

## ***Fire and Ice***

Forrest Studebaker—July 2020

Veterans of UMUC may not be aware of the former Atlantic Division that included Azores, Bermuda, Greenland, Newfoundland and Iceland. My academic career began in that Division; specifically in 1962 in Keflavik My undergraduate study began there, and fourteen cumulative years teaching for UMUC Europe ended there in 1997. I served three tours in Iceland, one two-year Navy tour, and two final UMUC teaching stints in the UK, Germany, Italy and Turkey.

The Iceland orders in 1961 led me to wonder who in the Bureau of Naval Personnel had it in for me. My first days in Keflavik with the base transitioning from USAF to USN command didn't reassure me. The Icelandic Government was quite unhappy with the Air Force, and the Navy was the last service available; the Army having occupied from 1941 for decades. Senior Navy staff restricted most junior service members to the Base.

My Administrative Officer, Commander Ralph Moore, was the first Navy UMUC graduate at Keflavik. His long progress from entry into a flight program with two years college in 1944, to completing approximately 180 hours of work at various campuses finally earned him a University of Maryland B.A. His journey was recorded in *Readers Digest* in 1963. He suggested that I take the College GED first, and then enroll with University of Maryland. With twelve GED credits earned, it didn't seem like a bad idea. We were restricted to the Base most of the time, our TV service centered on old Perry Mason, and canned Western films. Iceland, perhaps the most literate country in the world, had no TV station. The conditions were ideal for a fledging night school student.

I left Iceland in 1964 for a Pentagon tour, with one year of creditable work, allowing me to continue night enrollments at College Park until my discharge in 1966. Four years later, with a B.A. earned on campus, and M.A. from the Graduate School, I was established in a new career in Navy R&D. Then came a major decision, to stay in a promising HR career, or to accept entry into a PhD program at the London School of Economics. The lure of the PhD called, and Maryland offered some UK employment. Four interesting London years, two dissertation supervisors late, broke and ABD, I was compelled return to the US. But once more I left via Iceland, teaching one Spring term. It was reassuring to return to Iceland; the country still held great cultural appeal. And I was even able to incorporate the Penguin edition *Of the Njal's Saga* into one class, with special attention to the tradition of very independent women.

It was interesting to return on the other side of the classroom to Keflavik and to venture out into Reykjavik for cultural events. At one of these I formed a friendship with an Icelandic Political Scientist. We shared perspective at Vardberg Society meetings, and coffee at the Hotel Borg. In 1997 we met again. At that point he was the President of Iceland and as democratic and welcoming as before. Leaving Europe a little less impoverished, the PhD having been awarded in London in 1990, I reentered the teaching market in New York State, from 1998 to the present, in class and on-line. Iceland reshaped my views of the world, especially social values.

Iceland, the *Land of Fire and Ice*, now a major eco-tourist destination shaped much of my life. My academic advisors included the Atlantic Division Director, Captain Morgan Slayton, USN (ret.), Dr Joseph Arden, the President of Iceland, Olafur Ragnar Grinsson, the students, colleagues, and numerous Icelanders whom I came to know and regard further influenced my *Weltanschauung*. The Navy, combined with Iceland's glaciers and the volcanoes added fire to my life and inspired my mind. Thus it may be that even a seeming 'bad' assignment may prove to be a life changing experience, opening new cultural doors and friendships.