

Asian Division 1975 to Now: My Early Years with Maryland

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In 1973, I resigned from my first college teaching job at Sophia University's International Division in Tokyo to return to Korea, where I had done my Peace Corps service as an English teacher in Busan during 1966 and 1967. I arrived in Seoul from Tokyo, and, while waiting to be cleared to teach with the University of Maryland's Far East Division, I found a job as a Teen Center counselor at Yongsan Army Garrison. By the time I had completed my first year as a counselor, I had been approved to teach and had taught a couple of sociology classes at Yongsan for Maryland. I enjoyed the teaching more than the counseling, so I resigned from my position and began teaching full-time for Maryland.

Maryland became my only job, but I'm not sure whether I should call it full-time or not. Logistical support for locally situated faculty did not yet exist for our university, but I managed to get base passes and visa sponsorship from friendly Education Services Officers. I'm not certain but I think I taught at least one class a term and possibly sometimes taught a second class. During this period, I got married to a young Korean woman and convinced her that, even though she was a city girl, it would be exciting to go live in the countryside. Maryland told me they could use a teacher at Camp Long in Wonju, so we moved there and found a traditional Korean farmhouse with a courtyard behind the base, where we were able to rent a corner room for about \$5 a month. There wasn't running water, but there was a water pump right outside the door to our room.

It was fun teaching and living in Wonju, and, being the only teacher there, except for a Korean language teacher, I taught a number of sociology, anthropology, and Asian Studies classes at the camp and got to know my students quite well. I believe that I usually only had one class a term, but, with such inexpensive rent and living expenses, we did fine. Many years later, sitting around with some storytelling Marylanders, I heard someone tell a story about a Maryland teacher who walking home late at night, after drinking with students at an NCO Club, was crossing a dark, frosty rice field when he suddenly plunged up to his chin into a liquid human manure pit, which was used for fertilizer, until he managed to scramble out. I was amazed because that story was about me. As I emerged from the pit, my wife ran off screaming while I chased after her. At our farmhouse, despite the bitter winter cold, I had no choice but to allow my wife to pour buckets of freezing cold pump water over my naked body while I shampooed and completely scrubbed myself several times.

After six months or so in the country, I was told there would be more classes for me if I wanted to move to Osan Air Base. That sounded like a good idea, so we moved to Songtan and found another room in a farmhouse in a village a few miles out in the country from the air base. The rent was only \$10 and we bought bicycles to navigate our way over the dirt roads into the town. My wife actually went out with the village women a few times to wash our clothes in the nearby village stream, pounding the clothes over some rocks.

Teaching at Osan, for the first time, I got to know a group of fellow teachers, who were part of the original traveling faculty for Maryland, moving every six months or year to another part of Asia. They were an intelligent, young, and adventurous group of individuals, and we quickly made some good friends. I also soon discovered that, in addition to making much more money than I was, they had various benefits such as shopping privileges and even the ability to fly on military aircraft to Yokota Air Base outside of Tokyo in between terms if they wanted to. After teaching at Osan for six months or so, I decided to apply for one of those traveling faculty positions. I had gotten to know Joe Arden, the director of the Far East Division (as it was then called), and he suggested that he sit in on my sociology class behind the Ed Center, in a building that is still being used more than 40 years later, before he made his final decision. I was pretty nervous and was about to tell him after the class that I realized how poorly I had done when he surprised me by telling how much he had enjoyed the class.

I was offered one of the traveling faculty positions, and my wife and I began to travel. We went to Yokota for a term or two and then to Iwakuni Marine Air Station for a half a year before returning to Korea. There we moved down to Kunsan Air Base for two or three terms and then north to Seoul, where my daughter Lori was born. From that point on, we managed to bounce back and forth between Seoul and Okinawa. We had cribs, high chairs, and cooking utensils at both places as we went back and forth for about another four years. In Okinawa, there was an extremely interesting group of Marylanders that I became friends with, including George Sidney, Ken Shapiro, Jim Vickery, and many others. Mary Lawlor rented a nice house up on a hill near Kadena with a beautiful view, and George Sidney, the area director, organized spirited co-ed touch football games that involved many of us teachers.

After finishing the maximum length of five years of traveling, I settled back into one of the new logistically supported positions in Seoul from which I continued to travel all over Korea teaching classes. Of course, I made new faculty friends back in Korea, and some of the friends that I had made in Okinawa also made their way to Korea either as logistically supported or annual traveling faculty. Back in those days, although there were faculty members of various ages, most of us were fairly young so there was always a lot of adventure and partying to be had.

After about six more years of full-time teaching in Korea, I accepted a position at Hanguk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS), Korea's major foreign language university, where I taught English and American culture in the undergraduate school and North American studies and applied linguistics in two of the grad schools. I continued to teach on an adjunct basis for Maryland during my nineteen years at HUFS, often teaching two classes a term with UMUC during my first ten years there. After nineteen years, I finally returned to full-time teaching for Maryland in 2008. I am still teaching full-time today and will address the changes that have occurred at UMUC/UMGC in the last 15 or 20 years in a later memoir. For now, suffice it to say, I have loved teaching overseas students in Asia for Maryland in various capacities over the last forty-five years.