

Asian Division Recollections
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I started my position as Japan Area Director at Yokota AB on the first business day of September, 2001. I had moved during August from Okinawa, where I had been Pacific Director for then-Troy State University for five years. I choose an apartment in Yokoyamadai, a town about 20 km south of Yokota, not far from Sagamihara station. I was the only gaijin in my neighborhood, a situation that I had wanted.

When I started, the Japan Area Office was on Yokota West in the bottom floor of a residential tower across Route 16 from the main base. As the Division was organized, the Japan Area Office was responsible for the seven installation on Honshu and Kyushu, from Misawa in the north to Sasebo in the south. Having come from Troy, I had certain advantages. I knew these installations and the ESOs. I can recall Fran Wilson, Jeff Allen, Jon Richardson, Bob Sazama, Ron Scronce, and Sharon Dial as my starting lineup. I also had some experience scheduling courses and faculty.

Still, there was much to learn, particularly about scheduling, given the vast difference in enrollments between the Asian Division and Troy's Pacific Region. Scheduling is an art that must consider so many variables: what the students need, what the ESO wants, what faculty are available to teach which courses, the preferences and personal situations of faculty, among other factors. I really learned this art from Joe Arden. I worked hard at it and took great pride in it. I had the same appreciation for a schedule that balanced all the variables well as would a mathematician for an elegant equation.

My transition to the Asian Division coincided of course with those tragic events in the US on September 11. How I received the news is still fixed in my memory. I was in my office working on the upcoming term schedule. It was late, near midnight September 11 Tokyo time or even very early morning September 12. My admin—the spouse of an active duty member—called me in the office and told me that a plane had crashed into one of the Twin Towers in New York. I was incredulous as I was trying to understand what she said. I remember saying to her that I was sure the structure could sustain the damage, so that survivors could get safety out. The next morning, when I saw footage of both towers collapsing, I did not realize what I was seeing. Then I knew how terribly wrong I was. The full extent of the tragedy was being broadcast, including the Pentagon and United Flight 93.

The situation for all of us immediately changed. All installations went to THEATCON Charlie—or maybe it was even DELTA—and only essential personnel were admitted to the base. Initially, I was not able to get faculty on base. Curfews were put in place that curtailed the evening schedule and required scheduling make-up classes on weekends or other times to address lost contact time. It was a significant advantage that I had a history with my ESOs and already had their trust. We were not getting acquainted under fire but could immediately get to the business of planning make-up classes and implementing other changes as required. Faculty were key

players in the success of all of this, carrying on as professionals, making every effort to accommodate our students whose ops tempo had dramatically changed.

I cannot recall how long the various restrictions lasted—it seemed like forever. But slowly they were lifted by degrees. Operations once again resumed as more or less normal, although there was a general sense of insecurity that stayed in the air for many months, especially for all of us, faculty and administrators alike, who lived off base.

These events made it all the more important for me to meet my faculty, visit their classes, and to start hosting faculty get-togethers. Hosting faculty get-togethers was something that Joe encouraged me to do several times a year at Yokota for the Kanto faculty and to host similar events—usually dinners off base—in conjunction with visits to the other installations.

My first faculty ‘social’ taught me an important lesson. That first autumn of 2001, I do not recall exactly when, I scheduled a Saturday evening get-together for the Kanto faculty. It became my practice to book the Niwa Room at the Yokota O’Club, which would cater the event for us. Coming from Troy, and different rules of engagement, I planned a wonderful menu with a variety of beverages: bottled water, diet drinks, tea, and coffee. I thought that the evening went well. But sometime afterwards, Joe suggested in one of our regular conversations that it was permissible to include beer and wine. So, it seems, the word got around! And to good effect.

The most cherished memory of these Yokota get-togethers was an enactment of a chapter from Fritz Logan’s substantial novel, Tokyo Motorcycle. This was a special addition to the evening. Fritz was the Asian Division Academic Director for the Humanities with a shared office at Yokota. He narrated while several faculty and administrators assumed characters and recited dialog. The Niwa Room was packed, and everyone roared with laughter. I remember Anand Krishna in particular since his rendition of his character was so hilarious.

Other gatherings that stand out in my mind were the faculty dinners at the “Chicken Shack” near Iwakuni and at the Viking Restaurant in Misawa, where we could always get a large room to ourselves and cold beer with our dinner.

It was in my first year as Area Director when I had what I expected would be fatal to my career, a collision with one of my ESO’s. At the time I was Area Director, it was university policy to test students before they were placed in college algebra or college English to gauge their readiness. Those who scored too low—students could try multiple times—were placed in a remedial course. What occurred was this. An ESO at one of my installations began insisting that he would make these placement decisions. I guessed that his concern was that remedial courses discouraged students from continuing with their program. His position placed the field representative in an untenable position. The Academic Director for Mathematics, Ruth Lattimore, was also naturally concerned.

What followed were a series of phone conversations between me and the ESO. I made every effort to depersonalize the issue, acknowledging that the ESO, as an experienced education administrator, might well be able to make these judgements. It really came down to an accreditation issue: our accreditor expects the university to follow its stated policies. It would be

an accreditation ‘finding’ if the university placed students via some nonofficial practice. Finally, faced with an unyielding ESO, my back was up, and I said this or something very close to it: “If you tell a student who has not taken the placement test that he or she may take college algebra, I will tell the student that he or she cannot take college algebra”. I assumed that the ESO’s next phone call would be to Joe. But I never heard any more about the issue. Not from the ESO. No word from Joe.

In the end, this was a failure on my part. There was likely some other legitimate horse trading I could have done with the schedule as a compensatory gesture. Long after I left the Asian Division, the university eliminated placement testing for a redesigned college algebra course that embedded remedial modules. This reflected a consensus across the academic community that remedial courses do indeed lower persistence rates.

At the time, part of the life of Area Directors in Asia were periodic meetings with Joe as a group at the New Sanno Hotel in the diplomatic district of Tokyo. Allen Berg would come in from Okinawa and Gary Hunt from South Korea. Eventually, Doug Franklin was assigned Area Director responsibilities, and he also would join. These meetings were scheduled over weekends and were always held in a conference room on the second floor of the Sanno. This was, and probably still is, a long, well-appointed room with beautiful wood paneling, a long heavy table, and deep comfortable chairs. Sometimes Lorraine Suzuki and other administrators would join these meetings.

A special part of these weekends was dinner with Joe at restaurants that he would carefully select. I remember my inaugural Area Directors’ meeting and my first dinner with Allan, Gary, and Joe. It was a French restaurant with small rooms and white walls. As we took after-dinner drinks, Joe offered cigars from a cigar box. I said to myself how could life be any better than this! I knew we all felt that way. There was a flair to life in the Division that started at the top and added an indelible sweetness to everyone’s years there.

A hard thing for any of us is to lose colleagues that you like and respect. One loss I experienced as Area Director was Dennis Doolin. Dennis had his graduate degrees from Stanford and served in the Department of Defense during the Nixon administration. He taught courses in East Asia politics and international relations on Kanto installations. Having such a rich personal background, he was an excellent and popular instructor.

I remember staying late one evening at Yokota and decided to walk over to the Education Center to see how the late-tier classes were going. I was astonished to see Dennis coming out early, and noticing my astonishment, Dennis explained that he was not feeling well. In fact, he had advanced lung cancer. He was admitted to NTT Tokyo Medical Center, not far from Gotanda Station. His family from California was called in.

I made many trips back and forth to help with various legal and HR documents that Dennis wanted to update. I visited Dennis every day. He would sit up in bed and tell stories about his time in the Nixon Administration and his interactions with Melvin Laird and Henry Kissinger. One Sunday, I received a call from his wife, Elko, to come immediately. While I had become very efficient in using the trains to Gotanda Station, I arrived after Dennis had passed away.

There was only Eiko and a nurse in his room. There was a wonderful funeral service for Dennis at the Franciscan Chapel Center in Roppongi. The Asian Division was there for him: Fritz Logan, Christine Beaupre, and others from the Asian Division were there to say good-bye to him and participated in the service.

There are a number of Japan Area colleagues who passed away after I left the Division. These include Fritz Logan, Frank Gualtieri, Chuck McGeever, Mervin Whaley, and Lorraine Suzuki. I have such fond memories of these dear people. I can only say that the Division was so much richer for each one of them.

One endearing memory I have of Lorraine is the annual parties that she would organize for her academic directors and other Yokota administrators at her home in Mitaka. Hers was an old-style Japanese home that would have been considered luxurious when built. It was two stories, had a sloping tile roof, was made of wood, and was quite large. It had an enclosed courtyard in a quiet, leafy area outside of Tokyo. Lorraine would cook all day and fret about the arrangements. But when the directors and other administrators would show up, Lorraine would relax and the wine and conversation would flow. When Lorraine moved to the Michigan, she and her husband sold the Mitaka home. I was so sad to learn that it no longer exists; that a place that was so special to them and shared with others is now an urban landscape of apartment buildings and shops.

I enjoyed Japan as much as my work for the Division. With 12 semester hours of Japanese under my belt, I was comfortable living on the economy. I had my favorite onsens and tonkatsu restaurants. I shopped at the Sanwa in my town. I joined a Buddhist temple in Tokyo at the request of a Japanese friend who later became my wife. I became a big sumo fan, which sport I still follow online through the *Daily Yomiuri*.

I left the Asian Division in 2005 for a position in the undergraduate school on the home campus. It was a wrenching decision because I loved the Division and Japan so much. I recall my going away dinner with key Yokota administrators. Lorraine presented me with a large ink drawing of Japanese thatch homes in the winter under Mount Fuji. It hangs today as a permanent memory in my study. That I was departing Japan really hit home when I was cleaning my apartment in Yokoyamandai after the movers had taken my furniture. Lorraine had a Japanese handyman who helped her at Mitaka, and he was willing to help me with the cleaning. I knew and liked him very much. He was still working when it came time for me to leave the apartment. He asked when I was coming back to Yokota. I remember the impact on both of us when I had to say to him, “kaerimasen” (I am not returning).

The foregoing was written in one sitting and close to the deadline for delivering a memoir. I wish I could have been more reflective out of respect for my colleagues and my experiences. My hope is that these OMA recollections can become an open source to be added to by the community. As I continue to pull the thread, I am sure I will have more that I will want to contribute.

Thank you for this opportunity.