

A Dual Existence

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In October of 2019 BC (before corona, so to speak), I was on my way driving home from our European Marylanders reunion when my old buddy and fellow UMED colleague Alan Ertl called. Al now lives in France, just close to the German-French border and had hoped to be in attendance himself. But ill-health forced him to cancel in the last minute. "So Pat, how was the meeting, who were there?" he asked. "I am driving and not back home yet. I will call you later", I assured. As always, much of our conversation, after getting back to Al, touched on his favorite topics: politics, general world affairs, and the ready supply of unforgettable lore drawn from our common *Maryland adventures* until 2014. Al had not heard about the UMUC documentary film "Over There". So I needed to fill him in and direct him to the appropriate online links, knowing very well that he would enjoy following the historical accounts. I believe the current Memoirs Project will collate with the film to equip everyone, touched one way or the other, by the details of UMUC's overseas program, with the most comprehensive of insights. After digesting every bit of the superb accounts submitted before my own here, I have a feeling that mine - in comparative terms - passes only for a modest addition. So much of the narratives, certainly unknown previously to some of us, do really describe the *finest hours* of Maryland's motley crew. They help to set even the most forgetful mind straight down the path to memory lane. Whether as admin or faculty folks, the authors prove with uniform consistency that serendipity has been the gypsy scholar's strongest ally.

For the most part of my existence since the end of the 1970s, I have had two lives running parallel and concurrent to each other: that of the European Division of the University of Maryland (hereinafter referred to simply as UMED), and that of "Germany".

My formative years were spent in the former British colony of the Gold Coast (now Ghana since 1957). I passed through the rigors of Catholic boarding schools for boys managed by Irish Jesuits and Texan Holy Cross Brothers. When I left Ghana after secondary school, I already had admission to study law at the State University of New York at Buffalo. But that was not to materialize. So, how then did I end up becoming part of the European Division of the University of Maryland in Heidelberg, Germany?

I don't intend to overwhelm you with any volume of detail. Suffice is to write the year 1978 when I obtained my Master of Arts degree from the University of Heidelberg.

I had been living in Heidelberg since 1970 as a student. I came there as a 21-year old from England where I had enrolled to study Law with Wolsley Hall Oxford. I arrived in Germany with no knowledge of the German language or people. To be frank, I had never met a native German in my life prior to coming to Germany. At the airport in Duesseldorf where I disembarked in October of 1970, I felt lost when I wasn't seeing any sign stating "Germany" anywhere. I didn't know that the Germans called their country "Deutschland" instead of Germany. Indeed, the label Deutschland was familiar to me somehow; but I had always thought it referred to the Dutch (Holland) people. In regard of Germany and the Germans, the old stereotypes of my (colonial) British education had them imprinted on my conscience as those former warmongering and then heartless, work-obsessed robots... Remember, 1970 was only 25 years since the end of World War II; and war damages were still clearly visible in some places of the country.

It didn't take long for me to be fully docked within my new Heidelberg environment. The first people I became friends with were predominantly young draftee American GIs and some Canadian students of my age. After all, they were the only ones that I could communicate with in English. But, with the support of a Catholic organization based in Cologne whose address was my first point of call when I arrived, I became enrolled to participate in a German language program lasting six months. (This happened to be a necessary precondition for admission to study at the University of Heidelberg). My language school was an institution of the education ministry of the state of Baden Wuertenberg. It was housed in the Schloss Hotel behind the Heidelberg Castle. In line with the practical aspects of the language training, I was sent - together with other foreign students - to live for four weeks in the summer of 1971 with a selection of German families in the city of Heilbronn. My family consisted of the couple (both dentists), two daughters and a 4-year old son with whom I still maintain relationships after almost 50 years! By the second day of my stay with the family, it felt as if the language school had locked me up and thrown the key away into the ocean. I was on my own, like all the others -- and obliged to use only German as the means of communication with my German family members and all the inquisitive neighbors of our street. This was the purpose behind the program anyway: linguistic immersion...

One summer weekend in Heilbronn, all hell broke loose, as my GI friends (numbering seven) from Tompkins Barracks (Schwetzigen by Heidelberg), descended on my street in a VW van and converted the neighborhood into a veritable party zone. I don't know how they found me; it turned out they had planned to check me out at the language school, and heard about my current

whereabouts - 70 ks away from Heidelberg. The moment I saw those guys get out of the van, I went: "Holy C...; I thought I have been advised not to speak any other tongue besides German in this town!" They brought along an assortment of strangely-named drinks from the Class Six store: Pagan Pink, Coolade, Big Bear, Root Beer, Tequila Sunrise, Grasshopper, etc., etc. They had also brought along an actively deafening cacophony of disco music on cassette tapes. My embarrassment was mildly palpable, to say the least. But the neighborhood kids liked what they were seeing and hearing. So, that was fine by me too!

As the case was in the United States and elsewhere around the globe, the early 1970s were turbulent times at university centers in Germany including Heidelberg. There were ample moments marked by strikes, sit-ins, leaflet campaigns, protests, and clashes between police units and students bent on revolution. Such events frequently provoked the authorities to enforce shutdowns of universities. Most students were drawn to the University of Heidelberg as much for its tradition of activism as for its academic reputation. In hot summer days, crowds of hedonistic long-haired hippies were accustomed to invade and convert the banks of the Neckar river into spectacular scenes. Those were the heydays of a generation of young people in search of love and sex, inspired by booze, drugs, and music.

The Germany I came to know from this period on was a very welcoming environment, especially for foreign students of the so-called Third World. In a scramble to redeem its soiled reputation as a racist Nazi society, the country's foreign policy deliberately sought to entice African, Asian and Latin American students with scholarships to study at its institutions of higher learning and to help them get to know the true face of the new democratic culture and its people. So, I also became a beneficiary of the plentiful largesse that existed in Germany to fulfil the political objectives sought. But, superimposed on this policy was an untold precondition that appeared to stipulate that students should return home after completion of their studies, in order to aid in the economic development of their individual countries: -- typically German, of course, and also laced with good intentions. This point is worthy of mention for two reasons: First, it helps to explain some of the difficulties I personally faced after graduation from the University of Heidelberg in 1978, as I attempted to find some form of employment within the German system. Second, it became the catalyst - as it turned out in the final analysis, for my unflinching gratitude and dedication to the European Division of the University of Maryland from the year 1978 until 2014. Those details are part and parcel of my exhaustive accounts that follow here.

Universities in Germany by tradition do not feature the campus type of configuration commonly known in the English-speaking world. Lecture halls, seminar facilities and other venues meant for academic activities as well as student hostels are normally scattered confusingly among the general population of the

cities where the universities are located. It is a student's own responsibility to know and follow the compass to where a facility of interest is located. By the time I had advanced into the higher semesters, I was engaged in research for my master's degree at the Max-Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law. I preferred to make that facility my main learning base, because it was situated away from the hustle and bustle congestion of the old city area. The institute, at the time, was a globally-renowned flashpoint engaged in an ambitious project to develop an Encyclopedia of International Law. It attracted a lot of foreign legal experts and was usually headed by professors who happened simultaneously to be judges of the European Court of Justice or the Human Rights Court at Strassbourg, France.

This was the prestigious institute at which our UMED colleague Bob Hollweg had the good fortune to hold a full-time job. Bob was part of the group of international researchers who were involved in the editing of the encyclopedic volumes. I got to know Bob around the year 1975. Normally between 12:00 and 13:00, staff and students working in the institute's library and offices (including myself) usually left the building in groups to walk to a nearby student canteen to take lunch. I never saw Bob participating in that daily ritual; I used to see him with a briefcase always tugged under his armpit and marching in the opposite direction of where everyone else was headed. So I asked him one day what he was always up to. That was when Bob told me about his *lunch classes* at the University of Maryland to which he needed to rush to. Of course, I failed to understand what he meant by a University of Maryland - at Heidelberg, in Germany... But we had a common British friend who worked in the same office as Bob Hollweg. He was the one who later explained the mystery of Bob's second occupation to me.

Ok; so now, fast forward to the year 1978: the university had handed over to me my Master of Arts degree in the subject combination of Political Science, International Law and Philosophy. About a week later, I received a letter from the city administration of Heidelberg, informing me, dutifully, that I had passed my final examination and received my diploma; so I was required to get ready to head home and to make sure that I didn't overstay my residence permit! (Now mind you: the letter came from the city authority, not the university... Call this *synchronized information-sharing!*)

So, what now?

Well, there was something else about me they didn't know yet...

At some point in 1975, my German girlfriend became pregnant. This unplanned circumstance had led me to become married in the interim. This was a coincidence which also protected my residence status. Actually, in earnest, the situation before the birth of my daughter in 1976 was partly responsible for my determination to cease the occasional footlooseness, frequent disco visits and the

party lifestyle which most students of the 1970s were addicted to. Heidelberg, of course, was a major hub for such distractions. I needed to grow up fast, and hurry up to complete my studies in order to support my family in a responsible fashion. Achieving my academic goal in June of 1978 two years after my daughter's birth was, hence, a significant turning point. But now, I needed a job... This is the point where the reader might ask: "But Pat, why didn't you return home to Ghana?" Good question. By the close of the 1970s, the country was suffering from the ravages of successive military coups that had rendered the place the most unlikely environment for anyone with a family to choose for settlement. And, it was to get worse (anyone recalls the name of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings?).

The first step I took was to follow Bob Hollweg's track and meet Larry Hepinstall at Im Bosseldorn 30 with my application to teach for the University of Maryland. For my multiple letters of recommendation required for consideration, I included the name of Professor Roderick M Chisholm of Brown University in Rhode Island. He was a renowned guru in the branch of philosophy known as *Epistemology* or the "Theory of Knowledge". He had a number of - still, until today - much quoted publications, writings and articles on the subject under his belt, some of which I had read. I had taken some of his seminars at the university of Heidelberg -- where he frequently returned to as a visiting scholar -- and submitted commentaries and other works to him (in English), which he always painstakingly graded for me with a great degree of enthusiasm. (Dr. Hepinstall told me sometime later that his prompt recommendation in support of my application was one of the most comprehensive he had ever read).

The situation that prevailed on the employment market globally was not a good one in the period beginning from 1975. The general malaise became more acute, especially in a country like Germany. It was the direct result of the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the ensuing oil embargo that the Arab producers launched against Western nations. What became known in the second half of the 1970s as the *Oil Crisis* wreaked a far heavier havoc on a country like Germany - which totally lacked its own sources of oil as a resource. For a country that had experienced the proverbial *Wirtschaftswunder* in its background, characterized by decades of sustained economic growth and maximum employment, the country unexpectedly found itself standing on the brink of utter economic disaster. Factory closures set in; massive layoff of employees was initiated; the *Gastarbeiter* program was terminated with immediate effect (some factories were widely reported to have offered to pay out "bribes" to their Turkish workers, in order to entice them to leave the country). In a desperate attempt to slow down the exhaustion of the little strategic oil reserves which they had, the German government introduced an energy security law in November of 1973. Among other things, the legislation introduced speed limits on the *autobahn* and mandated the banning of car driving on weekends.

For new-comers to the German job market, looking for employment anywhere and anytime between the late 1970s and early 1980s sounded like a road map to definite disappointment. In my own case, I soon realized that it was a waste of time, as the efforts linked to my applications stumbled on, and the series of negative responses continued to mount. So, the best option I thought I had was to re-enroll to continue my studies towards a doctorate degree at my Alma Mater beginning, without hesitation, from the winter semester of 1978. At the same time, I registered with the German labor office (*Arbeitsamt*) as unemployed and in search of a job. My marital status entitled me to make use of such social services in Germany; but not only that: it allowed me and my family to remain medically insured for free. A fortunate addition to all these developments was when the Catholic agency responsible for my scholarship towards the master's degree approved the extension of its support to cover my doctorate degree. So, here I was, a student again in Heidelberg...

One morning (specifically-speaking on March 21, 1979), I received a letter signed by Larry Hepinstall, informing me that I had been "approved to teach the following courses in the European Division: GVPT 100 - Principles of Government and Politics, GVPT 240 - Political Ideologies, GVPT 300 - International Political Relations". The last paragraph of Larry's letter attracted my attention. It stated: "We appreciate your interest in the overseas program, one which can be rewarding both to the student and the faculty member." What Larry meant by "rewarding", I could deduce with certainty, was the factor of academic benefits and intellectual growth. However, given the kind of mental state I found myself in, my perspective was diverted rather to the material, *sic* monetary, benefits, tied to the good luck of having found a means to earn my daily bread.

I started my career with UMED soon after the arrival of the approval letter, when Area Director Larry Hepinstall sent Manfred Deckert and myself to Kapaun Air Station (Kaiserslautern) to co-teach a weekend seminar on Africa. Larry himself showed up on Sunday afternoon, with all his video and photographic gear. He was interested in monitoring how we were faring with the students. This seminar was followed by additional assignments on a range of other themes that took Manfred and me to several, sometimes far-flung, military bases in Germany, Holland and Belgium. By the time we accomplished our third or fourth seminar assignment, I had morphed into something like Sherlock Holmes' bumbling sidekick Watson. Manfred, a veteran faculty member at the time I first met him, of course, was Holmes... (I remember Dr. Arden telling me in October 2019 that Manfred was also on board the plane from the US that first brought him (Joe Arden) to Europe, go figure).

I recall that Larry left Heidelberg for good not long after I first started to interact with him. After his departure, Manfred and I continued to pursue weekend assignments that managed to materialize every now and then -- as before. The Heidelberg office folks might have rationalized that I was still a student: I was never assigned to go and teach any regular classes of my own during this time. Although entering military bases or spending a night at the BOQ around this period wasn't a major issue generally, there was always the advantage of Manfred functioning as a guardian on my behalf, since I wasn't an ID-Card holder. Sometimes, to secure my access to a base, I relied only on a simple note from the Heidelberg logistics office, typed on a Maryland letter head, and stating that I had a class business to transact at the base. But, so long as I was travelling with Manfred in his car, as the case almost always was, the gatekeepers never asked anything from me anyway.

In particular, I liked Manfred's friendly, easy rapport and polite interchange with the students we always met. Endowed with incredible stamina, busybody Manfred, it appeared to me, was always on an important teaching mission. And he infected me with this synergy. In a few cases, I discovered that he had gone to great lengths, planned well ahead, and arranged for students and the two of us to spend the post-seminar evenings together enjoying ourselves at a restaurant or some interesting eatery in town. A highlight was when we spent an evening in a restaurant at Bayreuth constructed upon a subterranean lake out of which the fish we were served came from. Such arrangements were more common, if our seminar happened to occur within his main Hessen/Bavarian action radius of Aschaffenburg, Hanau, Wiesbaden, Gelnhausen, Fulda, etc. where he resided, prior to moving to live in Heidelberg (Eppelheim) in 1991. Manfred's was an attitude which was to influence the conduct of my own class affairs in the succeeding years.

In November of 1980, my life as a student finally ended. But for the reasons already mentioned, I knew that my newly-minted doctorate degree did not offer me a blank check to a long-term employment or predictable income. At least, not yet. But, the doctorate degree made me become a preferred target of recruitment for volunteering in Germany after 1980. Traditionally, as part of the social infrastructure of Germany, there exists a broad array of organized groups at the communal levels. They include church groups, worker associations, youth movements and other interest groups. In the 1980s, issues tied to development aid, foreign policy, military coups in the so-called Third World, Apartheid in South Africa, were all topics of great public debates. German citizens sought means to provide feedback to their national government and international institutions on the effects of their policies on real lives. I became frequently invited by various groups all over the country to hold talks and to participate in such debates, which brought me two times on German national tv as part of a discussion panel in

1982/83. There were sometimes individuals in the audience who later requested to have a copy of my speech. But all I normally had were a few notes I had jotted down for myself as talking points. So, at a certain juncture in 1983, I wrote a book which I then offered for sale at the end of my speeches.

Meanwhile, by the end of 1980, I was no longer residing in the neighborhood of Heidelberg (Oftersheim). We had moved to my wife's birthplace - and my current location - near Speyer (about 30 minutes drive from Heidelberg) after inheriting the house of my in-laws.

Also, shortly after Christmas 1980, I reported to the career counselors at my local German employment agency responsible for my work placement options. They advised me to participate in a government-sponsored Electronic Data Processing training program (as it was called). The program was offered by the German company known as Nixdorf Computer AG in Wiesbaden. It was earmarked to begin in June 1981 on a daily basis for a duration of nine months... A computer, or its use, was not a household term understood by everyone in 1980. I remember that in the course of my studies at Heidelberg, I took a seminar in 1976 lasting an entire semester - out of sheer curiosity. It was titled "*Legal and Administrative Informatics: The Application of Computing Processes in the Field of Jurisprudence*". I am by nature not of a numerate turn of mind. Also, the issues handled in the semester appeared to me to be so abstract that I could confess by the end, that I had grasped very little. In spite of this background, I readily accepted the offer by the employment agency counselors. After all, program participants were expected to receive monthly payments as if they were in full employment.

Meanwhile in Wiesbaden, the composition of the group of participants in the program to which I now belonged shocked me, when I first met them in June of 1981. About a quarter of us - all designated as previously unemployed -- were holders of the doctorate degree. Each one else either had a master's degree or an equivalent advanced degree from various academic fields. There were engineers, chemists, physicists, geologists, sociologists, psychologists, you name it... Out of the total of 22, only four of us were non-Germans, including myself. After listening to the self-introductions and life stories of everyone, I became instantly convinced about the kind of unholy alliance within which I now found myself. The group revealed itself as a set of thoroughly disgruntled, angry and disinterested individuals who saw no real prospect in the success of the Nixdorf program as a means towards gainful employment or self-fulfilment. The Germans considered the program to be a futile attempt on the part of their government to throw money at the general problem underlying the integration of highly qualified individuals into the workforce. As the program progressed, a good deal of them showed up for the relevant instructions only sporadically, usually late, or not at all. The Nixdorf

instructors were mostly very professional and well-prepared in their presentations. But, they seemed to sense the kind of people they were dealing with. They never asked us questions or gave assignments. They usually came in, held their lengthy, monotonous lectures, while most participants engaged in reading their own books, fidgeted through newspapers and magazines, and simply departed when time was up.

I later heard that similar programs were running in Frankfurt and other cities parallel to our own in Wiesbaden. Instructional materials covered the following themes: Elements of Business Management, programming languages (BASIC, COBOL, FORTRAN). We also received practical training in the operation of Nixdorf computers. Nixdorf computers were heavy, oversized so-called mainframes that required rooms the size of three or more times any standard home garage to store them. They had a pretty good reputation and were used mainly in the banking and insurance sectors. At the end of the program in April of 1982, each one of us received a certificate of proficiency in computer management and operations. However, most of the group still had no clue as to the objectives or the implications of what we were expected to have learned. A major consequence of the introduction of the first PC by IBM in August of 1981 was the demise of Nixdorf mainframe computers. This shows that the training which my group received at Wiesbaden was already involved with an outdated technology at the time the program was launched. Nevertheless, the degree to which my introduction to the computer was to influence me personally and also my teaching career was to unfold in the distance of the future, as will be seen in my later accounts.

Peripatetic with my own Courses at Last

Meanwhile, from 1979 onwards, I was in attendance at all the UMED faculty meetings that were held each year prior to our May Commencements at the Officers Club of the Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg. I became used to listening attentively to Dr. Joe Arden's long presentations to faculty whereby he also regularly cautioned that teaching for the university may not be taken as a full-time occupation ensuring or warranting a steady flow of income to support the long term aspirations of faculty members. I understood the truth in what he meant very well. Freelance teachers, of course, are not earning income when they are not working. For someone like me with a family, Joe's occasional passing hints served as a signal to strive to keep one foot in UMED while maintaining the other foot in the German system whenever possible. In any case, I was standing alone near the entrance to the venue during a short break from one such meeting when Joe approached me. I think the year was 1983 or 1984. "Patrick, where do you plan to be in five years?", he asked. I reflected for a moment and replied in a surprised

tone: "I believe I will still be here". That was the end of our brief encounter. After this, Joe moved on to work the crowds as usual.

The consequences of that brief exchange, unknown to me at that point, however, were destined to be far-reaching. It marked the beginning of my full integration within the European Division core faculty fold. From that period on, I began to function as an independent contractor (within the German context, a *Lehrbeauftragter*) teaching my own courses whenever they came my way. From this time on, I began also to decline invitations to hold speeches or to deal with German interest groups, in order to pursue my UMED assignments.

Those assignments hailed usually from the office of the Area Director, Central Germany and from weekend seminar coordinators. If I remember correctly, Rosemary Anderson was my first Area Director in this regard. Several others were to follow over the years. Rosemary left soon after I began to chase her courses assigned to me. My wife and I were honored to be guests at the farewell party at her Gau Angerloch residence shortly before she returned to the US.

Travelling around to multiple locations to teach in Germany always involved inevitable encounters with fellow faculty members. From my personal experience, it was also the best means by which we came to know each other and in some cases establish tight friendships over the years. Just as we mostly never knew in advance who our students were going to be, it was, in the same token, also impossible to know ahead which faculty member or members might be teaching at the same base or in the same building as one's self. Occasionally situations arose whereby you could unexpectedly bump into a faculty member during your weekend class at Vilseck with whom you might have shared an Ed Center building at Ramstein Airbase a few days earlier. Those moments tended to lead to a great deal of funny exchanges, in my case, frequently, with Barry Denison, or Brian Cann: "Whaaat, are you here too?" used to be Barry's standard greeting in my direction for maybe hundreds of times; after which we would both burst into laughter. It used to be Barry also who always wondered why "they" were sending all of us in the opposite directions. Of course, by "they" was implied our "benevolent handlers" at UMED headquarters responsible for our class assignment protocols: Faculty members living in the Kaiserslautern areas were sometimes seen to have been shipped to the Heidelberg/Mannheim Ed Centers, while those living around HD/MA were headed to teach in the opposite direction of KL/Ramstein. "Cross-pollination, Barry; it's called cross-pollination", I would respond. Then goes Barry: "Whaat?"

The presumption, though, was that Area Directors had good reason for doing what they were accustomed to do...

Of all the myriad of bases where I had the pleasure to teach in the ED (63 in total), Ramstein Airbase, where I held my first regular class, turned out by 2014 to have been the one single base I travelled to the most. It was also the place where the overwhelming majority of the people (whether as students or colleagues) with whom I developed the longest lasting and enduring friendships lived, worked, or took my classes. This is especially true for the period from 1984 to about 1995. Before they left Germany, after their tours ended as service members or as military affiliated dependents, they had become close friends who were often on hand at my house, just like Manfred Deckert and his son, to join me either in the celebration of my children's communion, birthdays or son's baptism. On a few occasions they just came by to my small town near Speyer to have us frighten New Years' nights with fireworks and dazzle.

Special moments in the life of the European Division were for some of us the months of May. That was when the colorfully staged Commencements took place. Commencements served as the best and most convenient platforms for meeting some of the past or recent students scattered all over the globe, who - at some point, one way or the other - might have crossed our paths as professors. I enjoyed commencements immensely, and always made sure that I was part of the crowd. Looking in from the outside, they showcased the European Division as a well-oiled machinery capable of the meticulous display of pomp and pageantry, providing a unique experience and magic to honor our graduates. Popular opinion still holds that the last Commencement with Joe Arden at the Mannheim Rosengarten was by far the most intense and memorable.

Diversifying Activity Profile in the Years of Transformation and Anxiety

1989/1990 were eventful years, globally, and for UMED. This was when communism's fading credentials -- for a long time trapped in a delicate web of self-deception, tumbled and fell, bringing down the Berlin Wall with it, as well as a huge crack in the political universe. Post-Cold War realities involved some drastic alterations in familiar foreign policies and international relations. As ideological tensions subsided, military draw-downs and base closures took hold. The rapid developments were accompanied by legitimate fears -- among all those dependent on UMUC's European program or whose *raison d'être* for being in Germany was linked essentially to UMUC -- that the end might be nigh.

Existential fears tied to unexpected economic hardships frequently lead people to think of a plan B. As an increasing number of my courses began to be cancelled for lack of adequate enrollments, I made an effort to explore new academic activity avenues. On a notice board at the entrance to the library of the University of Administrative Science in Speyer, I read once that a German professor was looking for someone to translate research results from German to English for a

small fee. In Germany's socialized educational system, full-time teachers and professors were (and are mostly still) civil servants appointed with the approval of state governments. Their ability to advance their careers or gain promotional points, as the case may be, depends inextricably on the degree of their research credentials. I called the next day and had a chance to visit the professor soon afterwards. What he was involved in was a joint research project dealing with EU local administration and sponsored by the European Commission at the time. In short, I enabled the professor, after some time, to publish some of his works in a number of academic journals based in Australia, the UK and the United States (especially journals of Indiana University, with which the Speyer University maintained an exchange program).

One morning in May of 1991, the German professor called me with the following news: a county council head responsible for Bad Duerkheim in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate had sent an appeal to his department requesting assistance in the production of a social plan for the care of the elderly in the jurisdictional area of the county. He said they had sent a reply to the county council advising that they were too busy, so they would instead send a qualified person with much free time to take care of the objective they sought. The professor warned me that the county council did not appear to be prepared to invest much financial resources in the project, but that he thought I might be interested. So, I was that "qualified person" he had in mind. By the next morning, I was at the offices of the county administration in Bad Duerkheim - just 30 minutes drive from where I live, to meet the coordinating official in charge of the proposed project. We both agreed to have him come visit me at home so that we could discuss the issues involved in the project...

Meanwhile, by the middle of the 1980s, I had found a new hobby and developed a keen interest in computer hardware, peripherals and software. (That's the reason why the basement of our house, to the annoyance of my wife, is still a graveyard for dead technology). The prices of the IBM PC had started to plummet and become relatively affordable. By means of the income from my Maryland courses, it had been possible for me to acquire my own, albeit used, IBM-PC, and become the proud owner of the 8088 (of the original architecture). I purchased it at a public auction involving the assets of a bankrupt German company. Those were the days when the private owners of the PC formed what seemed to be an elite cadre of like-minded aficionados. In some circles, lively friendships and clubs became readily formed, centered on the exchange of expertise, common interests, and the illicit sharing of proprietary software, games, and programs. Very much of the friendships that developed between me and students in the earlier days were pretty often not only for reasons of academic matters, but the result of our common interest in PCs about which we talked a lot during breaks. A good deal of such students were, of course, far more ahead of me in terms of programming

knowledge, whether through the auto-didactic path or as part of their military jobs. I remember this one episode: I had written a short BASIC program to enable me to perm and arrange numbers for playing the German lotto in six numerical sets. The program worked fine, but I had failed consistently to have the program dump the number sets straight onto a printer sheet, in addition to placing them within a database. At break time during one evening class at Sembach Airbase, I showed a student a printout of the program. I literally fell off my seat, when he manually inserted two lines of code into the program in no time - accompanied by the assurance that the program should work as I desired. Lo and behold, so was it, exactly as predicted, when I tested it later...

For a long time after the mid-1980s, I was spending a great deal of my free time building my own PCs from scratch using parts ordered out of the Computer Shopper magazine (anyone else recalls those bulky catalogs to which connoisseurs were addicted to?). One's own kids, or friends and acquaintances (so long as they were prepared to pay for the price of multiple parts and could deploy them usefully) turned out mostly to be the prime recipients of self-built PCs. I believe, having your own PC offered a great deal of advantages for a Maryland lecturer. It included the ability to compose and store your own course syllabi and other class-related materials for long term purposes. But the ownership of a computer, or even the ability to make use of it, continued to be very rare until the passage of the last century. On some occasions throughout the 1990s, colleagues such as Alan Ertl, Manfred Deckert and Joseph Goeke were travelling long distances to my house, so that I could assist them in the printing or transfer of their syllabi onto diskettes using the word processor. This, of course, made for a very welcome liberation from the, by then, slowly vanishing uses to which the clumsy typewriter was tasked.

Going Humanitarian: A Balancing Act between Two Systems

OK; so, now, back to my connection to the German professor started above. The official of the county administration in Bad Duerkheim came to see me on the appointed day. After listening carefully to him, I was able to discern almost immediately that what they planned was not something I had done before or even knew about as a subject-matter. The proposed project details pointed to their need to conduct comprehensive research with a view to determine the statistical data affecting the population of elderly people 60 years and over living in the county, and the kind of institutions and social services which existed specifically to cater for their well-being, both within their homesteads, and within formal, informal, private and national care facilities. After hearing all this, the first thing that came to my mind was the visual display of statistical data using computer graphics software. So, it was my turn to demonstrate to the official what I could do to forward the interests of their project: I marched him straight to my

basement office, turned on my PC (by this time a more powerful, self-built IBM 386 with a VGA color monitor attached). I then loaded my DOS-based Harvard Graphics program. I did input a few speculative numerical values intended to represent the various communities of the county and their general population structures. I hit "Show Chart". And almost instantly, I could detect the eyes of my deeply impressed guest bulge. It turned out, the old school public official had absolutely no idea as to the basic functions of a personal computer; neither had he ever witnessed a computer work on any task. In any case, this is how our meeting ended. (Sometime later, I was to build him his own and teach him how to use it).

About a fortnight after the above incident, I received an official letter from the county commissioner informing me that the district assembly had approved my application and decided to appoint me "for the duration of two years" to fulfil the aforementioned function. I was to begin my duty in the morning of the 15th of August 1991, after giving a speech before a convention of the county assembly, comprised of mayors, *Buergermeister* of the local communities, and political party leaders. After this, I was to swear an oath of allegiance - administered by the chief of personnel - to the German national constitution, as is standard for every important function performed within the German civil service.

On the first day of work at my office on the fourth floor, adjacent to that of the county commissioner himself, some unfolding events had me wondering who I was or where indeed I now found myself: The local newspapers (including those from the neighboring county where I lived), were carrying front cover reports -- depicting a photo of me -- detailing the specifics of my mission as a new member of the county council staff. Not that they made things sound as if I was some special agent conjured from a Harry Potter novel to save the world; but the detail of the reports was pretty deep: it included my birthplace, education, place of residence, family, and - last but not the least - my background professional career with the European Division of the University of Maryland in Heidelberg. In fact, one of the reports even stated that Maryland was the university "that awarded an honorary doctorate degree to Helmut Kohl in May of 1990".

I had brought and set up my own PC at my new office space. I soon became aware that out of a total staff of about 350, only 8 of them used computers in the entire administrative facility. These, however, were just mainframe terminals. They were allocated to the department occupying a part of the ground floor responsible for vehicle number plate and foreign national registrations. (I myself was integrated within the department of social welfare; my job description was designated as "scientific advisor - social planning"). It turned out, a few of the officials were not pleased at all to hear that I had brought my own computer to use. As I came to fully understand, my first contact, in terms of the official who came to my house, was also the assistant to the head of the social welfare

department. He later told me that the department, at a meeting, felt some degree of embarrassment regarding the deployment of my own personal computer as a work tool. So they had applied to the admin of the county council to authorize the procurement and placement of an official PC at my disposal. So, this is what I got after about one week: a brand new 486 HP Vectra running on MS-DOS/Windows 3.11. The Computer Shopper price listed for this machine in the US of 1991 was \$10,499. I don't know who advised them to get this. But I hated, and wasn't comfortable using a PC I had not built and configured for my own purposes. So, I guess some big wig at the office would have fainted, if he had seen (and understood) me wiping off almost all the bloated contents of the new PC, in order to replace them with my own stuff.

But, next, before I lay aside these details, I'm sure the reader would wish to know the outcome of this aspect of my professional life: You see, as is commonly known these days, modernizing trends in societies are accompanied by a demographic transition which results in the aging of populations. A population is said to be aging when the elderly segment of that population is increasing faster than the rest of the overall population. There are several ways by which this change can be measured. The most common index, and one of the most useful by far, is the change in the percentage of the total population which is 60 years of age and over. Modernization may also result increasingly in a lowered status for some older people, to the extent that their special needs are not catered for through specific interventionist political measures.

Moreover, another truth is that current pension systems weren't designed for people to live longer than 65 years. So, since the 1990s many retirees in industrialized societies have been outliving their benefits and savings. Affluent Federal Germany, now reunited, saw a need to initiate several measures to address the quality of life of its aging population. However, they required the hard evidence to isolate, quantify and map out the kind of criteria that would permit the necessary interventions.

We all bemoan the fact that caring for the elderly - a traditional family affair, now tends to be outsourced increasingly to institutions. But there are plenty of factors that make those trends necessary in contemporary society. Among other things, prosperity discourages childbearing; and that, in turn, diminishes the family pool of potential caregivers. This, so to speak, was the reality underpinning the project that I was expected to initiate. It stemmed from an obligation imposed by the German federal government on state and local administrators to gather the relevant social data for use in the planning of national policy. However, the latter frequently showed disinterest or were reluctant in their responses, since they were the ones responsible for bearing the costs involved in the need to compile empirical data. As I found out later in my own case, the county council and

politicians had agreed to employ me full-time to carry out my functions, only after the agency for employment had provided them with assurances that the agency would bear 50% of my salary to cover the two-year period set aside for the completion of my work.

Also, it became clear to me very soon that there were several similar projects in other regions of Germany that were running parallel to my own. A few enterprising county administrations in some German states with ample funds to dispose of were reported to have passed their responsibilities onto management consultants and paid them millions to fulfil the same objectives for which I had been hired. These were some of the tidbits of chatter that I continued to draw from others at regional and state-level meetings of social welfare specialists where I was occasionally in attendance from 1991 to 1993. I knew right from the onset that this was not going to be an armchair enterprise on my part. My information gathering activity was bound to involve much travelling within the length and breadth of the county. In order to accomplish my tasks, I started early and laid out a meticulous agenda to meet key community stakeholders, leaders of church and red cross as well as existing health maintenance organizations among others. This proved to be a crucial step in the right direction. I was pleased to find the administrative facility and my new workplace also well stocked with its own library and archive.

At some point in the course of my new job, I wrote a short note to Jane McHan (the then Area Director of Central Germany) informing her that I was only available for the next two years to teach only evening classes and weekend seminars. At this time, there used to be also a semblance of "Who is Doing What" faculty periodical which was managed by John Golembe at our UMED headquarters in Heidelberg. I sent a short note to John informing him of what I was up to at my German office. John later had the news printed in the periodical. The next time I came face-to-face with John at Im Bosseldorn, he asked me again about what on earth I was really involved in at the *Kreisverwaltung* office in Bad Duerkheim. After having provided him with some brief details, John's characteristic response - usually crisp, and laden with thoughtfulness - had me laughing all the way to my car: "Very good; you're lucky", he said. "But make sure you don't tell them how you're doing those things". Of course, I knew what John meant!

At the end of July in 1993, I submitted a 300-page report detailing the results of my work to the county council assembly. But first, I needed to introduce them to the work at the spacious county hall using presentation graphics and flow charts. I had spent the past three nights reviewing the work carefully. I came across some areas of criticism -- leveled against the activities of some social workers -- that were well-intentioned. But I thought those passages might prove to be too controversial. In reality, some of such individuals were veteran experts in their

various fields; and they were expected to be present for my presentations too. Leaving those passages in the work could have sounded like denouncing the scriptures before an audience of bishops. So, to avert unnecessary disputes, I deleted them from the work.

After thorough review by all stakeholders lasting about eight weeks, the document containing my recommendations was accepted and finally approved unanimously. This fact was linked also to the automatic termination of my employment relationship with the social welfare department in line with the project duration originally stipulated to encompass two years. The local press and media outlets went to some lengths to inform the population regarding the positive and negative social circumstances which my work had brought to light. Some aspects proved to be unexpected or even shocking, since nobody had known about their existence previously.

The completion of my work and the number of issues raised in my documentation also implied a great deal of pressures, especially, on the civil servants of the social welfare department. They found themselves as targets of the practical recommendations that I had suggested for implementation to improve the situation of senior citizens in the county. Meanwhile, a series of arguments had erupted in August of 1993 among the various political groups within the county assembly as to how to deal with my employment contract, now that my original mission was a done deal. Those in favor of having it terminated were opposed by others who insisted that it needed to be extended indefinitely so as to enable me to assist the social welfare department in the translation of my social plan into practical reality. In accordance with the internal protocols of the administration, I was not supposed to be privy to the talking points and discussions conducted at the meetings of the assembly. Its membership comprised of elected individuals. Thus, they were external political operators and not part of the administration per se. However, the secretary of the county commissioner, out of mischief or sympathy with my cause, had formed a habit of feeding me with minutes and written accounts of session debates which I also kept secret and refrained from discussing in all instances. Those accounts constantly kept me abreast of the goings-on in the background that had me as a focus.

As it transpired in the final analysis, those favoring the need to retain me finally won the day after striking a compromise with those opposed. One evening in September of 1993 while I was gone to my class at Ramstein Airbase, an official from the personnel department of the council who happened to be living a few streets away from my house came and delivered a letter to my wife. In it was stated that the county council had decided to retain me permanently in my old position, however on a part-time basis. I was expected to work a total of 19 hours per week with a corresponding reduction in pay.

This, therefore, became the position that I held for a total of twenty-five years. The new employment contract proved to be a convenient arrangement that suited me very well. It enabled me to accept and carry on with all my UMED course offers without any restrictions as to time, while pursuing my other role at the council simultaneously. Well aware that I was awfully underpaid to perform a useful function, the departmental heads usually left me alone to come and go as I pleased, so long as I managed to log my weekly hours together. The city of Bad Duerkheim intersects the route between Mannheim and Kaiserslautern/Ramstein. Over the years, a few fellow Marylanders made a habit of branching off on their way to teach to come and visit me at my office there. More frequently, Manfred Deckert or Alan Ertl dropped by to take lunch at the canteen. Perennially pedestrian Tom Tuller interrupted his train journey at Bad D once, in order to continue with me later by car to Ramstein where both of us had classes to teach.

By the way, a chief effect of my work at the county council -- as well as similar effects from other regions of Germany -- became the basis for the introduction in 1995 of the statutory nursing care insurance scheme covering the entire population. The comprehensive research results (mine included) supplied realistic inputs and informed the decision-making processes which led eventually to what is known in Germany as the *Pflegeversicherung*.

In July of 2014, I was officially retired from the county council after reaching the mandatory retirement age. By then, I had expanded the parameters of my functions and created, among other things, additional social plans for young children, families and other classes of people with special needs. Those plans have all become part of the social policy currently applied in the county. I may have helped to respond effectively to a humanitarian call.

The Mannheim Campus Years

If I had to pick a specific period in my career with UMED, my favorite would be the years from 1994-2005. This is because 1994 was the year when the European Division's residential campus in Germany came to the city of Mannheim near me. The campus was located previously in Munich and became another collateral casualty of the post-Cold War draw-down and base closures, as its peregrine existence showed after 1990. After a brief period in Augsburg, it finally moved to Mannheim. Mary Baron, the first Dean of the Mannheim campus, once told me that I was the first person whom Joe Arden asked her to contact to start teaching courses there. Recollections of my UMED mental history tend frequently to propel certain specific people to center stage. I was with a good deal of such people at our small, beloved campus, where everyone: students, administrators, lecturers, student leaders and other passionate activists of campus life invariably knew each

other very well, and our lives intersected and crisscrossed constantly. It created a very supportive learning environment, and lent a new, deeper meaning to the concept "human ties" -- reflective of the Human(i)ties which was also my main teaching field. The Mannheim Campus acted as a cloak for comfortable academic existence to all those who belonged to it. And when the final decision came for the campus to close down after eleven years, it felt like a knife in the heart, as some young students dissolved into tears, and others staged a defiant but futile demonstration - at the gates of the campus. That sad event was reported widely by the Stars and Stripes and local German media. Left alone to grapple with the protracted state of affairs, Dean Mary Fiedler, our harmoniously empathic and staunch ally of student interests -- was not able to turn the tides.

UMED enters the Electronic Age

At some point in 1997, I was invited together with other UMED faculty colleagues by John Floyd, the head of a new task force at our Heidelberg headquarters, to participate in an online training program for distance education sponsored by UMUC Adelphi. The reader might recall that the internet, as we now know it, actually hit mainstream in March of 1993 when AOL for the first time made it possible for millions of people in the US to have internet access. However, 1997 is commonly seen as the year when the internet progressed from being a relative rarity to a widespread luxury in people's lives. This shows that UMUC's early grasp on tapping into the new developments for educational purposes was pretty timely. But it also opened the floodgates for new challenges in our traditional modes of instruction. For those of us in UMED who were lucky to become involved at the earliest stages, we very soon - especially beginning from the mid-2000s, morphed into a mysterious class of internet warlords and email guerillas engaged in a quasi-esoteric playbook of professor-student interactions. It was a novel situation barely understood by our old-school colleagues with no technical turns of mind.

As my personal interest (or rather fascination, if you will) in this new educational field surged, I delved a great deal into some of the existing literature and history of education by remote means, via uses of contemporaneous technology, and correspondence courses (such as those offered since 1894 by Wolsey Hall Oxford; an interesting fact that most people are unaware of is that it was the War Office that authorized Wolsey Hall Oxford - beginning from the 1930s and officially in 1942 - to provide educational opportunities to the British Armed Services, including those that were scattered all over the colonies). Such background efforts at military-university cooperation are, of course, not unlike what the UMUC DE program came to represent.

I believe my brief stint into DE research served me well in my DE course planning and management over the years. (The reader may wish to return later to read the article found here): http://polaris.umuc.edu/ugp/fyi/june_01/fyionline6.html

In 2002, I joined a few colleagues to participate further in an Adelphi training program hosted by CTL - the Center for Teaching and Learning. At the end of the training sessions, I obtained a certificate designating me as a "Trainer of Trainers" dated June 16, 2002 and signed by Jose Bourget-Tactuk, the then CTL Executive Director. The certification allowed me to become part of the UMUC group that conducted online training sessions to prepare select instructors to teach online using UMUC's proprietary WebTycho platform. Meanwhile, as time progressed, I invented and applied several approaches to the design and setup of my own online courses and classroom which, I felt confident, were imaginative enough to lead to a semblance of authenticity reflective of a physical classroom experience.

My role as DE trainer and instructional coach also equipped me with the authorization to *gate-crash* and peep occasionally into the online classes of other instructors in order to assist them later with written comments regarding potential improvements in their teaching performance. Joke aside, they usually knew this in advance. The question I always sought to address in my coaching function was simple: Would I, as a student, have considered myself to have benefited realistically from an online course after completing it? This is not to say that students -- disgruntled by the rigor of my own methodologies or grading convention -- always assigned due value to my DE courses they took, or found my DE courses to be beyond reproach. Yet, what I saw some of our DE instructors engaged in - especially as their numbers continued to proliferate - failed to impress me. In some instances, their course materials, dispersed incoherently all over the WebTycho learning space, read like code broadcasts to occupied territory. I knew when a purported class was nothing more than an exercise in organized chaos.

With all the heavy toll wreaked on us - in terms of time spent in front of computer screens, and the aggravations of frequent internet instabilities (of the earlier years), I always reasoned that intuition was the DE instructor's best associate. Intuition, mostly, was what made or - whenever it was lacking - broke an online class. My experience showed though, that fellow DE colleagues did consistently appreciate the sensitivity with which we handled our mutual concerns with online teaching effectiveness.

Much later on in my Distance Education career with UMUC, I became a faculty peer. By then, there was an institutional effort of UMUC Europe, in addition to that of UMUC's CTL, which provided a platform for faculty development and the

support of learning outcomes. In September of 2009, Stephen Richards gave me the opportunity to prepare and moderate the forum titled "*Teaching Critical and Analytical Thinking across the Curriculum*" which attracted 64 of the global faculty crew as participants. The reader can return for a summary review of that forum which can be read [here](#).

When the Lights Switched off

The part of my life linked to the European Division of the University of Maryland, as stated at the onset, was a life touched by a great number of UMUC people: Directors, Area Directors and Deans, EdCenter personnel, coordinators, fellow faculty members, staff and students. With some of them, I still continue to have vibrant interactions. Without UMED, I don't think I would still have been in Germany by say the year 1985. The European Division supplied me with the lion's share of all my income made in Germany from 1979 to 2014. And I am forever grateful for this. However, there is something else, I am sure, most of UMUC folks never realized in all those years: people without the SOFA privileges, such as myself, were always at the (inescapable) crosshairs of the German IRS. To be frank, of all the income I personally ever made from working with UMUC, I can wager that roughly 40% was exacted into the coffers of the German *Finanzamt* as taxes. And when the mass layoffs of the European faculty dawned on us in 2014, whereby a significant number among us received severance payoffs, I received nothing, since I wasn't legally qualified to be considered for those benefits.

My last face-to-face course with UMED -- made possible through Diane Ochs-Oliver -- was held at Stuttgart Panzer EdCenter and ended in August 2012. Contrary to long tradition, there was nobody at the Heidelberg office to help me obtain a base pass prior to the beginning of the course. The US army office in Heidelberg responsible for the issuance of the passes had disappeared. Entering military bases after 9/11 had already become a very tricky business - managed in part by German security agents. But our logistics people, by special arrangements with the US military, always managed to furnish non-ID Card holders with the required paperwork to enter bases to teach. This practice seemed suddenly to have ceased in 2012. I travelled - empty-handed, 90 minutes to Panzer, and got trapped at the gate. A Field Rep had failed to show up to sign me in. The apprehension I felt that evening was a clear harbinger of what laid in store for me. For the first time since more than 30 years, my physical access to students was blocked by a gate!

But luck was on my side. A student from another course held at Patch Barracks the previous year saw my rare white Mazda RX-7, standing very close near the gate *where it ought not be*, and recognized me pacing nervously to and fro nearby. He was the one who signed me in. Once arrived to start my class, 20 minutes late,

I arranged with a student living on the base to be my gate entrance enabler for the rest of the eight weeks of the twice-weekly class. Those young soldier students were always honored to have a personal role to play in the life of their professors anyway.

My very last class was a DE course held online. It ended on the 9th of March 2014. A few days later, I drove past the Patrick Henry Village on my way to our UMED office. PHV had become a ghost town; all the military personnel, their dependents, the shopping center, the school, etc. were no more. Also, at the Patton Barracks, a short distance down the road, not a soul could be detected; neither could any of the - usually loud - trucks or vehicles be seen making any movements this time.

Having arrived at the vacated Maryland office, my spirits subdued and somewhat crestfallen, I loitered aimlessly about in front of the mailroom area where the cars were always parked. One part of my, hitherto, two worlds, had ceased to exist forever. I also left the office grounds after a while -- to visit Manfred Deckert at his nursing home downtown in the old city area.

That 2014 became the year when the lights went off at Im Bosseldorn is a somewhat strange coincidence, in some sense, of my personal affairs. It was also the same year when I reached the mandated retirement age, thus entitling me to draw the bit of paltry pension that the German side of my employment history made possible. At my other job with the state, there were plans afoot in March to see me off on the 1st of July 2014. It seemed, eerily, as if time and the tides had conspired against my UMED world, and as if everything had been pre-ordered -- to occur in 2014...

I thank the reader for bearing with me. In the current pandemic age within which we are all potential victims, I pray that you are able to protect yourself.

Live long and Prosper!

[The End]

PS.: Here again are the links to the two articles suggested for reviewing above:

http://polaris.umuc.edu/ugp/fyi/june_01/fyionline6.html

http://www.crossnevin.com/files/post-forum_review.pdf