

Dinwiddie County Board of Supervisors



2017 Black History Month Honoree Dr. Marguerita D. Ragsdale

Dr. Ragsdale's 30-year career with the United States Foreign Service included early tours of duty as Consular Officer in Kuwait, Political Officer in Mogadishu, Somalia, Liaison Officer for Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and the Secretary of State's Crisis Watch Officer at Department of State headquarters in Washington, D.C. Later, as second in command at the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar, she directed staff and tracked political, economic and commercial trends in Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula region.

Following participation in the Department of State's premier executive and leadership training program, Dr. Ragsdale served as Deputy Director of the Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs at State, and then Chief of the Political Section at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, where she was a member of the Ambassador's Policy Advisory Group. Following those assignments, she was asked to join the team that would re-open the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan after its lengthy closure for security reasons. As second in command in Khartoum, Dr. Ragsdale was principal policy and executive advisor to the Chief of Mission and, in his absence, was Head of Mission. In 2003, President George W. Bush nominated Dr. Ragsdale to become U.S. Ambassador to Djibouti. Following Senate confirmation, she completed her term in Djibouti, leading a mission heavily focused on counter-terrorism in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, on economic development and cooperation with

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Djibouti, and on developing in Djibouti the sole U.S. military base in Africa, named Camp Lemonier. A staff of 20 U.S. Government personnel and 118 local hires assisted Dr. Ragsdale's efforts. When she returned to Washington after her ambassadorship, she helped lead the Department of State's efforts to plan and execute U.S. arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament policies. In 2007, Dr. Ragsdale led the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Disarmament Commission and in 2009, served as Deputy Head of the U.S. delegation to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meeting in New York. In her last position before retiring in 2013, she was asked to lead a team of officers in a new unit at the Department of State focused on developing coherence and direction for U.S. engagement with the United Nations and regional organizations.

Dr. Ragsdale received numerous awards at the Department of State for superior performance of her duties and the Government of Djibouti's highest award—Commander of the Order of June 27—for extraordinary efforts promoting close ties between Djibouti and the United States. She holds a B.A. degree from the American University, Washington, D.C; an M.A. and Ph.D. degree from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.; and a J.D. degree from Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

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Dr. Ragsdale is working on a memoir of her 30-year career as a diplomat. She also supports the artistic programs of two professional ballet companies in the Washington, D.C. area, and is still pursuing her long-term interest in American antiques. An avid collector, she displays some of her diverse collection of paintings and art objects at the Antique Center at Historic Savage Mill in Savage, Maryland. She also supports land, agricultural, and forestry management programs in Dinwiddie County, and participates where possible in County-sponsored events as a way to give back to her community and her country. She is fully committed to the work of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, of which she is a member, to preserve historic American architecture and national historic sites. Dr. Ragsdale resides in Washington, D.C. and at her childhood home in McKenney, Va. Her parents, the late Vernon and Lillie Ragsdale, were lifelong residents of Dinwiddie County.

The Town of McKenney celebrated her accomplishments in 2006 by naming “Marguerita D. Ragsdale Street” in her honor.