

Thanks, UMUC

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Not having asked many former Marylanders directly, I cannot be sure how their experiences match mine in any way. My very first paid teaching position was with UMUC at Kagnev Station in Asmara, Ethiopia, as related in my previous memoir. I can well imagine that many others came to the program after having already begun their careers elsewhere. Why I bring the matter up has to do more with my post-Maryland years. That is because on every teaching job that I had after I left my position with UMUC in 1975, I was able to put those seven years teaching across three continents prominently on my resume. So I can further state that at every other school where I interviewed for a teaching position, I got the job in spite of very stiff competition. While still in grad school at the UW-Madison working on my Ph.D., I applied to teach English for UW-Platteville. I held that full-time position for four years (1978-1982). During my interview, the hiring committee asked, "What was it like teaching for U of Maryland Overseas?" Those next five minutes allowed me to roll out stories that essentially wowed those teachers and administrators. I fully believe that I won the job over ten other candidates because I had Maryland in my back pocket. The same situation arose when I went to interview for the UW-Whitewater. Interviewers marveled at what I was able to relate. I stayed there for a couple of terms, but then the old "last hired, first fired" problem came about with the normal student attrition between fall and spring terms.

Finally, in 1984, I saw a posting at the UW-Madison for a position with Eastern Iowa Community College in Clinton, Iowa. It was for a two-year guaranteed position with a strong possibility of staying beyond. Once again, my CV with its Maryland years of service came up in the interview. Not to belabor the point, but the committee was impressed enough to ask follow-up questions such as, "We see that you live in Madison. Do you have any qualms about the long commute?" A few tales about the "splits" I did in Germany took care of that question. "Our students are all two-year associate-degree types and are mainly adults. Did you ever have to deal with that level of teaching?" Here again, my Maryland years fit right into that need. I later found out that there were almost 100 applicants for the one position! About ten were called to be interviewed, including the wife of one administrator who was so certain that she would get the job because everyone there already knew her. However, that wife did not have my impressive U of Maryland experiences in Europe, Asia and Africa to fall back on. I got that job and kept it until I retired in 2009. Later, whenever I encountered that administrator in the hallway and tried to say hello, he would turn and refuse to acknowledge me for that whole twenty-five years.

Further, while teaching at that community college, I got the urge to travel abroad once again. I signed on with one of those travel-and-teach programs and used my years of living in Europe and exploring London, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Amsterdam and beyond on my Maryland teaching breaks as my authority to run those programs for thirty years. (I kept doing them even after my retirement up through 2014.) I did London every year for thirty years over the winter break (and coincidentally for my birthday) and then parlayed the spring break into trips covering all of Europe and even reaching as far afield as Rio de Janeiro and Bangkok, Thailand. Those trips became so popular that I was even able to bring in student and community participants from the other two schools in the district, which were in Muscatine and Davenport. Much of my expertise as a group travel leader on over fifty such trips was obviously gained on the road with UMUC.

So I can honestly say that I will go to my grave touting the "Maryland Experience" as being directly responsible for my whole forty-year career as a full-time English/Humanities educator. The side benefits of all the extra travel were just the icing on that delicious retirement cake.