

I feel greatly honoured to have been asked to deliver the 1997 O.D. Skelton Memorial Lecture on a foreign policy issue. Dr. Skelton's is not a household name; indeed before coming to this lecture many of you may never have heard of him. Yet in 1952, when I arrived in Ottawa as a foreign service bride, his was a name to conjure with. As new recruits to the foreign service preparing to serve our country abroad, we were told on several occasions that it was Dr. Skelton who had created the Canadian foreign service, a foreign service that, thanks to him, was second to none, one that we should feel proud to be part of. We were.

Dr. Skelton built the Canadian foreign service between the wars by persuading a number of talented young people to sit his challenging foreign service exams and, when they were successful, to move to Ottawa to work under his influence until they were ready for posts abroad. One of these young people was my father-in-law, Lester B. Pearson. So, although Dr. Skelton died some years before I came to Ottawa, I feel personally connected to him. Indeed, except for him, I might be sitting with you in the audience today instead of standing here before you — an alumna of the academic community rather than a “graduate” of the Canadian foreign service. This is because my husband had two choices before him when we were first married and living in Oxford. One was to join the Department of External Affairs (as it was known then) for he, too, had passed the difficult exams; the other was to pursue an opening in the English Department at the University of British Columbia. That he chose the former and made teaching and poetry an avocation rather than the other way around was due, I am sure, to the passion for world affairs created in him by growing up as his father's son. And that choice, of course, made my own adult life very different from anything I could have imagined as a young girl living in a small town in Southwestern Ontario or even as a student at the University of Toronto.

Once we were married my horizons expanded rapidly as we travelled with our growing family from Canada to France, then to Mexico, then to India and finally to the former Soviet Union. With each move I became more aware of the richness and diversity of the wider world. At the same time, through the eyes of my children, I learned to see what is common to the human condition. Helping my children confront the challenges of our