

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

PATRICIA A. MURPHY

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi
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Ms. Murphy and her husband, Craig S. Tymeson, both State Department Foreign Service Officers, served together in “Tandem Assignments”. She discusses some of the special considerations in such assignments, as well as her preparations for a tandem assignment with her husband in Fiji

Background.

Born in Albany, New York
State University of New York (SUNY), Albany, NY
Cornell University
Married Craig S. Tymeson in 1987
Entered the Foreign Service in 1981

Special Considerations in tandem assignments

Pregnancies and child care
Foreign language facility
Child care
Promotions; Stateside or abroad
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“Spousal obligations”
Spousal groups at post
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Posts of Assignment

Patricia Murphy

Bamako, Mali	May/1981 – Nov. 1982
Warsaw, Poland	Aug. 1983 – Aug. 1985
Washington, DC (tandem)	Aug. 1985 – June, 1988
Suva, Fiji (prospective)	Aug., 1988 (tandem)

Craig Tymerson

Lisbon, Portugal	April, 1981- April, 1983
Port of Spain, Trinidad	June, 1983 – July, 1985
Washington, DC (tandem)	Jan., 1986 – July, 1988
Suva, Fiji (Prospective)	Aug., 1988 (tandem)

INTERVIEW

Q: This is Jewell Fenzi, Tuesday, June 14, 1988. I'm interviewing Patty Murphy in the Foreign Service Lounge at the Department of State. Patty is a Foreign Service Officer. She is a tandem couple with her spouse, Craig Tymeson. They have been assigned to Suva, Fiji, where Patty will be the Consular Officer and Craig will be the Administrative Officer. They are the same grade. O-3. However, in Fiji, Patty's job is ranked O-2. Craig is going to have a consular commission to be able to help her in the Consular Section.

Patty is pregnant, expecting a baby any day. (Three weeks after the interview, Patty Murphy had her baby by Caesarian section and, three weeks later flew to Fiji to take over the Consular Section.)

MURPHY: I have to tuck my feet up so they won't swell.

Q: Okay. We have been talking about you more as spouse than as tandem couple. Where does your job -- which has priority at this time when you're moving and you're about to have a baby. Which has priority: - your job or getting your family from Washington to Fiji, getting your dog into quarantine --

MURPHY: Right now, all I can think about is the baby -- getting things together and going. I'm not thinking about the job at all, which is unfortunate, but --

Q: When did that take over? Just in the last couple of weeks, or-?

MURPHY: The last couple of weeks. I think it's (she laughs) partially hormonal, so I think it will go away. I'm very interested in the job and I'm looking forward to it. It looks like a fascinating assignment. But first things first. First, I've got to have the baby, and when the chips are down.

Q: That's right. Explain to me now, you and Craig are both what level?

MURPHY: We're both Three's.

Q: And the job that you're going to is a --

MURPHY: Two.

Q: Were they willing to do that to get you both assigned as a tandem? They used to do that in the Service, and I take it they still do. Or were you a special case?

MURPHY: I was a special case, I think. One of the reasons that I was very "saleable" for this job is because I speak French and it's a job in East Asia. Very few EAP [East Asia/Pacific] people speak good French, and part of my district is in French Polynesia and New Caledonia. They desperately need someone who can talk to the French there.

Q: Will you be traveling too?

MURPHY: Yes.

Q: Any idea how much of the time?

MURPHY: I guess every few months I'll be going somewhere in the district.

Q: For a couple of days?

MURPHY: A week, or less.

Q: Now, are you going to take the baby with you? Or --

MURPHY: No, Craig is going to watch the baby. He -- well, we'll have a nanny. So, between the two of them they'll manage, I guess. I don't know if he knows how difficult that could be (she laughs) but he'll find out.

Q: Do you know anything about the household help and the nurses in Fiji?

MURPHY: Yes, from what I hear, they're very good. A lot of Third World women are much better with children, much more patient than I am.

Q: That's what their expectations are.

MURPHY: I'm looking forward to it. In many ways it's much easier than having a baby and trying to deal with working here, in the States. Child care is difficult to find, expensive, and not very good quality. In Fiji it's good quality, and not expensive.

Q: And so really, while your children are small, it's much to your advantage [to be assigned abroad] -- How will that work? I mean, how difficult was it for you and Craig to get this assignment in Fiji where you'll both have good jobs?

MURPHY: It was not easy. I had to deal with my Bureau, CA, which has a large voice in Consular assignments, and talk to them. And also to EAP [East Asia/Pacific]. And Craig had to talk to EAP and EAP/EX. We basically had to promote ourselves a lot. It took some time, but it worked out all right. My Bureau backed me, which was probably the most important thing, and said that I was doing a good job and they would really like to see me out there. The language helped with the Desk. So it worked. But we did have to do a lot of planning and a lot of work on it. It's not something that you just send in your bid list for and it just happens.

Q: Probably it was easier to arrange that here in Washington than it will be to arrange it from Fiji?

MURPHY: That's true, but I think that's true of any assignment. Even when I was single. If you're here in Washington, you get a much better shake than you do when you're overseas. It shouldn't be that way but it is.

Q: But at the same time, your household help, your nursemaids -- your life is easier overseas. So your problem may be -- your personal life functioning better overseas but your career functioning better in Washington. Am I right?

MURPHY: Well, you may be right.

Q: And I may not. Why don't we double back a little bit to see what you've thought about these things.

MURPHY: Well, it seems to me there's two kinds of Foreign Service Officers: the Washington types, and the overseas types. Craig and I both consider ourselves much more overseas types. We would like being overseas, we'd like the work better. It's not as career-enhancing, you don't get ahead as fast, you don't get as many promotions. But it's worth it. That's what you join the Foreign Service for, as far as I'm concerned -- to live overseas. So, if we stay overseas for a while and we don't get promoted as quickly as some of our colleagues back here, that's all right with us.

Q: Have you thought far enough ahead if, say, a terribly career-enhancing job came

along for you and there was one of equal stature for Craig at another post, what would you do in the future?

MURPHY: Well, we've decided that we're going to be flexible. But we'll have to see what comes up like that. We are both willing to go on leave-without-pay, at least for a part of a tour, if necessary to make assignments work out. Tandem assignments aren't easy. Tandems don't get as much favoritism as some people like to think they do. A lot of times it may be necessary for me or Craig to go on leave-without-pay for a year and wait until an assignment comes open. We've done a lot of work on this. We've really thought about it. And his being in Personnel right now has helped, because he knows what you need to do, and how the system works, and what they will do for you and won't do.

One of the things we did was, I studied Portuguese in early morning, and he studied French, so that we have the same language skills, basically. Instead of not being able to bid on countries where we didn't have the languages or one of us didn't have the language. He wouldn't study Polish, for instance. You know Craig -- he won't go to a cold country. So I have one language "on him," but it doesn't matter. (both laugh)

Q: Are there any of those "Comments on Tandem Couples" that you were looking at that you'd like to comment on?

MURPHY: I noticed the one about -- this is something that really irritated me. That tandem couples should not be allowed overseas because the Department shouldn't encourage nepotism. That really irritated me because I was a Foreign Service Officer before I married, and I certainly don't think I should have to resign because I get married.

Q: Although they did, at one time, you know.

MURPHY: Yes. I think that was terrible. But I came into the system single and I built up my own career. And I certainly don't think of myself as "nepotism." And I don't think that women who join after their husbands, or vice versa, husbands who join after their wives, are either a case of nepotism. Because I don't think they get a special break getting in. They earn it.

Q: How can it be nepotism if you're in two equally ranking, or more or less equally ranking, jobs?

MURPHY: That's right.

Q: Now, if Craig were DCM, and you were working for him, I might question that, really.

MURPHY: That's true. And that, I think, is the problem.

Q: I shouldn't say that -- if you were DCM -- (laughing)

MURPHY: Either way! It is a problem. And I can see people's concerns there. But there are things you can do. You can work for another agency -- an excursion tour, or something like that.

Q: There are ways of getting around it.

MURPHY: I would think so. We haven't dealt with that yet, but we both realize that that's a possibility, and that even as long-term layoffs.

Q: How much of that have you actually discussed? None of this has affected you yet, really; and this is your first time out [as a tandem couple]. You both already had your assignments in Washington when you were married. So this is really your first...

MURPHY: Our first experimental experience. And this one was probably easier than any other will ever be, because of where we are, and how many contacts we each had in some necessary areas to get the assignment. But yes, we've talked about it but it was not a factor in whether or not we would get married, because we were more important to each other than the career. And that I say for each of us. Craig takes precedence for me over the Foreign Service, and I take precedence for him over the Foreign Service. It wasn't a question, but we both recognize that we're probably not going to be shining stars. Because tandems don't. Their careers suffer, I think, by being tandems. But that's all right. It's worth it.

Q: I think you have absolutely the right attitude.

MURPHY: I hope so! A lot of people don't want it to affect their career. They fight it, and they say it's wrong. But it has to, because I don't have the whole world open to me any more. I can't just go wherever I want, you know. Singles have a lot of advantages.

Q: I've also always thought that you were a very, very practical person and...

MURPHY: Or so it seems.

Q: You can't have it -- nobody "has it all," really.

MURPHY: I think being a tandem, at least right now, at this point in our careers, this looks like the ideal to me. You know, that you have somebody you love that's with you, and you have your family, and you're overseas and you're doing what you like to do. In an exotic place, with beaches and palm trees. (she laughs)

Q: It sounds wonderful.

MURPHY: It may not always be as ideal as it is now, but I like it, you know. And I'm willing to accept some of the bad breaks. It's funny, you know, your interviewing me as a spouse because I've never, until just now, even thought of myself as a Foreign Service

spouse. It never occurred to me. I've been in the Foreign Service for seven years now, and it's the first time I've ever though, "Yes, you know, in a way we're both spouses."

Q: Now, how many of those "spousal obligations", which theoretically don't exist any more because of the 1972 directive but are still there -- are you going to feel obligated to entertain? Or are you just going to entertain in a very casual fashion like you do now? Do you know?

MURPHY: We're going to entertain the same way we do now, because I don't know any other way. And as a single officer, that's the way I entertained. You know, barbecues and picnics. And Craig does at least 50% of the work. He's very organized. So I can't imagine trying to do it any other way. I'm certainly not going to start counting linens and sterling silver. It's just not our style. But there are other things that come up sometimes. I even ran into it as a single -- the ladies' groups and luncheons and teas. There's a certain amount of pressure even for single officers to be involved in that kind of thing. And I think when you're a spouse and a mother and there are mothers' groups and things like that, I may run into some of that. We'll just have to see.

Q: How did you react to that? Did you resist it? Or did you ever long to be part of that?

MURPHY: I resisted it pretty much. I went to a few teas and things like that and found myself very uncomfortable. I knew all the women. It wasn't like we weren't friendly. It's just that I felt myself gravitating toward the few other working women who were there. I just felt I had more in common with them.

Q: Did you sense any resentment from spouses?

MURPHY: (with a little laugh) Yes; yes. There was a kind of jealousy, I guess, you know. You work with their husbands. It used to make me laugh -- that they would have this feeling that I was (in amused tone) after some middle-aged married man. Because you know, frankly -- but there was a jealousy, I think. They really thought that -- you know, here I was, this young "gold-digger" who was going to steal their husband.

Q: No: this young attractive Officer whom their husband was seeing more of than they were seeing of them. And had, really, probably, in some ways, day to day, had more to do with you than.

MURPHY: Yes, I can imagine it would be difficult. I dread the day I have to go on leave-without-pay, to tell you the truth, because although we've talked about it and we've agreed that if it becomes necessary or desirable -- one or the other of us will do it -- I don't think (she laughs) I'm going to be very good at it, you know? I think I would really feel cut off.

Q: It will be interesting to see if you perceive any difference in the spouses' attitude to you now that you do have your own handsome spouse.

MURPHY: That will be interesting. Maybe it will tone down a bit. I do feel a certain amount of hostility -- more at my first post in Africa, where families are a little...

Q: Where -- at Bamako?

MURPHY: Yes. Because there wasn't an awful lot there. It was kind of a "wild" place, socially speaking.

Q: (laughing) Literally translated, meaning what?

MURPHY: Well, it was a kind of decadent post. There were a lot of people involved in extramarital affairs within the expatriate community in general and the Embassy also in particular. There were some very awkward social situations.

Q: Was it more or less accepted, or ... ?

MURPHY: Oh no, no; it was very scandalous. But I think it was partially the post, the fact that there wasn't a lot to do there. Well, there wasn't a lot that was automatic. I found a lot to do there but you had to kind of work at it; you couldn't just sit back and wait for it to come to you, you know. But I loved Bamako a lot, I really did.

Q: I was in Bamako once for lunch, and stopped on a plane once. What is there to do there?

MURPHY: I was in a theater group. This was self-generated, expatriates. It was a multi-national theater group; we did plays in English. We built our own stage and all the dressing rooms and the lighting systems and put on dinner theaters; things like that. It was a lot of fun. I spent a lot of time with the French community. My French is good and they accepted me, so I had an outlet other than just the U.S. community.

Q: You were comfortable enough in French so that you were comfortable socializing.

MURPHY: Yes. And to me that makes a big difference. I wasn't trapped in this very small social setting like many of the other Americans were. I felt sorry for them, you know, because the French are such snobs, if your French isn't good enough, they're just not going to talk to you. I traveled a lot. I had a lot of Peace Corps friends and would go visit them on weekends and sleep on straw mats under the stars. That was really exciting to me -- I saw a lot of Mali that was off the beaten track.

Q: Right, "off-off!"

MURPHY: And I really enjoyed that. It was really fun being there. You know, your first post they say you're always more fond of than maybe you would be if you had hit them later on.

Q: We-e-ell, not necessarily. Our favorite post -- my favorite post, anyway -- was my third. You've been in Bamako and Warsaw? (Murphy confirms this) Each post has something different to offer, and the one post where I got it most all together was Morocco, I thought. I think you have maybe a fondness for your first post but you may find another one that...

MURPHY: Fiji sounds like our kind of place. And particularly my kind of place -- there's a lot of Peace Corps there. It's very strange, in some ways; very Third World in some ways. There's a little bit of political excitement, which I like.

Q: Oh yes, between the Indians and the Fijians.

MURPHY: And that's always nice because it adds a little extra, something to talk about, to keep your hand in.

Q: Well, that makes you feel that you're in a place where maybe you'll be headlines in the New York Times.

MURPHY: And I'll be doing Consular work, which I really like. It's a very odd Consular post, you know -- they have strange cases because of its isolation and location. You get the yachts and "lost at sea" and that kind of thing -- odd little weird problems that you don't encounter in a lot of other places. I like that kind of thing.

Q: Oh and you'll have a lot of people coming on yachts and round-the-world tours and you'll be invited on board for...

MURPHY: (laughing) I hadn't thought of that yet!

Q: That happened in Curaçao. And it's fun when you're on an island to have these people coming from the outside world.

MURPHY: And the district is so varied too -- Tonga, which is an ancient kingdom that's celebrating some-centennial, I'm not sure which hundred years it is this year; they're having all sorts of ceremonies, the Ambassador's going to go out there. The French Polynesia, of course, is real hot right now, especially New Caledonia with the Rebels. It's very varied, you know, very big. It's just a unique place and the work looks very interesting once I can get past the baby stuff and focus on the job. I think it's going to take me at least a week at post to get to the point where I can feel comfortable starting on the job. At least a week; and that's if everything goes perfectly, you know.

Q: When are you leaving?

MURPHY: We're arriving in Fiji on August 17. The baby is due in probably a week or ten days, two weeks.

Q: That gives you about two months?

MURPHY: Yes, a little less.

Q: That's good, because you'll have your strength back and the baby's still small enough to travel easily.

MURPHY: I realize we've really put it "down to the wire" if the baby's late, if I have to have a Caesarean -- there are all sorts of things that could really mess up this very finely timed little operation. We'll cross our fingers and hope it'll be normal.

Q: You may need a Caesarean?

MURPHY: I hope not. Never been one in her family yet. We're Irish and tend to be easy breeders. But you never know, you never know. The Caesarean rates are high now. At the hospital I'm going to 25% of all deliveries are done by Caesarean.

Q: Why is that?

MURPHY: Malpractice, fear of malpractice suits. If there is the slightest hint that the baby may be having the slightest trouble they just start cutting. I can't blame them, and if I sense the baby's having trouble it would be very hard for me to say "No don't". You have to recognize that you have that very high chance of having a Caesarean and all the complications that that can lead to, and the weakness -- I hope not. But there are things you can do to hopefully try to prevent it, like going to the hospital as late as possible. I haven't told Craig that yet.

Q: Which hospital are you going to?

MURPHY: George Washington. If I'm at work I can just walk over. But as I told you, I'm having some trouble getting out of here, getting out of my job. It's hard to let go. My office is kind of dependent on me as a specialist for some things and they're having trouble just easing off on demands. I have some temporary replacements for about six weeks, after which my permanent replacement will come in. It's just that they're trying to get a lot of things done -- to get me to do a lot of things before I leave; and I have a lot of personal things that I need to do. I hope it works. But it's frustrating, you know, because I'm trying to get out and they're trying to get things done, and we're kind of working at cross purposes.

Q: But I think this happens really when you leave a post.

MURPHY: Yes, I think you're right.

Q: But yours is compounded now with moving for the first time with a baby; that's the

main thing.

MURPHY: That's the complication and as I told you I'm getting very anxious. Finally, I just gave my boss a memo and said, "My last day will be June 17," because I just had to do something, had to make a decision. Baby's are one thing you can't schedule! I can schedule everything else. I hope it's not late, because then I'll be sitting around for weeks wondering why did I do that -- use up all my leave for nothing.

Q: I meant to look at the map of Fiji. What is near by if you and Craig want to travel -- any long weekend possibilities? Or are you going to be sort of island-bound?

MURPHY: The long weekends, probably, mostly on Fiji. Fiji has 300 islands.

Q: So you can island-hop, collect islands.

MURPHY: It's not quite like Curaçao, just one place. But everything else is a little bit more difficult. I think New Zealand is the closest country and it's a four- or five-hour flight.

Q: But it is a possibility.

MURPHY: Yes. But it's expensive traveling, I think. The French -- Tahiti and such is a much longer flight, even though that's in our District. I'm not sure how we're going to work it out, but we definitely want to take some trips. We've never been to Asia; and we're not that far from New Guinea, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and all the Pacific islands. Hopefully we can see some things.

Q: What are you going to do about nursing the baby? Are you going to do that?

MURPHY: At first, I think I'm going to nurse and try to wean either soon after arriving or start before arriving. It's touchy, I don't know, because I haven't done it before, so I don't know how it's going to work out. I'd like to have the baby partially on formula and partially on breast milk, which some people can do and some people can't. We'll see how it works out.

Q: But there again, you'd be close enough to dash home and nurse.

MURPHY: That's right, but it depends on the job. You can't always schedule the right thing -- "Oops, excuse me, Mr. Ambassador" -- And people say you can pump your milk. But it's the same thing, it takes 20 minutes or half an hour (both agree this isn't practical). If I could manage to get the daytime feedings mostly on formula and just nurse just a couple of times a day, I'd like to do that for the first three months or so. But if it doesn't work, I'll just go to formula. I was raised on formula and I know the kid will survive, you know. (she laughs) It's better to nurse, but there are a lot of things. My mother is so upset that I'm not going to get at least three months off. She said, "It's not good for the baby." I

said, "Well, I know, Mom".

Q: You don't really need that much.

MURPHY: I don't know -- I've never done this, I don't know. People say -- there's all this talk of "bonding", I have a lot of trouble dealing with that. My father never took a day off when any of us were born and we loved him dearly. Does that mean that we'd have loved him more if he'd taken three months off and sat with us? I don't think so.

Q: Oh, I don't think so. You don't want to take three months away from your job, and you might build up a resentment if you were at home.

MURPHY: Yes, I might. Although I don't know.

Q: Not too strongly.

MURPHY: Sounds kind of like a summer vacation. (she laughs) But I don't think somehow it's going to turn out that way.

Q: Well, I like the idea of your being so close to the Embassy that you could just go home for lunch, or go home.

MURPHY: Yes, I agree.

Q: Being very close by.

MURPHY: I'm going to have to get Craig to go home sometimes for lunch.

Q: It might work out that way. Both of you to go home and have an hour or so with the baby, and then go back -- it isn't as if you've got this long hour and a half commute at the end of the day.

MURPHY: I get the impression it's a five- or ten-minute walk from the Embassy, so that'll be really nice. (Deep sigh.) But it's going to be difficult. I think the next few months are going to be really hard.

Q: Yes, you're going to have to make an adjustment, an adjustment in your life. For one thing, if the baby doesn't sleep through the night, you're going to have a disrupted night's sleep and then have to work all day long. It might take a while for that to sort out.

MURPHY: I may add -- the junior officer I'll be supervising has scheduled a trip -- we've talked about it and agreed on it -- to Tahiti. She's going to go out to Tahiti about a week and a half after I get to post, so I'll have the whole Section then. At that point I have to have at least a feel for it and be able to work full-time, frankly. And that's going to be -- we'll do it, and Craig is going to get a commission and he can also help in the Consular

Section. So we'll manage it.

Q: Do you know anybody who has done this -- gone out as a tandem couple with a baby? Have you talked to anyone who has. Have you found anyone in that situation?

MURPHY: No. Everyone I know, all the women officers I know -- I know someone who adopted a baby; I don't know anyone who had a baby and went right back to work. Everybody I know has taken three months off, six months off. Most of them aren't tandems, either, they're female Officers married to non-Officers. So I'm unusual, I think.

Q: Is there anything more in here about tandems that you feel merits discussion? I thought some of those things were a little out of line.

MURPHY: I think there's a lot of hysteria about it on both sides, you know. A lot of the tandems feel like the Department "owes" them more and they're really getting a bad break. I think you just have to accept the fact that it's going to be harder, not as easy as when you weren't tandem if you were a single Officer before, and you just have to work within the constraints.

You can't ask for too much in the way of special treatment or people will have real justifiable resentment against you. If you always want to go to Rome, and nice cushy posts, and you want an assignment at grade, in cone, it's asking too much: it's asking the system to distort itself all out of proportion for you. On the other hand, I don't think the system should do what they used to do -- intentionally separate tandem spouses, refuse to give them assignments in the same place, on principle, you know? And ask them to basically choose between their spouse and their career. I don't think that's fair either. There's got to be a middle ground. If the tandems are willing to be flexible, work hard at assignments, look for places that are not all necessarily Western European prime posts, then I don't see why the Department can't be a little flexible too and try to work around.

But I think the tandems still have to be judged as individual Officers too, and if one of them or both of them are not good Officers, they're going to have trouble getting good assignments. Just like you would if you were single, you know. You can't ask them to bend over backwards so much that you get an assignment that you wouldn't have gotten on your own anyway.

Q: I would think your attitude's very important toward your success as a tandem couple, too.

MURPHY: I think you're right. There's a lot of bitterness in the Foreign Service in all groups, you know. A lot of people have very bad attitudes. I think it really handicaps them.

Q: I know you can't generalize but just...

MURPHY: A lot of times that I've seen this it's people who came in with very high

expectations. "I'm going to be an Ambassador in 15 years." "I'm going to make foreign policy."

Q: Unreasonable?

MURPHY: Unreasonable expectations. And they come to realize shortly after -- four, five, six years in -- that they probably never will be an Ambassador, and they probably aren't going to make much of an impact on foreign policy in any large sense, you know? And I think that people who have those kinds of expectations are very disappointed and tend to become bitter.

Q: Do you think that the State Department's recruitment system is correct in bringing in the best, the brightest, the most ambitious, and I don't know what the figures are these days, but the numbers that you bring in and the numbers who make it to the top -- if you are bringing in that type of person, with that kind of expectations, is that fair? Is that correct? Aren't you just looking for trouble?

MURPHY: I suppose in a way, yes, it does cause problems, but I don't think that the best and the brightest are always so ambitious that they are going to be frustrated by it -- I look at Craig, for example, he's obviously very intelligent, he's very good at what he does, and if he doesn't make ambassador it's not going to break his heart because he has other interests in life. And that is what I think they should look more for, is well rounded, well adjusted people who don't need the career success to fulfill themselves as a person.

Q: I couldn't agree with you more.

MURPHY: But then who doesn't want someone like that.

Q: But they should recognize someone like Craig, who is well rounded, and promote him. A person like Craig should shoot up [in the Service] because he doesn't need the career to make his ego function.

MURPHY: Yes. The promotion system I think has a lot of flaws. I don't think anybody would argue with that. It helps so much to be in Washington, to just know a lot of people. And the people who are real Foreign Service types who really like living and working overseas are handicapped. I also think a lot of it is just luck, you know, if you get a supervisor who writes well, you get an OER that is well written you are more likely to be promoted. That shouldn't be something that they judge on, but I don't know how else they are going to do it.

Q: What do you come in as now? Do you come in as O-8s now or O-6s, or how do you come in?

MURPHY: People come in as 4s, 5s and 6s. I think generally 5s and 6s.

Q: And you came in..

MURPHY: I came in as a 5. Well, actually I came in right before the new act, as a 7, and was immediately made a 5, like a month later. But I came in as a 5 because I had an MA. That's all done by the book, I think.

Q: You've had two promotions in seven years?

MURPHY: Yes

Q: But that's good.

MURPHY: It's average. I'm certainly not. Many of my classmates have had three promotions -- not many, four out of 52 people in my class have been promoted to 2 by now.

Q: Since I don't know any of those people -- do you admire the ones who have been promoted. Do you think they are the ones who should have been promoted?

MURPHY: Yes, actually, I was surprised because I don't have much respect for the promotion system in general. In this particular case, yes, they really did pick people who had taken difficult assignments and done very well at them. Extraordinary talents, you know. One of them is a very respected language Arabic scholar. He learned his Arabic in the Foreign Service, but he speaks like 4, 4+, or something like that. Another one has had very difficult assignments and done excellent jobs at them. You know they picked the right people from our class, I think, the ones who had taken the worst and had made the best out of it.

Q: And did Craig come in as a 4.

MURPHY: He came in as a 5 also. Because he has a lot of years of work experience and he also had an MA.

Q: And now he has had two promotions?

MURPHY: Craig and I were in the same A-100 class

Q: Oh, you were, so you came in at exactly the same time he did. So you knew each other before and you met again here [in 1985]. Oh, I see, so you really have started your careers together.

MURPHY: Then they went like this (hands gesture in opposite directions.)

Q: And then like that (hands brought together).

MURPHY: We were good friends in A-100, Craig and I. We spent a lot of time hanging

around together, and liked each other a lot and kept kind of loosely in touch, you know, a Christmas card and maybe a letter in the summer over the years. And when we came back to Washington, we had decided we would look up each other, and I think we both had it in the back of our minds that we were interested in each other, but things just kind of took off from there.

Q: Well, it's probably great that you went off and established your career, and now here your paths have crossed again.

MURPHY: Yes, it really worked out wonderfully. And if I had come back 6 months earlier than he, or vice versa, we might have been involved with somebody else. That has always been our problem. Every other time we have been in Washington, either I have been involved with someone else or he has been involved with someone else. So we kind of had a feeling that it might be nice to see if we were compatible, but we never had the opportunity until this one time.

Q: You haven't been married before?

MURPHY: No

Q: Well, that's nice. You know I am so fond of Craig, you know as I have said many times, he was the one other sane person at the embassy other than Guido [at our last post].

MURPHY: I know, he says the same thing.

Q: Surely you are not going into a situation like that again.

MURPHY: I hope not. We know the ambassador, and we like him a lot.

Q: Who is it?

MURPHY: He's a political appointee, but we met him several times before he went out to post. He was being held hostage here in a way because we didn't approve of the coups that the Fijian government had had, and we were just withholding the ambassador as a protest. It was very frustrating for him as a businessman, he had given over control of his business months before and he was kind of kicking (cooling?) his heels here in Washington. He's a very pleasant man and down to earth and intelligent, and we really liked him a lot.

Q: Do you know the DCM?

MURPHY: No, we don't. We've heard he's a good guy, so I think it will be a good post. Craig knows all the JOs out there.

Q: Because he assigned them all.

MURPHY: He knows they're good too, and I think it will be a nice post. I hear the post has some morale problems right now, but I think some of them are leaving.

Q: How many people are there?

MURPHY: State? I think there are eight.

Q: How many are spouses?

MURPHY: (Counting?) 1, 2, 3 or 4, oh, yes, and me, 4 or 5. And one of the couples also has a young child, one of the JOs has, I think, a two year old. He may be able to give us some tips on nannies and how to get baby stuff, and things like that.

Q: One nice thing will be no snow shoes, just little diapers. It is easy to take care of a child in a climate like that.

MURPHY: I admit that as an ex-biologist, I have certain interests, and peeves and pet fears, and dengue fever is on the island. (Unrecorded comments on severity of dengue fever.)

End of Tape I, Side A

Brief summary of Side B (partially recorded, inaudible because of interference)

Murphy comments on:

Tandem Couple - Craig's language is Portuguese, Patty's is French. Each studied the other's language to enhance joint assignment possibilities. They entered the Service at the same time and were friends; when their paths occasionally crossed from 1981 to 1986, one or the other was involved with someone else, even though both felt they would eventually get together.

Spouse Role - Cannot imagine being "just a spouse". Knew that she would graduate from college to career. Would be reluctant to take three months maternity leave from her job after birth of first baby. Hadn't given much thought to going to her first post as a spouse. As an FSO, will be traveling to other islands as part of her job, will leave the baby with Craig and a nanny. Hopes to partially breast and bottle feed.

Representation - Feels that, no matter what rank they achieve, they will always entertain informally. Cannot envision crystal, sterling, linens or white gloved waiters as her life-style. In Bamako as a single officer, had her domestics do all preparations for entertaining, then sent them home before the party began.

Telephone Addendum:

There are always people who complaining about the Foreign Service, but few of your friends are resigning. If they do resign, it is almost always for personal reasons, and is almost invariably because a spouse can't pursue her career in the Service. That's one of the most difficult problems today. There are depressed senior officers (because of budget and personnel cuts), but I don't think they are a majority. It's more likely to be the ones whose expectations are unrealistic.

We're not all going to make ambassador, so why hang around and wait for your time in grade. The officers coming in now tend to be in their early thirties -- I think thirty-two is the average age -- and after twenty years in the Service they'll have a good retirement and can look at a second career when they are still in their early fifties. If we make ambassador, that's nice, if we don't I think we have to take charge of our lives. I can't see sitting around and waiting to get kicked out.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse's name: Craig S. Tymeson

Date entered Service: Both Jan. 81 Left Service:

Status: Tandem Couple

Posts:

Patty:

5/81-11/82 Bamako, Mali
8/83-8/85 Warsaw
8/85-7/87 OES/NEP, Washington, DC
8/87-6/88 CANO, Washington, DC
8/88- Suva, Fiji

Craig:

4/81-4/83 Lisbon, Portugal
6/83-7/85 Port of Spain, Trinidad
1/86-7/88 PER/FCA/J, Washington, DC
8/88- Suva, Fiji

Date and place of birth: Albany, New York 6/10/56

Maiden Name: Patricia A. Murphy

Parents:

Robert A. Murphy - attorney, judge (deceased)

Mary L. Flanagan (remarried) - librarian/researcher

Schools:

SUNY at Albany, B.S. 1987 (molecular biology)

Cornell, M.S., 1981 (animal genetics)

Date and place of marriage: Arlington County Courthouse - January 29, 1987

Profession: FSO

Children: Soon

End of Interview