

***Book Review by Dick Sklar***  
**GLOBAL ADVENTURES ON LESS TRAVELED ROADS:**  
**A FOREIGN SERVICE MEMOIR**  
**by James R. Bullington**

There are two kinds of American Ambassadors: Political appointees, who are usually rewarded for campaign contributions and often serve in places like London, Paris and Tokyo, and career Foreign Service Officers like Jim Bullington who mostly serve in Africa, South and Central America and Southeast Asia.

Jim grew up in rural North Alabama, often walking on the "south end of a north bound mule" on his granddaddy's farm, and in a working-class neighborhood of Chattanooga. He actually wanted to be a military officer, but polio robbed him of that option so he did the next best thing by becoming a career Foreign Service Officer.

A man of strong principle, he received national fame as the editor of the *Plainsman*, the official student newspaper of Auburn University, when he denounced segregation and the horrible treatment given to freedom riders. He also was sanctioned by the University President, the KKK burned a cross on his fraternity lawn, and he received insults from other students and Alabama politicians. But he maintained his belief in what was right, which prepared him well for things to come.

Jim began his Foreign Service career in Vietnam, during the war there. His first posting was in the northern part of what was South Vietnam. He fell in love and married a Vietnamese woman, Tuy-Cam, in the middle of the most intense fighting in the country. Jim describes harrowing exploits during that period and also provides interesting insights into the prevailing political and military situations in which he found himself.

Upon returning to the USA, Jim was sent to Harvard to study for and receive a Masters Degree in Public Administration. Following this, he and Tuy-Cam were stationed in Thailand and then Burma. They formed life-long relationships there. Jim, an avid lover of bluegrass music, spent some of his free time playing in bluegrass bands. He was also quite active as a ham radio operator.

Jim next describes his experience as a student at the US Army War College, located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It was there that Jim became deeply interested in leadership, to which he refers throughout his remaining public service challenges. By this time, Jim and Tuy-Cam had two beautiful daughters who accompanied them throughout most of the remainder of Jim's career.

The two educational experiences plus assignments to Thailand and Burma gave Jim ample opportunity to take deep breaths and contemplate the future. It was a time when Jim's self confidence grew, further preparing him for difficult assignments to come.

The book then details assignments in five African countries: Chad, Benin, Burundi (where he was ambassador), Niger and Senegal, all but one of which were designated as "maximum hardship posts" by the State Department. The six years he spent in Niger, on the southern edge of the Sahara, were among the most satisfying, despite that country being ranked 174th out of 174 in the world for quality of life. Despite threats to his life in several of these places, Jim upheld his commitment to the USA and his values while creating wonderful relationships with many of the people. His stories are rich and inspiring.

Jim shares his experiences in Washington as Dean of the Senior Seminar, the State Department's highest-level training program, where he added what he had learned about leadership to the curriculum. Prior to retiring, he served as municipal foreign minister for the city of Dallas and the head of a training center at Old Dominion University. The position in Dallas was a perfect fit for Jim, but he found his experience at ODU less than satisfying. Once again, in both instances, Jim's integrity and sense of honor shine through. Jim, in my experienced judgment, is a genuine American hero, who personifies unselfish service and commitment to family and friends. He is a gifted writer and storyteller. This is an inspiring book—very much worth reading!

The book is available on Amazon.com in both printed and Kindle formats, and Jim has donated copies to our Patriots Colony library and the Williamsburg Regional Library.