

5208 Glenwood Road  
Bethesda, Maryland  
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To the Editors,

The American Foreign Service Journal

In order to prevent the entire American Foreign Service from acquiring a mass guilt complex due to reading too many accounts of Gian-Carlo Menotti's "The Consul", I should like to present a little evidence on the other side.

When my father was in Frankfort, Germany, last year he naturally had a number of business dealings with the Consulate General ~~xxxxx~~, in connection with passports, etc. Upon his return to the United States, he told me about an employee there whose name he didn't remember, but whom he described in the most glowing terms as a wonderful man, a powerful influence for good, and an example for all to follow. As far as I could gather, this employee was (and I trust still is) a kind of receptionist, happily endowed with the ability to expand his job into that of ministering angel. My father said he was a Negro, with a pleasant voice, equally fitted to console the frustrated in German or English. He gave all those waiting in the lobby the impression that once they had intrusted their names to him, they could cease tormenting themselves about whether or not they would eventually get taken care of by the proper official. He had, said my father, a superabundance of tact and a mastery of the soft answer that turneth away wrath., with the result that in the eyes of the public everything was well in the Consulate General even on the busiest days, and each and every case was being carried forward with all possible speed and zeal. "Whoever this employee may be,"

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my father added, "He's a good advertisement for the Foreign Service. He might not have done anything for us, really, but he looked as though he was doing a great deal, and that was enough to make everyone in the waiting room a lot happier."

I don't know his name, either, but he is obviously talented. I once met a gentleman who had this same talent, and I am still grateful to him. He was a Foreign Service Officer in Bordeaux in September, 1939, at the time when hordes of American tourists were trying to get back home in ships which hadn't arrived in Bordeaux yet. There was absolutely nothing this officer could do for any of us beyond telling us to wait patiently, which we didn't want to hear because we already knew there was nothing else to do. These idle hordes of tourists, I among them, spent a good part of their ample leisure looking for a scapegoat. A less understanding consul would have found himself the innocent victim of this situation before a day or two had passed- but not this highly commendable gentleman! He treated us all as if we were his sons, daughters, and favorite cousins in distress, so that we went away from an interview with him charmed into patience and confident that as soon as something could be done, this consul could be depended upon to do it. I imagine that my father's friend in Frankfort has this same benevolent influence on the public. Having been a member of the public waiting endlessly in the lobby myself, I can agree with my father when he says that in his opinion a good receptionist whose heart overflows with charity can be more valuable than ten highly efficient officers working feverishly behind the scenes. I would only add that the most efficient officer, too, is more valuable to the reputation of the consulate in direct

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ratio to his kindness and understanding. As my father put it, "The public is pathetically eager for a kind word". And he also said, with vicarious generosity, "what ever that man in Frankfort gets as a salary, it ought to be doubled!"

Very truly yours,

(Mrs. William L. Krieg)