

## **“Ich hab' mein Herz in Heidelberg verloren”**

Melanie Ruark Paris  
September 2020

Melanie Ruark and James Paris met in 1987 when they were both working at UMED. James was working the summer and then returned to school in FL. At some point, James came back to Heidelberg to stay.

Melanie and James liked doing some of the same sorts of things: biking to places like Koenigstuhl and having a beer at the Gaststätte; traveling with friends to different places for fun activities; and other sports like skiing, racquetball and running. They were just friends to begin with and for some time.

At some point that changed and they began living together. While on vacation in the Canary Islands, and some 50 feet under the water scuba diving, James proposed and Melanie accepted.

As time went on, they felt the need to leave UMED in order to expand their careers. They had hit the glass ceiling. So, they mailed back as many of their belongings as they could via APO and began the search in the US trying to answer the question “where do we live now?” They were headed to Colorado but traveled visiting friends and family; all the time looking for jobs and asking if it was “the” place. Melanie was originally from WA and James from FL, so there was much to explore and determine.

Melanie and James were able to find jobs in the DC area and have been there ever since. They eventually got married, bought a house and then filled it with three kids and a dog and a cat. They’ve been trying to teach their kids German.

The kids are no longer kids as the oldest is in college the other two are a senior and a sophomore in High School. James and Melanie enjoy taking them back to Germany to visit family and to enjoy some of the same European experiences they have had. Of course, there is always something new to see!

James and Melanie also thoroughly enjoyed the UMED reunion in Heidelberg, Germany in 2016. Now, they want their kids to have a similar experience - to be able to work and travel abroad while earning a college degree.

Melanie Ruark Paris  
UMED 1984 -1993

Melanie was part of the University of Maryland European Division (UMED) Administrative staff from 1984 to 1993. She also taught Computer Studies Seminars for the last few years.

Melanie worked with these folks in these areas during this time:

Dr. Rosemary Scholl Hoffmann and Val Greer and Richard Clegg

Drs Paul Phillips and LeAnn Cragun and the British woman (can't remember her name)

Dr. Lynn Whitaker and Penelope Roberts

Faculty Advisors Drs Chris Mooney and Fabian Schupper and Jennie Quillien

Computer Studies Dr. Ronaldo Vacchino and Dan Bennett and Scott Culton and Doug Lemmon

Some of her fondest memories are:

Having the pleasure of meeting and working with Dr. Joe Arden and others and continuing to keep in contact via the many gatherings

Many other friends that she still keeps in touch with - Linda O'Reilly, Patrice Rodrick, the late Beverlie Erwin, Penelope Roberts, and the late Dr. Fabian Schupper

Teaching Computer Studies seminars - deliver and set up computers and teach classes in Germany and Belgium

Working and schooling weekdays; traveling and playing weekends

Getting her Masters Degree while working and traveling (Melanie received an MS in Computer Information Systems from Boston University. This was before UMED began offering a Master's program).

Living and working in Heidelberg, Germany. Learning and speaking the language.

Meeting her future husband James Paris. She can honestly say "Ich hab' mein Herz in Heidelberg verloren." See other memoir.

It was a great experience and one that she wishes her children could experience. It was travel galore on peanuts for pay. The exchange rate at the time made it more possible.