is part of human nature. Again, I'm not pointing fingers but what I'm saying is, our society has changed and if we want to continue to have the best and the brightest come to be part of the Foreign Service family, then you have to reflect the changes that exist in society as a whole. If you don't address them, whether it's jobs in the embassy, compensation for representation, home leave, child care, et cetera , all the issues that face the United States also face the Foreign Service people. What you and I put up with 20 years ago wouldn't be understood today.

That's not to say that we were in the wrong or that perhaps we were exploited. You reflect the society in which you live, and my point is that the Foreign Service, in order to be the Foreign Service we all want it to be, has to reflect the changes in society to the extent that they can. I feel they have not gone as far as they can.

Q: What do you see in the future? What would you recommend particularly from your perspective of the time when you were the wife of the Secretary of State?

EAGLEBURGER: To be candid, had President Bush been reelected and Lawrence stayed on as Secretary of State and gone through confirmation and all that, that was on my list: to begin again. Frankly, from a position of even greater power. Unfortunately, it didn't work out that way.

So what would I like to see? People always reinvent the wheel. I hear murmurings and talk of -- you know, more ideas about jobs, and perhaps there are things we can do like compensating senior wives, et cetera. I would say, "Ladies, Gentlemen, the wheel doesn't need to be reinvented. A lot of hard work and thoughtfulness went into the proposal we presented. I would only suggest that they read this." Because we went through the soul-searching questions of only paying senior wives, and I say that's wrong. Mind you, having been a senior wife, I understand why they are singled out. There's no question in my mind that if a job becomes available in the embassy and the wife of the ambassador or the DCM applies for it and gets it, on her own merits, I should add, having the qualifications, there is always that niggling doubt in the back of people's minds that the reason that person, male or female, got the job was not because they deserved it or could do it better but because of their relationship to the power structure, i.e., to the ambassador or the DCM.

So I understand it. It's very difficult for a senior wife to take a job. If you were to say,

“Well, she should go on the outside and perhaps take a job with a U.S. corporation,” that same doubt persists; you can’t get away from it.

Q: Would there would be a conflict of interest? Was she selected because-

EAGLEBURGER: Exactly. And that to me is a very onerous umbrella to have over your head. In my view, then, the only way you address this is by having compensation, a contract, however you want to frame it, whereby the ambassador’s wife gets compensation for doing her work but the junior wife also gets it if she so chooses for doing her representational work. No line is drawn.

Then I think if you have that in place, when you look at the “regular jobs that exist in the embassy,” because there is this cross-section of jobs available, representation or within the staff, some of that niggling will subside because people will feel that everybody has a shot at doing what they want to do and what they feel they have the talent to do.

So I think the idea of paying only senior wives is a very bad idea, and I would not recommend it. I don’t think it will sell on the Hill, I don’t think it will sell in the Department, and in my view it certainly wouldn’t among the vast majority of wives who perform representation on a more junior level. They do this for nothing while the senior wives get paid for it?

Q: Yes, that’s really untenable.

EAGLEBURGER: I don’t think it would fly.

Q: But you think some sort of a combination of the Foreign Service Associates program would include representation identified as a job within the embassy that needs to be done? Because as it is now, I believe at least historically it’s been true, and I believe still is, the Foreign Service officers are judged in their efficiency report on how well they perform representation.

EAGLEBURGER: Again, to me, it’s how many angels can sit on the head of a pin. If you have a good marriage, how can you in good conscience tell your husband that you don’t plan to do anything while you’re in Somalia, or wherever, that you are going to sit in your bedroom or in the parlor while he entertains foreigners? A good marriage is going to find it hard to withstand that kind of discord. It’s tough enough being overseas, it’s hard enough on families dealing with new cultures, new language, whatever. Now you’re going to add, “You do your job and, Sweetheart, I plan to sit here because I’m not doing anything.” Most wives will not make that choice. So we’re right back again to doing the work and not getting anything for it.

As far as the Associates program is concerned, it should be all-encompassing. There should be as much weight given to doing representational work as there is doing a job in the embassy. Both are necessary to the successful conclusion of promoting U.S. interests

abroad. One does not really function without the other. So to divide them and make one a stepchild and one not a "preferred child," if you will, to me it's just an untenable situation. If we can't have the whole ball of wax, then I don't think we should have any wax. You cannot single out some jobs as being good and other jobs as being schlock work, you are giving people the wrong message. I think that's terrible.

Q: Well, from your perspective, certainly the people you have met and worked with in the last few years of the Bush administration, do you think that either AAFSW or FLO should make an effort to develop a combination program and to go forward with it?

EAGLEBURGER: Absolutely. Time will tell. In the atmosphere in Washington now with the new President and what he has articulated, I would say that now is the time, if indeed he puts his money where his mouth is and it is people first, et cetera. This is the time to come up with a combined package, well thought out, fair; it must be equitable. If it's not equitable, it will not last five minutes anywhere, be that in the Executive branch or the Hill. They're not going to buy it unless their perception is that we have covered all the bases. I would like to see a combined package, so that as many options are given to the spouses abroad as there can be.

Q: Yes. I think that we have often said, from the early days and it's still valid now, that if we decide that a viable Foreign Service that reflects American society is in our national interest, then we all have to do whatever is possible to keep a viable Foreign Service of the best and the brightest. And that's going to involve keeping families together, because that is representative of our society as a whole.

EAGLEBURGER: From what I understand, most FSOs coming in today are unlike my husband and your husband, who looked upon the Service as a career. They came in as young men, they expected to get their gold watch and leave at the appropriate time. This is not the philosophy the young men and young women are coming in with today. First of all, they're older. Someone told me recently that the average age is around 30, which is incomprehensible to me. Lawrence was the oldest member of his Foreign Service class; when he came in, he was 27.

As a result, these are not youngsters starting out, they have had other jobs, they know the other options that are out there, they're much more savvy when it comes to thinking about making perhaps two or three career changes in their work life, where that wasn't the case years ago. Therefore, if you're going to keep them, and I think we'd all agree that it's in the Government's interest that we keep them, then these issues have to be addressed. It is surrounding them with good things, good options, and the more good options you give these young families, I think the odds increase that they will decide to stay.

If you're intent on making life difficult, where the officer has to leave his family because of the wife's career, and maybe she doesn't have a career, maybe she's working because the kids have to go to college, you must give them options so they don't have to make those choices. The only way I see of doing it, and perhaps there are others, in my view the

only way is to make sure that the options available for the “dependent spouse” are wide and varied so that we cover all the bases that we can. I don’t think we’re doing it now.

Q: Well, I think you’ve set up a very good challenge for the future. We certainly have appreciated talking with you. I wonder if you might answer a couple more questions: What is your view of the female Foreign Service officer? Do you think she has equal opportunities, that we’ve had enough women ambassadors?

EAGLEBURGER: I think it’s obvious that the answer is no. Life is difficult, you know. There are no easy answers. I would only say that it’s getting better. I would hope, in fact, again, I’ve just read that in one of the latest classes entering the Foreign Service, the majority were women.

Q: Really?

EAGLEBURGER: I mean, this is unheard of. So I would say we’re on the road. I don’t think you and I, amongst many of our colleagues, will be absolutely satisfied until our whole society looks at, regardless of gender, whether the person does the job, and that whether that person wears a skirt or trousers has no bearing on the job at hand. We still have a way to go, but I think through our recruitment processes we’re making strides. It’s going to take a while for these women to reach a senior level before we can look for more ambassadors, more senior people such as Assistant Secretaries, that kind of rank, but it will come. Because they’re there.

Q: We often think in the United States that we’re very progressive, but especially in Foreign Service even though we want to advance women on merit, there are foreign countries that aren’t ready, as for example in the Arab world, some were quick to jump on Ambassador April Glaspie in view of what happened in Iraq?

EAGLEBURGER: I think we’re still dealing with what I would consider a generational problem, because you have to realize that a lot of people who are in charge, whether here or abroad, are of a generation where it’s somewhat threatening to have females in any position of power. I would only say that in regard to some of the countries where that really is a difficult problem, obviously you have to be sensitive to it, and I’m not going to say that I think a woman should be sent, for instance, to an Arab country that doesn’t want her. After all, we’re not in the business of promoting women’s rights, we’re in the business of diplomacy. So I would say, send them where they can do the job. It’s not fair for anybody to send a female to a country where she isn’t wanted, respected, or listened to. It’s not fair to that woman, or the host country, and certainly not to the U.S. citizen if the job is not being done. So I think you do what you can where you can, keeping in mind the mission but not sacrificing the mission to further anybody’s rights, number one, and number two, promoting them, hoping, working for change but not with a baseball bat.

Q: I would have one last question: You’re in the unique position of having served with your husband when he was a career Foreign Service officer and later a political

appointee. Do you have an over-all perspective on how political appointees have worked in the Foreign Service?

EAGLEBURGER: I have to say there were some political appointees that were terrific, some that were duds, but in my next breath I have to say that in the Service there were some ambassadors that were terrific and some that were duds. “People are people.” I’m not going to assert that every political appointee is terrific, but I feel the same way about Foreign Service officers: there are a lot of duds out there that have gone beyond their capabilities.

And if the Foreign Service has one flaw that I see as deep and wide, it’s thinking nobody else can do foreign policy. The reason it’s a flaw is because it clouds their judgment. There are many people who come from private business who are in positions of power in the Executive Branch, whether in State Department or anywhere else, who do a fabulous job. Number one, they’re bright, they’re smart; number two, they’re close to the President.

You cannot “discount” a political appointee just because he didn’t come up through the ranks. On the other hand, you can’t put a halo over a Foreign Service officer who’s come up through the ranks, either. People should be judged on the job they do. That is not to say that I think the majority of ambassadors or Assistant Secretaries should be political appointees. Not at all. The situation should be equitable, and frankly heavy on the professional side. But I wish the Foreign Service would stop worrying about numbers.

Q: Percentages.

EAGLEBURGER: Percentages. I mean, this to me is, first of all, futile. I don’t care who’s in the Oval Office; this is a fact of life. Instead of moaning, do your job, do it well, and you’re going to be fine; don’t worry about a political appointee. He’s not going to take your place any time.

Q: I did promise that that was the last question, but again looking to the future, I know you have one son of age who’s probably not going to choose to enter the Service; your second son perhaps we’re not sure yet what he’s going to choose to do. Would you like to see a son of yours enter the Service? We haven’t touched on terrorism, either, on how the facts of life in the Foreign Service have changed so much. Would you have any comments on that, as a final-

EAGLEBURGER: Well, if I had any hope for my children as far as what they do with their lives, what I have been preaching all their lives is, “find something you love to do with a passion and do it,” whether that’s the Foreign Service or whatever. I have relished my time with the U.S. Government. I can’t put that on my children or anybody else; it belongs to me. I would hope that if they chose it they would end up after 30 years like we have, grateful for the privilege, because it’s been a wonderful time, an interesting time, a significant time, and I wouldn’t change it.

Q: Thank you very much, Marlene. I think this will be a great addition to our Foreign Service life oral history.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: Lawrence S. Eagleburger

Spouse's Position: Secretary of State

Spouse's service: 1957-1984 and 1989-1993

Your service: 1962-1968, 1968-1964, and 1989-1993

Status: Spouse of Retiree

Posts:

Mrs. Eagleburger:

1962-1965 Belgrade, Yugoslavia

1965-1968 Washington, DC (European Bureau)

Secretary Eagleburger:

1957-1959 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

1959-1962 Washington, DC, INR (Intelligence and Research, Serbo-Croatian language training)

1962-1965 Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Secretary and Mrs. Eagleburger together:

Washington, DC:

1966-1967 Special Assistant to Dean Acheson

1968-1969 National Security Council Assistant Henry Kissinger

1969-1971 Brussels, Belgium (POLAD/USNATO)

1971-1973 Deputy Assistant Secretary, Defense Department

1973 Special Assistant to the Secretary

1973-1976 Special Assistant and Under Secretary for Management

1977-1981 Belgrade, Yugoslavia (AEP)

1981-1983 Assistant Secretary for European Affairs

1983-1984 Under Secretary for Political Affairs

1984-1989 [Non-government - President, Kissinger Associates]

1989-1992 Deputy Secretary of State

1992 Acting Secretary of State September

1992-Jan. 20, 1993 Secretary of State

Place/date of birth: August 10, 1936 - Chicago, Illinois

Maiden name: Heinemann

Parents: George and Anne Heinemann, retail bakery owner

Schools: Sophie Newcomb (Tulane), Louisiana

Profession: Foreign Service spouse

Date/place of marriage: April 23, 1966 - Washington, DC

Children:

Lawrence Andrew

Lawrence Jason

End of interview