

## An Unforeseen Consequence

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Two things I will always be grateful to the University of Maryland Asian Division for were the opportunity to go to exotic places and the free time between terms to enjoy those places. I used to tell my friends in the States that Southeast Asia was my backyard. I went to places there during term breaks that I would never have had the chance to visit if I had not been working for UMUC in Japan or Korea. I put together slide shows of my travels that I used in my Asian studies classes over the years, and I like to think that my students learned a great deal from MY travels.

Aside from East Asia and SE Asia, another place I'm sure I never would have had the opportunity to go to is Australia. I actually taught there twice for Mother Maryland. The first time, I had the good fortune to be the last Maryland faculty member to teach at Harold E. Holt Naval Station on the Exmouth peninsula on the Indian Ocean in Western Australia. It was in the Spring of 1992. I had an experience there between terms that found its way into the classroom which wound up having a consequence I never would have imagined.

Between terms, I went to Darwin up (not down) in the tropics. The only way to get there was to fly down to Perth and then fly back up to Darwin. Before I left Holt, someone on base recommended a hotel in Perth used by Americans which was a short taxi ride to the airport. It sounded good, so I stayed there. It wasn't an actual building. Instead it was a number of cottages. Very nice. About 50 bucks. I don't remember if it was US or Australian, but at the time there wasn't much difference. I spent a few nights there, so I could explore Perth a little, and then went to Darwin, and then returned to Perth for one night before I went back to Holt to teach.

On the last night I was there, I had a strange and troubling dream. The seed of it may have been planted the night before when I had gone to see the movie JFK. Bad history, but a good movie. I thought about it quite a bit the next day, and that night, my last night in Perth, I dreamed about the government being involved in all sorts of sordid things. Black ops. Breaking into people's homes. Scary stuff. In the dream, somebody dressed in black from head to toe broke into my home and shined a flashlight in my face. I asked him how he got into my house, and he replied, "Through the roof." I said, "Well, get the hell out, and use the door." Obediently, he turned to his left and walked out the door.

I awoke in the morning thinking that was a scary dream, especially because it was so vivid. As I walked to the bathroom in my usual morning manner --- slowly and with my head down --- I saw on the floor just before me a lot of --- a lot something that didn't look right. Being half asleep, it took me a few seconds to focus on and realize what this weird debris was. It was chunks of wood and a bunch of gray shingles. I looked up --- and sure enough --- there was a gaping hole in the roof. It hadn't been a dream! Some burglar had fallen through the roof, shined a flashlight in my face, and left when I told him to get out. I was stunned.

I called to the front desk, and to my surprise, the woman I spoke to didn't seem very concerned. She asked me if he "pinched" anything. I told her I didn't know; I hadn't looked through my things closely yet. Then she made a weird a comment. She said "You say he came in through the roof? That's strange. They usually come in through the window." That made me feel *really* special.

Afterwards, when I was at the office settling my bill and calling a taxi, the two women there did not seem at all concerned or contrite. I assumed they would have comped the bill, but they didn't. They seemed pretty much inconvenienced by my situation. I don't remember exactly how it happened, but as I was settling the bill, the taxi was waiting outside, and we seemed to finish up without them actually asking for the money. Ordinarily, I would have said, "Well, I haven't paid yet," but since they had been so crummy about it, I just walked outside and got in the taxi.

I hadn't been at the small airport long when I was paged. I went to the area where I was told to go, and there was one of the women, her finger wagging and

pointing at me and demanding her 50 dollars. I gave it to her and left. I probably considered telling her where to put it, but I didn't. I just wanted to get away from her. I got on the plane.

Two nights later, back at Holt in front of a class on the first night of a new term, I told the students what had happened and cracked a few jokes about it. I thought that was the end of the story, but at the break during the second night of class, one of the students, a Navy Chief, came up to me and said "the situation" had been resolved. I had no idea what she meant. It turns out that her husband, a civilian contractor who was in charge of arranging accommodations for people coming to the base on official business, had been using that hotel for their accommodations. After she told him what had happened to me, he changed hotels for the incoming personnel. She told me that they had on average about four people come each week. Four people a week! That's 200 bucks a week, which, of course, is 10,000 dollars a year.

I was shocked that my comments in class would wind up having such an impact on the hotel down in Perth. And I'm sure the good ladies down in Perth didn't realize that the way they treated me would have such an impact on their business either. But I think they figured it out because a month after I was back at Holt I received a letter sent to the base addressed to me apologizing for had happened. Included in it was 50 bucks.