

FAR AWAY PLACES WITH STRANGE SOUNDING NAMES

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All of us associated with the Maryland overseas program are, of course, familiar with many of the large military installations in Asia and Europe. Installations in Asia such as Yokota, Misawa, Yongsan, Osan, Kadena, etc., and the Ramsteins, Heidelbergs, Lakenheaths, Berlins, Frankfurts, Naples, Adanas, Rotas, etc., of Europe. As well as the large 'down range' installations of a generation later.

The importance of these large installations cannot be over emphasized. Quite literally, with their high enrollments, they carried the European and Asian Divisions, financially, logistically and academically. Carried, from the 1960s well into the 21st century. Without them, there could not have been a UMUC overseas program.

But in my years (1971-2007) as an administrator in one division or the other, I always took particular pleasure, as did other senior overseas administrators, such as Julian Jones and Paula Harbecke, in seeing the Maryland flag planted in yet another "Far Away Place With a Strange Sounding Name." Thus, I was greatly pleased, when based in Heidelberg, to be directly involved in bringing UMUC classes to Morocco, Iran, Cypress, Portugal and Cairo/the Sinai, all of which were administered through the European Division. When in Asia, I was responsible for the Maryland program being established at Midway Island, Kwajalein, Hong Kong, Subic Bay in the Philippines and a couple of different locations in Australia.

Particularly fun and challenging, whether in Heidelberg or Tokyo, was to bring Maryland classes to United States Embassies in Beijing, Moscow, Vienna, Paris, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

How did one go about opening a Maryland program in such locations? Well, it varied a lot but always involved many letters and/or telephone calls. Maryland classes began at almost all of the above venues before the coming of e-mail. To illustrate, I'll use case of the Harold E. Holt, a small Naval installation in a quite isolated area of Western Australia. After having sent several letters over a two-year period, without receiving even an acknowledgement, I almost bounced off the ceiling when in 1978 in the mail at Yokota, arrived a letter from the Navy Chaplain assigned to the Harold E. Holt, with an invitation to call him. Within a couple of weeks, I was on a plane bound for Australia.

Sometimes, as with the Moscow Embassy and also in Saudi Arabia, the key link was an adjunct faculty member who had taught elsewhere with Maryland. And, in a couple of instances, a particularly keen student wanted very much to continue her/his education with Maryland and contacted us, as did a Marine Sergeant stationed at the Embassy in Beijing, who had earlier been a Maryland student at Iwakuni in Japan. On other occasions, as with Sigonella (Sicily) and La Maddalena (Sardinia), I quite literally flew in unannounced and went knocking on doors. In case of Bahrain, I had earlier known a senior Navy Captain, and he opened the doors for me to fly down from Heidelberg to discuss Maryland classes.

Perhaps the "strangest-most-far-away place" was Montevideo, Uruguay. Someone at the U.S. Embassy contacted the University of Maryland College Park campus and asked about classes. By good fortune, UMCP forwarded the inquiry to UMUC. So, Ben Massey, UMUC President, contacted me in Heidelberg. I then immediately took liberty of giving Ben a brief history lesson in which I emphasized that Uruguay had once been part of the Spanish Empire in South America, and, "Ben, we all know that Spain is in Europe, and so what could be more logical than a European Division program in Montevideo?"

With regard to the faculty who taught at locations such as those noted above. In case of embassies it was almost always State Department officials or other staff assigned to the embassy in question. For sure that was the case in Moscow and Beijing. But in other locations, sometimes to include the Bangkok Embassy, travelling faculty were assigned. In such instances, the faculty member often needed to be a Jack or Jill of all trades and deal with lots of issues other than classroom teaching. Playing, for example, the combined roles of Education Services Officer and Field Representative. Among present OMA members, a partial list of faculty who taught in some of the above locations would include Richard Adams, Bob Barcus, Charles Brumfield, Carl Castore, Jerry Collins, David Forde, Ray Fox, Pauline Fry, David Glaser, Marla Lowenthal, and Nick Zoa. (Apologies to the many folks I am failing to recall.)

A final point: When studying European history and international relations, I had never really understood, and certainly did not empathize with, the apparently almost universal tendency of political leaders in the major European countries, to view a globe or a world map and yearn to see their country's flag flying in "far away places with strange sounding names." And always dreaming of yet more conquests, more flags.

But, during those marvelous decades as an administrator overseas with Maryland I completely understood and totally empathized.