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Foreign Service and a Texan's Gift

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WASHINGTON, July 21 — It was 1948, only a year after India's independence, and the captain of a ship docked near Bombay on a world cruise had decided, out of safety concerns, to refuse to give his passengers their travel documents.

One passenger, a strong-willed Texas ranch millionaire, Una Chapman Cox, ignored the captain's warnings about traveling without a visa. Mrs. Cox, a 42-year-old lover of travel and adventure, would have her Texas-bred autonomy challenged this time: Indian officials promptly threw her into jail.

A young vice consul in the United States Foreign Service, whose identity is now unknown, tried in vain to get her freed in time to rejoin the departing ship. He did, however, take her a book, some sandwiches and a bottle of wine and spend some time consoling her. And the next morning he helped arrange her release.

Thirty-eight years later, the diplomat's helpfulness is more than being repaid. The woman from Corpus Christi, who died in 1982, never forgot him. She left the bulk of her estate, about \$16 million, to a foundation she chartered in 1980 to support the effectiveness of the Foreign Service.

Programs Being Expanded

The nonprofit Una Chapman Cox Foundation provides grants for projects that encourage quality diplomats to stay in the service, promote the benefits of the service or educate the public about the role of the service. Over the past six months, it has begun an expansion of its programs, appointing a former United States Ambassador to Colombia, Diego C. Asencio, to oversee the task.

Mr. Asencio, best known for being held hostage in Bogotá by urban guerrillas for two months in 1980, is looking to share an office and staff with other foreign relations organizations and to recruit retired officers and other volunteers to help. He is also working on a one-hour documentary in cooperation with WETA, a local



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Associated Press

public television station, on the lives of Foreign Service officers around the world. The foundation would like to air the \$750,000 production in prime time on PBS, as well as lend copies to service groups and schools.

"We want to develop a popular and political constituency," Mr. Asencio said. "Our basic feeling is that if you get beyond the city limits of D.C. and New York, no one really knows what the Foreign Service is, what it does, what the problems are."

Harvie Branscomb Jr., a friend of Mrs. Cox who is president of the foundation, agrees. "There are an awful lot of people," he said, "who are for peace and for the improvement of international relations. But there has not been much interest in the establishment through which you accomplish those things."

The foundation finances mid-career sabbaticals for promising Foreign Service officers. Mrs. Cox's goal was that in their one-year visits to the states these officers would recharge their batteries and renew their commitment, thus becoming quality candidates for the State Department's senior diplomatic corps. Thus far, the foundation has underwritten 17 sabbaticals at up to \$25,000 per diplomat.

The organization has a three-member board of trustees, including Mrs. Cox's first cousin, Jane Chapman Owen, and a rotating eight-member policy council, with such diplomacy

notables as Shirley Temple Black, Philip C. Habib and Carl T. Rowan. The council meets periodically to evaluate requests submitted by organizations for grants that would promote or enhance the Foreign Service. For instance, the foundation supports the Academy of Diplomacy, which evaluates ambassadorial candidates.

The foundation also gives about \$20,000 a year to the Director General of the Foreign Service to use at his discretion to "fill in the gap" when Government monies fall short. In addition, the foundation is open to requests by individual officers, for example, who need help paying for travel to seminars.

'Everybody Was Amazed'

Both foundation officials and relatives of Mrs. Cox say they tried without success to learn the name of the vice consul who came to her aid that night in India.

Mrs. Owen, who lives on the same 32,000-acre ranch where her cousin lived — their grandfather bought it in 1919 — said Mrs. Cox spent a year deciding where to donate her money and two years testing her decision with the sabbatical program.

Mr. Branscomb agreed that it was not a whimsical move. "Everybody was absolutely amazed" at her choice, he said. "But that is not the kind of decision that a stupid person makes; she had a very specific idea of what she wanted to do."