

## □ INTERVIEW □



**Liaison:** *In what ways has the role of spouses changed since your first posting?*

**Mary Taylor:** I think that, as a young wife now, you could go to any post and say that you were not interested in doing any entertaining or even in going out to diplomatic functions, and that would be accepted. I think it would narrow your life, because it is a way in which you meet people and learn about the country, but I don't believe it would affect your husband's career.

**Liaison:** *How do you think women of your generation view these changes?*

**Mary Taylor:** I suppose that some women of my generation feel they have had the worst of both worlds. When they were young women they were expected to do quite a lot. For example, they might be asked to take a visiting minister's wife around to see the shops or requested to attend the ambassador's dinner for a visiting senator. Now this has totally changed. I think that any head of post's wife would feel that the most she can do now is to invite other wives to attend a function but that she can't require them to help her. Yet as an ambassador's wife you are still inevitably involved when somebody important comes and on other occasions.

**Liaison:** *Do you see the changes happening today as positive?*

**Mary Taylor:** Yes, I think they are geared to a society in which the vast majority of women work, and therefore have developed much more independent roles. When I first became associated with the foreign service, a great many women felt that their status came from what their husbands did. Sondra Gotlieb's phrase, "Wife of", describes this very well. Now attitudes are dif-

**Mrs. Mary Taylor has been associated with the Canadian foreign service for 31 years since her marriage to Mr. James Taylor in 1957. Mrs. Taylor met her husband while working at the British High Commission as Second Secretary in New Delhi. Mr. Taylor was Second Secretary at the Canadian High Commission in Delhi at the time. Together they have raised five children and shared postings to Delhi, Paris (twice), Moscow, and Brussels. Mrs. Taylor works part time as an editor and translator. The Taylors are currently located in Ottawa where her husband is serving as Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs.**

**Liaison:** *How would you briefly describe your role as a wife of a young officer in your early days with the foreign service?*

**Mary Taylor:** As a newly married wife, I continued working at the British High Commission in Delhi. They were quite happy that I stayed on because it saved them the inconvenience of replacing me right away and it freed-up a flat! However, my husband received a letter from the Department of External Affairs, requesting that I stop work as soon as

possible and establish my identity as the wife of a Canadian diplomat.

When we were first in the foreign service, there was a section on the performance rating in which comments could be made on the officer's wife. The first time we were in France, my husband's report included a section which described my performance as a wife, and, presumably since it was good, it helped his chances for advancement, and if it had been bad, it wouldn't have.

As a young woman in those days you were expected to participate in more entertaining. People at all levels had more servants, and so you were expected to go to more functions. It depended upon where you were and who your ambassador's wife was, but certainly during that period, wives could sometimes be required to go to a formal dinner who could barely get into an evening dress. Of course, that sort of thing would be expected by somebody who was being fairly demanding, but it would be made clear that if you didn't go, it would be a black mark against you. Also, you were expected to entertain, and if you weren't doing so, you might be told to.