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Foreign Service Spouse Series

**JUDY IKELS & FAYE BARNES**

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## INTERVIEW

*FENZI: I'm speaking today with Faye Barnes, president of AAFSW and former FLO director; and Judy Ikels, Chief of the Work Life Division, Office of Employee Relations at DOS, and former FLO deputy director. They will discuss regulations that inform the spouse relationship to State. Today is Thursday, September 23, 2010. I am Jewell Fenzi.*

*I'm just going to let the two of you talk because you know more about what the two of you are discussing your relationship with each other at FLO, what you accomplished at FLO, your feelings about FLO.*

IKELS: I guess we'll start by saying how happy I was to get a job in the Family Liaison Office, having worked at FSI for four years and then being overseas in Greece, I was really looking forward to coming back and getting a job. But not in my wildest imagination did I ever think that it would be the perfect job for me. I was in Greece and somebody said that an announcement had come out in the little newspaper there and she called me on the phone and she said, "Judy, this is your job." And I thought, whoa, what is it? I had done employment workshops at FSI; I was very interested in employment issues and very interested in the situation of spouses overseas. So I applied for the job and I was really surprised when I got an interview, I immediately bought a plane ticket and came home.

I stayed in Barbara Hogenson's house. I did so much preparation; I took a cab into the interview. I was so afraid that I would get snarled in traffic, or lost, or not get a parking space and arrive there ruffled, so I took a cab even though it was only a few blocks. I did the interview, and I had some errands that evening and went back to Barbara's house, and Kendall Montgomery called me and said, we'd like to offer you the position. I was just thrilled; I couldn't believe it.

I flew back to Greece, barely got packed out, came back and started working long before the household effects arrived. It was a very good match; I worked on the bilateral work

agreement portfolio and others. I really enjoyed working with that team, but I think the thing that really made a difference for a lot of people and was a big experience for me was trying to get the family member appointment together.

Family members had been able to work in overseas positions since 1978-1980, somewhere along there. But everyone was appointed on a part-time intermittent temporary position. So what that meant was while they were working, they didn't get any benefits and it didn't add up to anything. We had this history, building history, you can look at it, of people who had one job after another at post, and in addition to the fact that they seldom got a raise, it never added up to anything, and so I remember coming into a meeting with Kendall and Gail Knowles, and Gail said to me, (Gail was the deputy, Kendall was the director.) And Gail said, "So, are we going to get benefits for spouses, or what?" That's kind of the way she put it to me. And I said, "Sure, let's do that!" But I had no idea what that meant or what would be involved. In the end, it took almost a year to figure it out. I had really good cooperation, and of course in government you never do anything by yourself, ever, ever, it's always a team effort, but it was especially great to work with some bureau coordinators, like Janet Keyes and a number of team coordinators, who were handling the family member appointments, the actual movement of the papers. I had to educate myself about how the personnel actions were cut. And then I worked with three wonderful men in the Office of Overseas Employment, Robert Morris, Robert West, and Robert Regelman, all three of whom at the time were sporting beards, so we finally referred to them as "the three bearded Bobs". The three bearded Bobs and I had many sessions and what we finally decided was that we would use the limited, non-career appointment. We would suggest to the department that instead of using part time, intermittent, temporary, that we would focus on eliminating the "I". The "intermittent" nature of the appointment is what keeps the incumbent from earning benefits. What was interesting about this to me are a couple of things. First of all, I thought we would have to create some new appointment, but it was right there, right under our noses all along. It's just that the department had never decided to use that appointment. And why? Because it would cost more money!

*FENZI: How did you persuade them to fund this? There were would have been a big hurdle I know.*

IKELS: It was, there were a lot of reasons; we made arguments about why, about how it was unfair, how these were real jobs overseas, they weren't make believe jobs. Also, there were a couple of things happening. Life overseas was getting more dangerous and many spouses were faced with the situation that their employed, mostly still husbands (not wives), were in really dangerous situations. So the chances that someone could get killed or injured early in a career as opposed to having a full career and a full annuity were getting more apparent. And something that was really quite unrelated but significant happened. In 1993, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, at the Lincoln Memorial, a gentleman who had been working for the park police for many, many years, died, I believe from heat exhaustion. And he left a wife and seven children with no benefits, no insurance, no retirement and it was discovered that he had been hired on a part-time, temporary, intermittent position. And there was quite an uproar about this in the government and

there was an article in the Washington Post which I referenced in my written material which showed that a special fund was set up for this man's family. And so I used that example mercilessly in discussions with senior management to convince them that we didn't want to wait until a similar thing happened with one of our spouses and finally the decision moved on. Finally, the undersecretary for management approved the idea. Now the other question was funding, because our plan was to just convert over one pay period everyone overseas working on a pit appointment and we needed three million dollars to do it. And three million dollars in 1998 was actually a lot of money. And that was another selling point that we needed to convince people on and Mrs. W (?) who? was a big help on that, and we managed to get the approval, and I remember that Bob Regelman stayed in the department until midnight that Saturday night until Sunday when the pay checks converted over to make sure all of the actions were taken and Monday morning all those, there were about 1,000 spouses at the time, I don't know the exact number, but from one day to the next were on benefits, they could apply for TSP, they started earning retirement, were able to purchase life and health insurance. I feel very happy about that.

BARNES: That was a monumental achievement, but I recall too after coming into FLO a few weeks later and hearing, some of the bureaus were dragging their heels, and they didn't all convert. Most converted, , I think all WHA converted, but there were a few EFMs that were not converted and later on we did the PIT conversion, there were family members who had a period of maybe five or six months who were still kept on the PIT appointment, so they could not apply for employment credit for this time period after the May conversion. So most converted, but not everybody did it. And not every bureau was as onboard. I remember Skip Gnehm, the Director General, attended some meetings where he was pressing the bureaus to do this immediate conversion. I mean this is really the cornerstone of family member employment today. And it was a monumental achievement because the Department had really worked off and on it for years, and it was done by May 1998.

IKELS: I really appreciated all of the help we got from people who were interested, to Kendall and especially to Gail Knowles, who was the deputy and my direct supervisor, who just gave me free reign to wander around and talk to people and just figure it out, and I think without their support I would have been lost. I also want to thank my carpool, I was riding at the time with Foreign Service officers all males, who would hear me coming in talking in the morning saying how are we going to figure out this puzzle. And they had not a clue, but they were all interested that I succeed because of course they all had spouses who were interested in employment issues. But things keep evolving you can't just stay still, because the family member appointment addressed working inside the embassy but that will always have its limitation. Not everyone wants to work in government, there aren't enough jobs to go around, and there still aren't enough jobs to go around.

BARNES: There never will be.

IKELS: And in spite of, there are so many things that have been done since then, like the EPAP, what does that stand for again?

BARNES: Expanded Professional Associates Program. It is a special program where certain jobs are dedicated for spouses and they are real jobs, and they are officer level, probably entry level positions. They are graded at entry and mid-level. There, it's an amazing program, the baby of the current undersecretary, Patrick Kennedy, but he was very committed to spousal employment and the wonderful thing about EPAP is that the positions are not fixed to a post; they are fixed within the bureau. So let's say you have a spouse with public diplomacy skills who is needed in EUR, if there is a need for someone with these skills, at say Post X in EUR, they can move that position there. So that is the key to success with that program.

Spouses have to go through a selection; they have to go through a business English analysis. It's not like you're going there, you are anointed and there you go, they do have to qualify and have the skills, but it is really I think, a fabulous program that has been in place for almost three years now.

IKELS: Why don't you talk a little bit about what happened, well in 1998, you were selected to be director for family liaison office, and then a short while later, you selected me for the deputy's office.

BARNES: I don't know if you are cursing me (laughs), no, it was a marriage made in heaven.

IKELS: No it was a marriage made in heaven. I thought it was maybe one of the best jobs I had in my life. But with family member employment things kept evolving. As I talked about with the diplomatic hiring initiative, that changed what we were faced with.

BARNES: Yeah, the focus of the office had really always been on employment inside the mission, because we felt we had more control. Because we could talk to the bureaus and explain the situation and they all had something vested in it, because most of them had spouses that were female. However, this was the time, 1998-1999, the economy was chugging along, the department was afraid we were going to lose mid-level officers, people who had been in the department for years, and they were going to want to find jobs in the outside. So the Department did the McKinsey study, and the McKinsey study came back with some interesting results. One of the things that played into our hands was the recommendation that the department could do more to facilitate the employment of people with professional level skills. Spouses had a lot of complaints about the level of responsibility of positions that were in the embassy and the low pay. This was an issue that McKinsey made and this was fine for us. Bonnie Cohen was U/S for Management at the time, and she took this to finding to heart.

Well, we do have these dual career couples, the way American society had been evolving, so she suggested to us in the Family Liaison Office, that we should go to some international headhunters to see whether there would be interest in our spouses and that we could perhaps contract, to assist professional level career spouses to find employment overseas. The FLO office had done everything to facilitate this type of employment and

Judy has always talked about this since negotiating bilateral work agreements, is the first step in enabling spouses to work overseas. So we had pretty good luck with that. Debbie Thompson, the employment specialist at the time, started talking to different international head hunting firms and she came back months later with the information that none of them were really interested in our spouses, since many of them had patchy careers, due to coming in and out of their career path. And these international headhunters did not want to look at a spouse who made less than \$100,000 a year, so this was the kiss of death to the program. And Debbie talked to a number of different people and felt that they didn't get us or the vagaries of how to deal with Foreign Service spouses, the security issue and some of their restrictions on certain types of employment and entire issue of mobility.

IKELS: Some of the ethics issues.

BARNES: Yes, the ethics issue, absolutely. So Debbie suggested that we had to do this ourselves, this is something FLO had to do. Ok, so how are we going to get this done? And about this time we got an extra position: it was one of those, exercises where they had to cut positions in the Office of Employee Relations and several other HR offices, and Judy is now a director in that HR/ER office. One of the positions they were looking at cutting was the position that dealt with expeditious naturalization, for spouses. Being a foreign-born spouse, knowing that expeditious naturalization is a big deal, and even just being in the office and seeing the foreign born spouses come in and how frustrated they were, I understood the importance of expeditious naturalization. We thought OK, this isn't a position we should lose for the department. So it was a three quarter time position in the office of Employee Relations. Skip waved the magic wand and moved it to the Family Liaison office. He said ok, I'm giving you a full FTE and since I'm giving you more time she can develop some of the headhunters that you are talking about. So we hired someone to do the expeditious naturalization, and moved part of her portfolio from the employment specialist, so that our employment specialist, Debbie Thompson, had had more time to look at possibilities with spouses. Through this effort we met this woman called Marriane Thompson. She was a foreign service spouse; she had been a lawyer, worked in the Reagan administration; got married to someone in the foreign service, moved to Sweden, marriage broke up, so she stayed in Sweden. Since she was familiar with global, international employment she set up a business to assist spouses. So we conferred with her, she gave us a lot of free time, and we actually came upon the idea of starting a pilot project.

Starting a pilot project, we looked at missions overseas, and decided it had to be a large mission, so there would be lots of spouses to choose from. In addition, there had to be a lot of American companies that might be interested in our spouses, and it had to be a place where the foreign language was not so difficult to start with, since language knowledge could be required. So we went to Mexico, which was a huge mission, and knowing there were a lot of multinationals and American companies located there. The embassy was willing to host it.

There was a change in administration about that time, with the Bush administration coming in and there was a new Secretary of State, Colin Powell. We also had a new

Director General, Mark Grossman, very forward leaning individual, of course he was a tandem, and he had a professional spouse, with a professional career. So he got it, supported us, and had us write up the proposal to start a pilot in Mexico. So we were all scurrying in December and January, and he didn't tell us why this deadline was such a short deadline. And so then Colin Powell walks in the Dept of State and his first town hall meeting he announces, lo and behold, two projects that were near and dear to the FLO heart. Judy had also been working with a number of other offices for a child care center at FSI, and he announces a child care center will be built at FSI and a pilot in Mexico for spouses to find employment on the local economy.

IKELS: We heard that live, we were sitting together. We almost jumped out of our chairs, it was such a shock!

BARNES: It was a shock, but there was this sense of, what do we do now? Grant Green was undersecretary for management and this was maybe the third week of January after Powell had come in, and we had to get this launched by March.

IKELS: I remember it was very short.

BARNES: This was all new territory for us! We said, ok, we know we can fail. There are all kinds of possibilities to fail here. But if we don't try we'll never know. And we'll never know if we could have helped spouses find jobs or not. The biggest mistake we made with that pilot, and we wrote this up at the end, was that we hired an American company to provide career guidance to some of the spouses, and a consulting company in Mexico. Obviously the company back in St. Louis, they were doing telephone interviews with the spouses in Mexico, they weren't on the ground, and they didn't have the lay of the land. It would have been better if we'd had another person come into our office and do the counseling and then go on down to Mexico. Another problem was some of the spouses didn't get jobs. But the improvement of morale was huge with the career counseling, and that someone was interested and cared. So we wrote this up, honestly and it wasn't a huge success story as far as jobs were concerned, but it had kernels of success in it. That was enough to persuade the Undersecretary for Management, who'd come from the military, from morale, welfare and recreation in his last job, and he knew how important it was to have employment opportunities for spouses. He said, OK, let's try it again, let's increase the number of posts. So we had 8 posts that first year, we got a huge infusion of money to pay for these.

IKELS: That was the biggest surprise, because traditionally we always had to fight so hard for funding.

BARNES: And historically most of the FLO budget went to paying for CLO training, paying for transportation for CLOs to take training. There wasn't a lot of other money in the budget just to do a few little projects. Suddenly we had this huge infusion of cash, and we knew we had to produce, and we knew we had to spend it all in a year. The idea was that we would go out to these posts, and we would run the pilot for two years at these select posts. The posts had to have a certain number of spouses, either a bilateral or

reciprocal work agreement, some opportunities in the local economy, educational institutions, universities, NGOs, and the post had to really want it. Post management had to want it. We weren't going to foist it on them. After the two year pilot, if it proved successful then the post would have to take over funding and it would be funded by ICASS. We initially envisioned a max of 30 posts worldwide over a period of maybe 5 years, and we never thought that small posts would be that successful. We also talked to post management about consular posts in Mexico; the idea was that any person they hired should have responsibility for some of the larger consulates in that group to provide services.

The key to success was hiring the right person for the job. And this was almost like heresy for FLO, to say to post management you don't have to hire a spouse. This is a contract position, we are going to hire through our contracting agent, and what we want you to do is advertise the position widely in the expat community, because we want you to hire somebody who can network, somebody who knows the local scene, and someone who can get 20 spouses a job, and not hire someone who maybe doesn't know the scene and can't get anybody a job. And this was a mindset not usual for FLO or posts. To our amazement and joy, there were several qualified family members who were hired. One of the people was hired in Mexico, had a background in the country and she networked like mad and provided career counseling and did a bang up job. That was a very successful pilot and that individual and the FLO worked very well together. Some of the other posts, for example, London, they found an American who was in country who had been there many years, also had a background in career counseling, did a great job in networking, was able to find spouses jobs. So the program was beginning to build and it was beginning to have some success stories.

The acronym for the program was SNAP: Spouse Networking Assistance Program. The person in our office who managed it was the employment specialist. That individual would have almost weekly contact with the people we contracted in the field, whom we called "local employment advisors." She would assist them, provide ideas, travel out to their posts make sure everything was working there. I left the office in 2005, I think there were 23 posts in the pilot, and six had been funded through ICASS. I think today there are 16 ICASS funded positions worldwide and the office today has combined two programs,

We didn't talk about that yet, the program that developed after you left in 2004/5. It was a nightmare, because we had to get it off the ground so quickly. The ideas was to help spouses everywhere, not just where there was a SNAP program. It was called the Global Employment Initiative, the GEI. Later it was combined with SNAP.

Since combining SNAP and GEI, FLO has gone with the regional approach. That means they provide regional support. There is a regional office in Mexico, since Mexico City hosts most of the multilateral companies for Latin America. So they have the local person from Mexico, and they have this regional support individual who provides services to all of Latin America, which sounds like an unlikely success story, but apparently this is a guy, who is as they say in Spanish, *bien enchufado*, he's very well connected.

IKELS: I met him, I met him at an awards ceremony.

BARNES: OK, and apparently he's doing a bang up job, they're going to hire someone in Singapore to provide that service in Asia, they're looking at Yerevan for Eastern Europe, they're looking at the Middle East. The Cairo program, is still funded, and I think that person can only do Cairo. And they're looking at London regionally for the Baltics hiring another person, aside from the London support to provide services there. So the program is still ongoing which is pretty amazing, almost 10 years.

IKELS: We don't like to see things fritter out.

BARNES: No, and it's changed, it's morphed, which is great, because things have to change to fit today and the idea behind this is that it is not a headhunter. It started out with this image, the concept which came from the Undersecretary, and spouses had this idea of, oh, all they had to do was turn their name in and we would find them a job. That's not how it ever worked: they were given a list of employers and they had to network. The local employer advisor knew they were coming, had their resume ahead of time, and could network with people in that career field for the individual. For example, so if Judy Ikels was going to Greece and was interested in a certain type of job there, and if there was a local employment agent in Greece, they would make contact with all of the businesses that she would be interested in, so you didn't have to waste two years looking around finding a job, you would hit the ground, and in two months have interviews where you could set up a job and complete your tour there for the next two or three years, and move on to the next location.

IKELS: I think this concept really has staying power, because you know once again, we are in hiring mode. The department has what they call Diplomacy 3.0, that Secretary Clinton has argued successfully for more funds, more staff, once again we are in a situation where there will be more Foreign Service Officers to do the work, and of course the work keeps expanding, I think it's a good example of how in the Family Liaison Office the director has the ability with her staff to look at the situation and has latitude to make these decisions, you're not locked in to some preconceived notion of how things should be, that really gives FLO the power to take on new projects.

BARNES: Right, absolutely. And I didn't really mention the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative which was started by Colin Powell, which gave us impetus and our Director General at that time, Ruth Davis, to help us handle the load, because we had all of these new officers, that State was hiring two or three tranches. Of course many of the new hires were married and were bringing in spouses. We knew that the writing was definitely on the wall in big, bold lettering that there would not be increases in opportunities for spouses inside the organization itself and we had to look for those programs where there were opportunities for spouses.

In the era when the State was not hiring Foreign Service Officers, there were more employment opportunities for spouses, like the Professional Associates Program, which

began in the 90's. We knew that program was not going to expand, because the concept behind that program was to hire spouses to fill unfilled Foreign Service Officer positions overseas. With new hiring, we knew that that little pool of job opportunities would be shrinking because they would be hiring more Foreign Service Officers.

But then 9/11 happened followed by Afghanistan and opening an Embassy there. And in 2003, the Iraq invasion and in 2004 we opened an Embassy in Iraq. All of a sudden, the thousand fold new officers who were supposed to be training complement, they were needed all over the system because we had all sorts of positions opened.

IKELS: I hope when you are writing your history about family member employment, you will write about the way in which family members have really supported the Department's mission overseas through their work.

BARNES: I just think about validation and family member employment and I of course, I have to mask my true feelings because I can't really say in this history, if the current management doesn't want it, they can take it out. I view family members as a resource and the Department will use them when they need them, but when they don't need them they ignore them. But they are a resource.

IKELS: They are a resource.

BARNES: Remember when we talked about that working on the Family Member Employment working group, and we talked about validation of family member employment, because one of the things that bugged me personally to no end was that the Secretary would get up and talk about our three categories of employees, and the three categories were foreign service, civil service, and locally employed staff, which we used to call FSN and I wanted to scream out, "What are family members, chopped liver?" Because they never even give lip service to them.

*FENZI: Yes, it's because there may be 1500, it is a drop in the bucket. They are a resource but they are important to the mission, they do jobs that local hires cannot do. They do mission essential work, but it's the chopped liver concept. It still bugs me.*

IKELS: This is what you get with staff in the Family Liaison Office. You get people with passion for this, out of our own experience, Faye and I both came into the Foreign Service and I still tell people this, and I just see the jaw drop when you say, before 1972, a woman could be a Foreign Service officer, but if she married she had to resign her commission. And after you peel the young woman off of the floor, who can't really believe that that was the case, and you say, but for a few more years, she was reported on her husband's performance evaluation. I still have mine, how well I spoke Spanish, what lovely dinner parties I gave, what a resource I was for the community and my volunteer service yada yada, in his performance evaluation. So of course, we reached that point where, that it was no longer legal, let's call it like it is, because they were not employed by the U.S. government, so how could they be evaluated, I'm sure that the whole history of the family liaison office creation has been well documented by our founding mother,

Leslie Dorman, and Lee Kroft and others who were on hand at the time, but what they infused in the office, and what still resides there which is alive and well, is a sense of responsibility those who work there have towards their constituency. The Family Liaison Office has a constituency that is organized, it is vocal, and now with communication what it is and Facebook, and e-mails, and write the secretary if you have a problem, it is really still a wonderful, and somehow unique and unusual thing that we have a department in the office that is such an advocate for family members. I think that what we used to say also -

BARNES: And employees! On issues like, I was in the office yesterday, and we were doing meetings with the regional directors for the Secretary of State Volunteerism Award. And the director of the Family Liaison Office, Leslie Teixeira, was also on the committee with us, She had received an e-mail from a friend, who was a friend of a friend, an employee who was between a rock and a hard place, because she had a child with a class two medical clearance, learning disabled, to put together her bid list for her next post. She had to be able to assure, that the child would be taken care of, which means she had to talk to all of the schools that were available in those countries. And the schools all said, we can't give you an evaluation, we can't tell you if your child will be accepted here, we have to do an evaluation with the children. This is a case where the Family Liaison Office will advocate for the employee. This is an impossible task for this woman, she can't possibly get the information from the schools, how can she put together her bid list?

So it's mostly family members but also employees as well, particularly for benefits, you are the office that makes the changes in benefits, but sometimes the Family Liaison office would come to your office, before you were there, and talk to them about working on improving allowances. Remember the evacuees in 1998, these people were bleeding money; remember the long battle we had with SEA benefits, Subsistence Expense Allowance, only through the long-suffering Pakistan embassy and consulate community evacuees, evacuated after the East African bombings and they spent so much time in Washington and were never told why. There were out of pocket so much. We put together the figures and were therefore able to move up the expense allowance. FLO is an advocacy office for many, many issues and I would say from what I learned yesterday it is still going on and will go strong.

IKELS: That is my view as well. Makes me proud to say that I have served there for nine years.

*FENZI: Is it possible today to put your two children through college, and buy a house, on a Foreign Service salary?*

BARNES: Not in the District. If you send your children to state schools, if you are a resident of a state with a good educational system, where you pay your state taxes and the state has a very good state system you can do it. Virginia has a good state system, Maryland is very good too, as is California, then it is possible because the in state tuition rates are lower. But Foreign Service employees officers and specialists don't make enough money to send their kids to private schools and buy a small house, unless they are

a tandem and they are both working. And then if you are living in the District you likely send your kids to private schools. I probably shouldn't be saying this, it shouldn't make a difference, but in the past we never considered living in the District because of the school system there, since we thought we'd have to send our children to private schools. Buying a house there and sending our children to private school, we just couldn't do it. I know from reading LiveLines today, Live Lines is the listserve that AAFSW sponsors as Yahoo groups. There are lots of questions from new officers coming into the service, and they're coming to Washington and interested in moving into a good school district, coming from somewhere maybe in the Midwest or the South, and say, "We're looking at Arlington and have maybe \$400,000 that we can spend on a house." Forget about it! You're not going to find a house in the Arlington school district today for \$400,000, so the answer to your question is now, that's why it's so difficult to get Foreign Service people together in the Washington area. When you are trying to organize a support event, it is tough, because they live in the suburbs or even exurbs. Foreign Service officers can't afford to live close in unless maybe if they're a tandem, then they're fine.

IKELS: There is never an easy answer, I learned recently there are a about 1,000 tandem couples in the Foreign Service.

BARNES: 2,000 out of 10,000 people. That was another piece of advice we used to give to the spouses, who really wanted a career and wanted to be guaranteed one at every post, and we would say the only way you can really achieve that is to join the Foreign Service. Because otherwise, even if it is a tandem, you have to be assigned separately.

IKELS: A separated tour is almost certain in the Foreign Service now, because there are so many unaccompanied posts. Mexico, Monterrey being the most recent that was designated unaccompanied. So that's an example of how it's become more dangerous.

I think that one of the things that's been difficult is no matter how many employment programs you have in place, no matter how many child care centers you can build, it's not enough. There's a fine balance talking to people who are coming in, to give them a realistic picture of how much work they have to do. We can point you in the right direction, but you still have to get your resume together, you still have to do a lot of legwork and luck has to be on your side.

BARNES: And you still have to prepare for the interview like you did. Looking for a job is a full time job. When you are looking for a job, every 10,000 you want to earn add a month. You might be looking 8 months to find a job.

IKELS: And that was back then, when the economy was good.

BARNES: One of the things that the FLO office is doing that has grown, like topsy is the Professional Development Fellowships. It started about the time you left and we ran the first program, the last year I was in office, 2005. Remember, how we had prepared this paper on spousal stipends and we could never get any takers? It was always shot down by HR. The basis for this proposal was information from a conference you attended overseas.

You came back with the data from Price Waterhouse Coopers report on corporations and spousal benefits. They had done some research on benefits for spouses of corporations, and in that PWC report, was the basis for the stipend concept, .....should never use that word!

Then there was another paper that we found after that from a corporate counsel for business. But they also published background information on the kind of company, the income generated, the number of employees. Getting employees to go overseas was hard, because the corporate spouses didn't want to go. Why? Because they would lose their career positions in the United States and the employee, also had career considerations. This isn't like the Foreign Service where when you come back to Washington, you know you are going to have a job, because there are positions in the State Department for you. When these people come back from overseas, there won't necessarily be a position at headquarters for them, and everyone had forgotten about them. So to sweeten the pot, the corporations would give spouses X number of dollars to advance their careers, to take courses, to hire somebody to help them find a job, but it was a pot of money for them. And so we thought, hey, we knew that the SNAP program was never going to work everywhere and Judy's favorite term was "there's no silver bullet for employment."

So we have to have a menu of options for spouses: those who were going to work inside the mission, or those who were entrepreneurs starting their own business. Or those who wished to continue in their career, for example, continue in keeping my licensing as a nurse. There were a couple of interesting creative programs that we were proposing with management however, our colleagues in HR didn't like our suggestions, so once again, this stipend proposal fell by the wayside.

So what happened is that back at the end of 2004, Cox, the wonderful Cox Foundation, was helping HR with some programs, and they had a call for grants. Maryann Miles was managing this and she came over to the office and asked do you have anything that you weren't able to get funding for, and I said yes! (laughter) So we changed the name: Professional Development Fellowships, dropping the word stipend. And so it started.

IKELS: Are they still giving this?

BARNES: Cox only funds things for three years, as start up. And then you are required to fund it. And so we came up with a program and advertised it, reimbursable funding to be used to start a business, to continue your career, to do something in your career field. The money couldn't be used for travel, but could be used to take some career enhancing courses. It was all about career development for spouses and for the lowly amount of \$20,000 we advertised it and said, grants up to \$2,000. We had 115 applicants that first year, it killed us. So we kind of nickel and dimed around with the \$20,000 dollars, I think the average grant was \$1150.00 and we gave about 18 or 19 grants the first year. Well, this had obviously touched the right nerve; we knew this would be a winner. So I left the office that year and I think Cox went up to \$175,000.00 for grant money and the high point was 185 applicants. Cox funded it for three years and then the question was, where is the money going to come from if the Department funds it. So, that chunk of change

that was coming into the office for employment, some of the money for the overseas programs for assisting spouses in finding jobs, some of that was diverted to the professional development grants for spouses when it became government funded. I believe it's three years ago, 2009 was the first year to get government funds. So, 2009-2010, this will be the third year now, 2010-2011. Now what happened with the USG funds is apparently there is some small print that a spouse can't use it to start a business. So that's cut out. They can no longer fund anybody who wants to kick off a small business. But they are doing a lot of professional development and courses, it's a very popular. There are spouses who wanted to start a photography business, spouses who wanted to work out of their home, and that was something that we changed too, we were able to make it possible for spouses to work legally out of USG owned or leased properties. .

IKELS: It was really hilarious because, I guess people thought that we were going to just move the several sewing machines into the living room and open a Levi's jean factory, but keep in mind, working at home using a computer was not on the scene just yet. . Not to put too fine a point on it, but family members had no place else to go if they wanted to be self employed, they had no office to go to. So that was pretty easy, but it did produce some pretty funny meeting notes. We did change the regulations so under certain circumstances and considerations spouses could use their government quarters for self employment. Not to offend anyone was one of the rules. One of our notes was "no bikinis shops in Bahrain", we wanted to be sure that we made reference to being culturally sensitive. We covered everything, and the bottom line was yes, you could legally work at home.

BARNES: That then came into question a bit later, with the inviolability of the diplomatic residence, the difference of civil versus diplomatic immunity. Three of four years down the pike, with all these professional development fellowships, pdfs they're called, the interest in the entrepreneurial aspect grew. I think you were in the office when we hired Chris and company in 2005 for the first entrepreneurial workshop. It was oversubscribed the entire summer. But we brought in some CLOs for CLO training, and then also gave them the entrepreneurial training. It was "train the trainer" an idea to send them out to "propagate the faith." We were like missionaries spreading the concept of self employment for entrepreneurs. There were a lot of interesting concepts.

I recently looked at the family member employment report, around so many years before we were in the office, before the web based program. Our ultimate goal was 50% employment for spouses, and we aren't there yet. That would be the ultimate, we'd never get more than 50% since there are always those who don't want to work. I think it's around 38% employed for this year, about what it was when we were in the office. What has changed is outside mission employment. When we started assisting spouses with outside employment, there was 10% outside employment. It was 11% after the first year starting the SNAP program. Inside the mission employment is 24% of the total that are employed. Now outside employment has grown to 14% . The improvement in numbers has changed more to the outside. The total figures: 37% or 38% employment is what it was when we were there and it is just hard to move it beyond that. But if we hadn't taken

the risk on outside employment programs, it is likely that the percentage of EFMs employed would have decreased.

The interesting thing is that the fields that are growing outside are telework. Educational opportunities have gone down, as are some multinationals and NGOs, so the telework and the entrepreneurial concept is growing.

IKELS: Let me just comment, in the Office of Employee Relations, one of the things that we were able to do was set up a program called domestic employees teleworking overseas, which was strictly designed for spouses. It doesn't work for everyone, there have only been about a dozen examples, but the mechanism allows a family member who is in a civil service position within a department whose spouse is being assigned overseas if her portfolio allows, can Telework the domestic position overseas. They actually take their domestic job, they just carry it overseas and obviously a lot of things have to be in place, the computer access oftentimes, they are able both work in the mission and get a space in the mission. We've actually had tandem couples in which one has reached a level in which the other can't work. So it's not for everybody but we do have, I think we have one spouse who is now on her third overseas assignment with her same job, she has a job that she can do remotely, they trust her, a remote worker has a hard job because you have to work twice as hard as everyone else. But because she has a portfolio that has a product in it that she can show deliverables, they know exactly what she's doing.

*FENZI: You have this menu of things, nothing is ever going to be the silver bullet, nothing is going to work for everybody. So there have to be options, things that you can choose. It's a small program but I think it's great, apparently there are quite a few Foreign Service employees are married to civil service.*

IKELS: We're calling it foreign service-civil service tandems.

*FENZI: It's a good term.*

IKELS: Right, there is some interest in that. And other things that have spilled over continue, like separate maintenance allowance; I was able to convince the department to separate the allowance to allow for voluntary and involuntary. Involuntary meaning you have no choice, I was really adamant about maintaining involuntary separate maintenance. People were arguing that if you didn't have to stay at post for business reasons, then there was no reason for a separate allowance and I argued that that really wasn't the case that there would be a lot of reasons why a family member might want to stay behind in the United States and on separate assignments. And I got a lot of, "Yeah, they're working on K Street working at Barney, Barney and Barney making \$120,000 a year, why should we give them additional money?" And I said, "I don't want there to be an economic test for this. It is simply a decision. If you're going to keep two households then you need a minimum amount of expense allowance to create the bottom line for these two households. I don't want to get into income tests and furthermore if a family member thinks for whatever reason, for her own career, to educate the children, because his or her

spouse is working in very dangerous conditions and who knows what could happen, that is still a sacrifice, so we managed to keep the income test out of it.

BARNES: That was good, I was pretty sure you were going to face that issue.

IKELS: I thought it was interesting how much has changed, it makes you wonder, because now there are so many people in the Department who have had this dual experience of being both an employee and at times only a spouse. And it really does give you a perspective on things. I know on my own staff now there are two portfolios that I am particularly interested be occupied by someone who has had this experience. One is the person who makes decisions about emergency visitation travel. That's handled out of the Work Life Division. That's where when someone oversees has a family member experiencing a medical emergency, the decision regarding whether the employee or family member may travel goes to the head of medical services, or if there is a death of a family member that's obviously a different one, but we handle those cases that are for unusual personal hardship or when their request comes in to travel for an elder care issue, and it is critical to me that the person making those decisions has foreign service experience. . We do it, there are three people that do it together, all have had overseas experience, all have had a situation where you get a call from home, that something has happened and there is no way to equate that experience with anything in a regulation.

*FENZI: If you've never had that international experience, if you've never gotten the call in the middle of the night in Moscow, that you've got to head home quickly, its different if you are living in the U.S. in a very small area.*

IKELS: It's difficult to get from here to Minnesota or from Washington to California, but it's doable. There's not really a huge financial difference, some of these airline tickets are still really exorbitant, but also it gives me a lot of satisfaction to help work with people, who one day need help from the department, we are able to provide that in a time that they really need somebody to help them sort through the regulations, because let's face it: they are always changing. Regulations are very complicated, no one knows everything, and I value the fact that the Office of Employee Relations can do that for people and also that I have people on my staff who are clearly out of the spouse tradition, who can, who have had a lot of other experience as well. Still, you can always go back to that place in your mind.

BARNES: Yeah, I think that makes a huge difference, I think that's a really good point. And also as you are talking, you are talking about these programs that have changed over the years. Quality of life wasn't a buzzword when we came in. Quality of life was 90's, when we talked about issues, it was always there, but we didn't use that term. I think the department has moved much more towards quality of life issues and work programs, but in my own mind, that's also probably why the Department of State is almost always ranked one of the top employers.

IKELS: Yes! We were ranked seven this year.

BARNES: And we're one of the huge government agencies.

IKELS: And we were five, and we could have been two, except the situations that came in that were in the mix this year. And they listen, Department leadership pays a lot of attention.

BARNES: I bet they do. I bet that Secretary Clinton pays a lot of attention to that, because she needs to be very interested in her people, as Colin Powell was, and concerned about them and work life, which is excellent.

You know you really haven't talked about some of the other portfolios in the Family Liaison Office, which are as important, but employment of course is the reason the office is written into the Foreign Service Act. Education and employment are the big issues. Education for children, employment for spouses, and feeling secure. While Ann Greenberg was director, Cox funded a survey for spousal issues, and those were the three big issues, security, education for children, and employment for spouses. The spouses who were employed placed employment as one of the first things in looking for placement, spouses who weren't employed placed security and education for children as their top two.

So when we worked together, Judy was the direct supervisor for 90% of the people at the office, and she's a wonderful mentor and a fabulous listener, and has a wealth of experience to share, so you were on a day to day basis talking to the education officer or crisis management and there were testy divorce cases that probably came to you, before they would come and discuss it with me.

IKELS: And I found out that they hung on until they got the answered they wanted.

BARNES: People shop around for the answer they want.

IKELS: Yeah, people may walk out, Jewell wrote the book, Married to the Foreign Service, and I think it really does sum it up, because it's not just a choice, it's not just a life-style...

BARNES: You really are married to the job and nothing demands as much as the job.

IKELS: I am very happy, I was very lucky, maybe I'm just an optimist. But I am very grateful for those years that I could stay home with my children, for several years, I had them very young, 23 and 26. My god, what was I thinking? But you know, we had this family really early, and we were overseas, we had a lot of help, I was, I could have worked but I wasn't all that interested in working when the children were small. I did a lot of volunteer work in the early years, and I got to do that, which I think if I had been living in Washington, I would have felt more peer pressure to do something else, and probably more financial pressure early on. But we were able to manage, I was lucky, to be able to use the experiences I had as a volunteer, and I still promote, when I talk to people, this idea of volunteer career development.... it was one of the key concepts I

learned in a workshop in Mexico in the early 80's. This idea that if you are going to volunteer, try to be strategic about it, do something you really like, write it up. Get some experience that you wouldn't have had in a regular job, find a way to manage something, hire people, even if it's just hiring volunteers. I look back on it, and I think that my first experiences in HR were actually as a volunteer. It's interesting our daughter who lives in Arlington and has two boys and is doing a lot of volunteer work. I found myself telling her, Catherine you should be writing this up, you have all of this experience that you are getting, this is volunteer work experience, don't let yourself fritter away your time, let yourself be pulled into something that you think you're really interested in. Somehow, form your own employment interests. She of course has much more education than I did, which she got before she had children. Things just don't change that much. She really does not want to be full time away from home, so I wonder how much influence I've had (laughter).

*FENZI: Yes, I (Laughter)*

BARNES: My eldest daughter said to me, she has a PhD, and does piece work here and there, and she does consultant work. With a PhD in an art field opportunities do not come calling. She volunteers, at a number of arts groups, and one of her big things is how to engage the next generation of people in supporting arts. She's done some papers on this. Anyway, one of the conversations I've had was that you've got to have benefits, you can't keep going on and on part-time. And she goes, "Mom, it was always more important for you to have a career than it is for me." SO, OK, I think we've been accustomed to the women's lib movement, because Judy and I are the same age, we graduated the same year, but we grew up on that first wave with Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem. You know we were college grads, we had expectations, I had the nuns talking in my head, use your talents, you're given a certain amount of ability and you use that ability, you don't bury it in the ground, and all of these things probably made us to our daughters, ambitious.

IKELS: (Laughter) Oh well, it all worked out.

*FENZI: What I think is interesting about you Judy, is that you got married very young and you stayed home with your kids and your son, who had to come back to the states, with some medical issues, you went through the whole gamut of Foreign Service issues, and you even sent your kids back to the States at one point, and you face all the problems of the foreign service experience, and yet you were able to come back, after years of living overseas. Yet you took advantage of the experiences overseas, like I never knew about this junior league workshop in Mexico, but you came back and you got a job at the Foreign Service Institute, at the OBC.*

IKELS: Yes, Barbara Hogenson saw me at the bus stop the one day and said, "Oh, are you back?" We had met at a conference in Rio, networking and it's so funny when I think back, of course, this was before internet. , and An FSI employee had been traveling all over Europe, gathering educational materials, to put with the briefing materials at the

Overseas Briefing Center. And she had all of these boxes of printed materials stacked in her office, and Barbara does not like messes. ,

So she spoke with the Director of the briefing center, Jean German and she talked Jean into writing a small contract, to get somebody to just organize the briefing boxes. And so she asked if I wanted to do that, and I can still remember standing in her office, and I said, “You mean, you want me to take that stuff in those boxes and place them on a shelf, like in the library?” And she said, “Yeah. That’s what I want you to do. And make an inventory.” Oh, Ok I can do that. And I finished it in a couple of days, and she paid me \$400. That’s what she had for the contract. And I was so startled by that experience that something as simple as that could generate some income. And I thought well, heavens to Betsy, this is sort of interesting, you mean I could come in here and think and write? It never dawned on me that that was how it worked . I don’t know. If you are a school teacher, like I had done mostly teaching before, somehow it’s different. Number one, you never get paid that much and you work around the clock. A teacher never stops working, you are always thinking about lesson plans, on and on and on. But here was this little discreet mess, and I just cleaned it up and they gave me a check. So I thought, I’d like to do that again. So they had this position open, a GS 6, and I used my non-competitive eligibility to get the job. It is written into the code of federal regulations, which allows a family member who has worked in a government position overseas, for 52 weeks, when they come back to the United States, within the first three years to be hired as a government employee. Let’s say you just get credit for that overseas experience. And the spouses, it was not up to the spouses today, that more spouses get jobs domestically, because there are still problems with it. There seems to be a forgetfulness in the department about how this works. You have to have all the competencies to qualify for the job, but it does not have to be the same level of competition, it is non-competitive eligibility. And I still, even last month heard Leslie in a meeting go over this with department managers, because they forget that this is a good way to get experienced employees.

BARNES: Employees who know the system.

IKELS: And there is also a little fact, which I think I’m going to have to write it on a silver tray and hand it to somebody as I am leaving the department. There is also a hiring eligibility for someone who is working for the department of state, civil service full time regular position, not contract, if that person goes overseas to accompany their spouse on an official assignment, not on vacation, on assignment, that when they come back to the United States they also have executive order eligibility for up to three years. That’s another little regulation that people keep forgetting about.

BARNES: And they do not have to be employed overseas.

IKELS: They can sit on the tennis court for three years! They do not have to work overseas, they just have to have left their employment in the United States and accompanied their spouse on official assignment and when they come back to the United States they have non-competitive eligibility. I have put this in so many letters, so many e-mails and people keep forgetting it.

BARNES: I had forgotten.

IKELS: There you go! We have to get a little silver tray or something, for when I leave, which is not too long from now, so I can pass that on to somebody and say, you are now responsible for remembering this regulation.

BARNES: That's something that the office of civil service should have, fixed in their brains or written on the wall.

IKELS: I know! I know!

BARNES: Does Marty know this?

IKELS: Marty knows. I had her repeat it back to me! (laughter) Repeat after me!

BARNES: You exercised your non-competitive eligibility and that's how you got your job at OBC and there is nothing wrong with that.

IKELS: The reason, that I was able to get the job and formulations was that I had that direct link from that first CLO job in Brazil, to the Foreign Service institute, to overseas in Greece where I couldn't work. I couldn't work in Greece, because of my husband's position. . I qualified for the FLO job, which was non-competitive, excepted service. But it bridged the gap for me to employee relations. So here is what I tell people: if you want to work for the government, you really have to get a good HR consultant. Mine was Ann Thompson.

BARNES: Yes, I know.

IKELS: Ann Thompson. It's very, very difficult to know all the regulations that apply. It's impossible in fact. And that is why FLO is so helpful, because it helps people to, you know, a good HR person is like a good counselor, they ask a couple of question and look for what it is you are trying to do and match that up with where there regulations fit, for where you need to be. That's my definition of a good HR person. It's not to try to and say why you can't do something but to try and help you figure out how that will work, and I was fortunate to have that kind of help.

BARNES: Yeah, because I remember when you got that information from Ann.

IKELS: She took me to lunch. I mean, we went to lunch together I should say, and she brought along with her the Code of Federal Regulations, like a little bible. And she was sitting there with a little salad, thumbing through it, and finding out the references, which I wrote on a small piece of paper and brought back to the office. This is my ticket, this is how it's going to work.

*FENZI: So the position you had at the Briefing Center, was Career Civil Services?*

IKELS: First it was contract, the second one was civil service regular, but it didn't go very far it just went on to six, and I wanted a promotion. I remember talking to Lee Lacy, she was talking with me and saying I can get you a promotion on this, but you're going to have to go into the excepted service. So I did that through grades 6 to 9, up to 11. So I to 11, went overseas, came back and did 12, FLO and went over to 14, then Employee Relations and I just last October was promoted to GS-15.

*FENZI: Congratulations.*

BARNES: Congratulations, that's very good, but with Ann Thompson, was that career civil service?

IKELS: Yes! It was the very first appointment.

BARNES: First appointment, yeah, yeah. And then you had excepted appointments after that, and leap-frogged around.

IKELS: And I was always doing things that I wanted to do. I was always doing the job that I wanted to do. At FSI, I can't tell you how much fun I had working with Barbara. Her mandate was to take the old "coping with violence abroad" program, and turn it into something that spouses could attend, and that children could come to in the summer. So that was perfect for me, with my educational background, so I got to work. And it was my first introduction to training. How is adult training different from teaching? That was my first introduction, and I did a lot of work after that, a lot of reading, and so then we wanted to set up this program for kids in the summer there, for a very small sum of money, setting up classrooms, writing curriculum, because there was no curriculum, there was no curriculum for teaching kids about safety. The best we could do was, you know McGruff the crime dog? We had him join the Foreign Service. All of that was more, that curriculum was more to just safety, whereas that overseas safety, safety overseas, security overseas for children, had never been written before. That was more fun to think about and to plan, to develop that programming. And I am very happy to say that that programming is still in place today.

BARNES: I have to say that one summer, my youngest daughter was hired to do this program for FSI., She was in a graduate program at the time, American University, Cross Cultural Training and International Education. She was working at that program and she said, "You know, Mom? I like this job, and I'm good at it." And it's the first time she felt that way. And today her job is as a cross-cultural trainer, and she has gone into that life in the corporate field with ALICO.

IKELS: I'm so happy to hear that.

BARNES: And it was this particular job, that got her. It was the first time I ever heard her say, Mom, I like this and I'm really good at this.

IKELS: We tried really hard with the young people that we hired, to make it a real employment experience for them. We had an orientation, we showed them around, we described everything about what they were expected to do. And after the sessions were over, we would get their feedback and what they thought could be done better and incorporated that. And I tried in addition to, you know, I wanted it to be a good experience for the kids, because again, we didn't have a lot of money to pay them, but it was great. You know, I worked with Gail Knowles. She and I, that's when we had our first, I think we had known each other before that, but that was our first time working together. , yeah, she came in, I got her to be the sort of coordinator, and it was really a stitch, because our main offices were in the building in Rosslyn, near Gold's Gym, and the classroom was what seemed to me like the back of beyond, in a building way over near the River. So, on days that we had class, you know, we had over, sometimes up to 200 adults in the class and especially the summer classes and then with their children and trying to get the logistics of getting all the materials over there, and then the issues of people who got sick or somebody who didn't show up. It was really, like running a small university, but it was fun. It was a good experience. We haven't talked about that. Maybe somebody else wanted to do that.

*FENZI: I think I've already talked for too much.*

IKELS: I'll set it up and we'll do it. Here's what happened. Before 1989, if a person worked in a part time position, and later took a position that had benefits with it, that employee, if they got added up a few years, and they wanted to go back and buy back those years of retirement credit, they could do so. Before 1989, but in 1989, the FERS program, Federal Employees Retirement System, came in, and eliminated the benefit portion for part time. So, family members who worked between 1989 and 1998, when the Family Member Appointment was instituted, the aforementioned of which we'd spoken about a lot, (laughter) it created these gap years, 9 years, so that family members who were on job, they had benefits, they could get retirement, instead of, "Wait a minute! But I was employed for 2 years here and employed at the GSR, I can't buy that back!" Paula Riddle, who was working with me at the time, we got the idea that we should create a onetime buy back, and we searched the Code of Federal Regulations and we looked to see where we could insert the line, the very respected retirement counselor, Mr. Dan X(?) .

BARNES: I remember when I heard about that meeting.

IKELS: Gail was a part of that meeting. And I don't mean to be a broken record, but an actual quote he said was, "Hell will freeze over before you get this changed," which to the three of us, was just like throwing down the gauntlet. I said, "Thank you very much, we'll be back in touch." On my next communication with him, I said, "Well, even though we know the likelihood is very small that we will ever get this changed, what would you suggest as the language." And he wrote as a couple of sentences that he suggested we put in, but he reiterated that, it would be a long time before it happened. So then, that's when we realized that we really needed to have a legislative change to make that possible. So

the family liaison office cannot lobby congress. However, we have a close relationship with AAFSW.

BARNES: Correct, correct. And that was . . .

IKELS: They carried that for us.

BARNES: And we worked with the Office of Overseas Employment , too, to get that right. The Department had to pay for this, so we had to know how many people might apply for this, and how many years they had worked, and what would this cost. So to get an idea of numbers , so we went to the President of AEFSW at the time, and said we can't really lobby for this, but you can send out the information in your newsletter if you like and just get an idea from us how many spouses had worked.

IKELS: Now keep this in mind, because people are going to say, "Well, that was a stupid way to do this." We could not post this on our website, it was nothing. There was no website.

BARNES: There was no website (laughs). We couldn't actively be seen –

IKELS: No, and neither could AAFSW, that's why they put it in their newsletter.

BARNES: Through the normal AAFSW newsletter, we developed a little form, that people actually had to take the time to fill out and mail in. And the numbers we got, final number we got from AAFSW was 200. The actual numbers who applied were 500, but our colleague Robert Regelman, did the financial calculation, based on 200. This started in 1998, and 1999 was the first year we tried getting it into the budget, and I still have the note from Skip Gnehm saying yes, this would work well but we just can't support it, we don't have the money. Because in addition to the fact that the employee who wanted to purchase this time for retirement credit had to put in money, the government employment agency had to put in a huge chunk with interest, and State wasn't in a budget position to do this. So 1999 went by, and by 2000 we had Mark Grossman, as DG and he said this is good, let's try to put it in. He tried to put in, but in 2001, the Deputy Secretary, Armitage, took it out. It didn't make it into the state authorization for a long time.

BARNES: I was about to think that it was impossible internally, so AEFSW said OK, we can take it to the Hill. So some of the FLO staff members, AAFSW members, many family members, and USG employees making sure to take annual leave, they went up to the hill to talk to their representatives. And the first person whose ear we caught was James Moran of Alexandria, and he sponsored the bill.

IKELS: Yes, he did.

BARNES: And the other local representatives, because we were their constituents, living in the USA, all supported it, the two senators from Virginia supported it, Congressman Wolf supported it, so we had some backing on the hill, and then AFSA got involved.

They had a fabulous legislative liaison at the time, Ken Nakamura, he took this under his wing, and he moved this around.

IKELS: It was really interesting.

BARNES: It was very interesting, he really cared about this. So we had several meetings, with AFSA, AAFSW, FLO and Overseas Employment, and we tweaked the language a little more. Then we spoke to the DG's office, they got a little more interested, and they started pushing for it. It was finally into the State Authorization Bill in 2002, they voted on it in the House, and took it out for the Senate, and then put it back in again. And then it was either 2002 or 2003, but it was approved, but the language was this, and this was a civics lesson. The implementing guidelines were to be written by OPM. OPM opposed this legislation.

IKELS: Yes.

BARNES: OPM opposed the legislation. Nothing was done until 2005.

IKELS: Never going to do that again.

BARNES: The interesting thing was that OPM got to the President. George W. Bush, you remember how he used to write those dissenting comments? He wrote a dissenting comment saying he didn't approve this. And that's because retroactivity is like a poison word, retroactive is not a government word. And we wrote this bill with the assistance of people, who knew to make it narrow, keeping it a small number of people, only covering Foreign Service employees and people who were overseas under Chief of Mission, not covering the American citizens working in the U.S.

IKELS: And we put in it a three year sunset.

BARNES: We put in a three year sunset. Anyway, this legislation lay in animated suspension at OPM. When I gave talks to incoming officers, I would talk about our advocacy, and I'd say we really had to learn about civics, and how to write bills! But what happened is that the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in HR (Ruth Whiteside) and the Director of Retirement (David Dlouhy) had a tête-à-tête, not with the head of OPM but one of the Deputies, and they convinced this person that it should be done, and that's when they wrote the implementing guidelines.

IKELS: I had forgotten that part.

BARNES: So the program opened in 2005 and ended in 2008, it had cost the State Department, several million dollars for all of these benefits, and over 500 family members were able to claim benefits, so it was a worthwhile effort.

IKELS: It was a good thing, it was the right thing to do.

*FENZI: I've been sitting here thinking, how can you take this and put it to some positive use for folks today, for whoever. I just want to thank you both, because I could not have done an interview with either of you to the extent that you two did, because I don't know enough about it.*

*End of interview*