A Different Format for Abroad

This issue of Bing Overseas Studies Program’s newsletter for our alums (Abroad, Volume 8, Number 2, February, 2010) comes to you for the first time by e-mail. For budgetary reasons we are sending Abroad this way to all of our alums who have provided their e-mail address to the Alumni Association. Those who do not have an e-mail address on file—or whose e-mailed copy bounces back to us—will receive a hard copy in an intentionally economical printed document providing that a mailing address is available.

We at BOSP hope very much your enjoyment of Abroad will not be compromised by the absence of a paper copy. While we believe that the budgetary situation is likely to improve, we have made no decision on whether to return to the previous format if and when we are able.

If you care to express your preference or send comments about the issue, you are invited to do so by e-mail to overseasstudies@stanford.edu or to Bob Hamrdla, Bing Overseas Studies Program, Ground Floor, Sweet Hall, Stanford, California 94305-3089.

Thank you for reading Abroad and for your interest! Thanks also to my BOSP colleague, John Chao ’99, for all the design work. - Bob Hamrdla ’59, Editor

Stanford in Florence Alumni
Join us for our 50th Anniversary Celebration in Florence
June 20th - June 22nd, 2010

We hope to see you in June 2010 for three days of 50th Anniversary festivities in Florence. Our Reunion Program includes a welcome cocktail reception at the Palazzo Capponi all’Annunziata, an Alumni Panel and a Roundtable Discussion to be held at Palazzo Vecchio’s Salone dei Cinquecento, and a number of exclusive on-site visits and classes with Stanford University Professors, local faculty and experts. The Director Emeritus of the Program, Professor Giuseppe Mammarella, is also co-organizing with a highly specialized travel agency a number of optional post-Reunion tours in Tuscany and in Italy.

Reunion and Registration Website:
http://bosp.stanford.edu/florence/reunion.html

Contact Information:
stanfordinflorence50th@stanford.edu

Director’s Letter

It’s always a good sign when Bing Overseas Studies Programs (BOSP) around the world want to celebrate the anniversaries of their founding. I attended a wonderful event in Oxford last June on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the program and, in November, a gala banquet for the 5th anniversary of our Beijing program at Peking University. The highlights of both events were our students: hilarious skits in the Oxford case, an elegant speech (completely in Chinese) in Beijing. This June we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Florence program. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

The reverberations of the financial crisis have made this a difficult time for BOSP and the university as a whole. In addition to cuts in our general funds, we have had to keep a close eye on growing currency costs and projections of relatively low endowment payoff. We cut the budgets of our overseas and home office operations, while at the same time trying to maintain the high quality of our centers abroad. As a way to preserve the financial integrity of our centers, we felt it necessary to suspend our seminar program until our budgetary situation has recovered.

The good news is that—for the time being anyway—we will not have to close any of our centers abroad, and that our newest, Cape Town, was up and running this January. The importance of this new Africa center cannot be overstated. It is the first time that Stanford has a facility and ongoing program there. Moreover, it is the first BOSP center dedicated primarily to service learning. Our students will not only be living and working among a population that desperately needs improved health care, housing, employment, and educational programs, but they will learn how to contribute to the development of South Africa and the region as a whole in both academic and hands-on contexts.

Stanford is moving forward with the renovation of a small palace on the Peking University grounds for the purposes of establishing a strong research and teaching presence in China. We would then move our present facility down the road to the new Stanford center. For BOSP, this would provide a larger Stanford context for our work and promote greater integration of teaching and research.

Students continue to come to Stanford in part because of the Bing Overseas Studies Programs. They continue to study abroad with us and grow intellectually, emotionally, and academically as a result. Just like you, they will look back on their experiences with a greater understanding of international affairs and a sense of world citizenship. Your interest and support continue to make this possible.

Norman Naimark
The Burke Family Director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program
San Diego to Stanford to Santiago to Slovakia: A Progressive Journey

Katharine Read Beamer (AB International Relations and AM Sociology ’01) writes of her time at Stanford in Santiago and how it contributed to leading her on a career path with the Foreign Service. She suggests that anyone interested in seeing what’s involved go to www.careers.state.gov

Santiago, Chile, January 2000. It was a remarkable time, marking the beginning of my fascination with the southern cone, learning and communicating in foreign languages, and living overseas. For as much as I loved every minute of my time on the “Farm,” the time I spent away from it, at Stanford in Santiago (and Stanford in Washington) during my junior year, was the most influential in determining my life’s path.

I decided to go to Chile during winter quarter 2000 and felt a twinge of regret that fall, receiving constant updates on glamorous weekends from my friends who decided on Europe instead. For as much as I loved every minute of my time on the “Farm,” the time I spent away from it, at Stanford in Santiago (and Stanford in Washington) during my junior year, was the most influential in determining my life’s path.

My memories of my nearly three months there are as diverse as any mildly adventurous and yet slightly sheltered college student’s should be. I remember attending political rallies for the Lagos–Lavin presidential runoff and for Pinochet’s return to Chile after years under house arrest in London (I was shocked at how evenly divided the Chilean people were between left and right). I was surprised at the humor and sharp intellect of Political Science Professor Rojas (a much friendlier and approachable alternative to the more intimidating Palo Alto variety), hiking in Pucon (and practically skiing down the volcano on a pick-ax), grooving to Enrique Iglesias and perhaps enjoying too much pisco at the Viña Del Mar music festival. I marveled at the European splendor of Buenos Aires (still my favorite city in the world). The most vivid memory I have of Santiago, though, was of a conversation I had one afternoon at the Center in Providencia with Fabia Fuenzalida, the unforgettable daughter and right-hand of then-Director Edmundo Fuenzalida. Fabia caught me after I had received the news that I had passed the Foreign Service Exam and had been accepted for an internship at the U.S. Embassy in Brussels. I didn’t know too much about the State Department, and was second-guessing my initial interest in a life of diplomacy as I experienced my first real taste of homesickness. Fabia encouraged me to give the Foreign Service a try, and related her own experiences leading a bi-continental life.

I had a truly wonderful internship that following summer in Brussels, and decided to join the Foreign Service after graduation in September 2001. I work as a political officer, enabling me to put my International Relations degree into use as I covered seminal human-rights trials just five years after the Peace Accords in Guatemala and right-wing populist movements and trafficking in persons in Poland. I also spent two years in Washington working on “Southern Cone” affairs and became an expert on the two smallest (and I would argue most interesting) countries of the bunch, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Now I am back in Europe for a second time, at the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava, Slovakia. Just last November the Slovaks celebrated 20 years of freedom from communism, and I feel privileged to live and work in a place where the people are still developing their own democratic institutions and experiencing the benefits and the pitfalls of freedom. I hope to keep up this balance between Europe and Latin America as I continue in my career, and dream of one day making it back to Santiago, so that I can give the Stanford students of tomorrow the same kind of encouragement that Fabia gave me. Oh, and maybe so I can revisit Neruda, Viña, and pisco...

Professor Filippo Rossi: Ambassador of Beauty at Stanford in Florence

On November 21, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI welcomed almost 300 artists, architects, performers, and directors from the world over for a private audience inside Michelangelo’s awe-inspiring Sistine Chapel. Among the many renowned artists present were Andrea Bocelli, Santiago Calatrava, Peter Greenaway, Mario Botta, Ennio Morricone, Giuseppe Tornatore and Franco Zeffirelli. Also in attendance was Filippo Rossi, Professor of Studio Art at The Breyer Center for Overseas Studies in Florence. He was the youngest of the artists invited to the Vatican by the Holy Father to receive this honor and to participate in a meeting dedicated to the relationship and dialogue between art, beauty and faith. This prestigious recognition pays yet another extraordinary tribute to Rossi’s oeuvre, which revolves around poignant representations of the sacred and is a mature visual expression of his own faith.

Professor Rossi in his studio

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Pope Benedict XVI, in his address, focused on the ontology of art and on the responsibility lying with each artist, noting that they need to “be grateful for the gifts received and fully conscious of the great responsibility to communicate beauty, to touch individual and collective sensibilities, to call forth dreams and hopes, to broaden the horizons of knowledge and of human engagement.” The Pontiff also emphasized that artists are the “custodians and ambassadors of beauty.” The event and the Pope’s message, in Rossi’s words, “were extremely moving and renewed my energy not only in crafting my work but also served to inspire me further as an educator and mentor to budding artists.”

Rossi, who was accompanied to Rome by his wife and their three children, also added that this unforgettable experience immediately left a very strong mark on at least one of them. Indeed, one of his sons, upon returning to Florence, boldly stated, “When I grow up I want to be the Pope!”
Jochen Wohlfeil, Instructor in Berlin, Wins BOSP’s Award for Excellence in Teaching

Karen Kramer, Director at Stanford in Berlin, writes about the Bing Overseas Studies Award for Excellence in Teaching just awarded to one of the local faculty members there.

Jochen Wohlfeil, Language Instructor at BOSP’s Center in Berlin, has been awarded the Bing Overseas Studies Award for Excellence in Teaching for the year 2008-09, in recognition of “innovative course design and a legendary classroom culture that at once challenges and sustains, facilitating the linguistic empowerment of hundreds of students at the Bing Overseas Studies Program in Berlin.” Norman Naimark, Burke Family Director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program, presented the Award to Wohlfeil at the Berlin Center on December 3. Wohlfeil succeeds Timothy Verizon of the Breyer Center for Overseas Studies in Florence who garnered the award last year.

Wohlfeil holds degrees from Indiana University and the Freie Universität Berlin and has taught German at the Berlin Center for over two decades. His courses consistently receive the highest possible ratings by students, who frequently refer to the learning experience in his courses as simply “awesome”. In his years with the Program, he has developed a number of innovative German language courses, including exceptional “Accelerated German” courses which cover the material of German 1 & 2 (German 12) or German 2 & 3 (German 22) in one intense quarter. Many students who arrived in Berlin with just one quarter of German have successfully entered full-time internships in the German workplace after completing German 22. The key to the success of these courses is a clear focus on the students’ primary goal: to become functional as quickly as possible in an all-German environment.

Wohlfeil developed a method uniquely suited to acquiring facility in German rapidly, one that does not abide by the standard assumption that students should learn German grammar over a full year. Students living in Berlin—and possibly preparing for an internship the next quarter—cannot wait a year to use the future tense, or express probability or doubt, or understand the passive. So Jochen introduces major grammatical concepts as soon as students express a need to learn them—and he’s found that they want to learn very quickly indeed. Within the first two or three weeks of the quarter, students receive a tour d’horizon of important grammatical concepts, giving them the basic grammatical tools so they can begin to communicate. Of course, it is necessary to review and reinforce the grammar throughout the quarter, but Jochen’s approach allows students to take flight in the language speedily.

The sense of expansion that comes with learning a new language and the exhilaration of learning to read and understand in a new cultural environment are both rewards and motivating factors. The courses tailor learning the language to the individual student’s perceived needs: each keeps a personal vocabulary book into which he or she enters the words really needed and on which students are tested individually. Students perform linguistically in class, give presentations, and make daily journal entries in German after the second week of the quarter. This highly integrative language learning resounds in all their environments: they bring the class into their city lives and bring the city into the classroom.

Parallel to his teaching at Stanford, Jochen developed and is Resident Director of Duke University’s Program in Berlin. Duke recently appointed him Adjunct Professor.

The First Report from a BOSP Asia Intern

Andrea Yung, Sophomore in Biology, tells us of her experiences as the first student to participate in BOSP’s Asia Intern Program in Taiwan.

Having worked in various Palo Alto labs for the past few summers, I decided to do something completely different for summer after freshman year: work in a foreign country. I’d always wanted to try living in another country to gain international experience and to expose myself to the world outside the Palo Alto bubble. When it came time to apply for summer jobs, I seized the opportunity, applied to Stanford’s Asia Internships program and was accepted as an intern for the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei (AmCham).

As an editorial assistant for AmCham’s publications department, I was responsible for writing a story on the current status of Taiwan’s life sciences industry. When I arrived, I was surprised at how much independence I was given—I could interview anyone I thought relevant for this article, and my deadline was sometime before I left Taiwan. While this situation was intimidating at first, I later came to realize it was a blessing. Rather than relying on others to gather information for me and coach me in the task, I had the chance to explore Taiwan’s life science infrastructure by interviewing policy makers in the public sector, such as those within Academia Sinica, as well as industrial leaders in private sectors, such as executives in multinational companies and start-ups. In my responsibilities, I found a new latitude and, for the first time, experienced what it was like to work and be seen as another individual, not just a student.

I quickly became accustomed to the working environment and got along well with fellow interns from nearby universities—we ate out together for lunch and met again to shop, eat, play pool, and karaoke at night. While I introduced them to life in America, they familiarized me with the life and culture of a typical Taiwanese college student. I embraced their lifestyles easily, and even now, I miss the omnipresent 7-11 and pearl milk tea stores where we bought drinks after lunch, the afternoon naps at work, and the amazing clubs we visited on weekends. For someone from the quiet suburbs of Palo Alto, Taiwan was, in a word, dazzling.

This Asia Internship will always be one of the highlights of my Stanford experience. Living and working in Taipei allowed me to discover Taiwan on a wholly different level, exposing me not only to different cultures and worldviews, but also to work in an international setting. In addition, the internship supplemented my academic career perfectly: in writing a story about the biotech industry in Taiwan, I experienced the life-sciences industry first hand, whereas classes and labs focus more narrowly on research. I was also given the opportunity to further improve my Chinese, something often difficult to fit into my schedule. Given the chance, I would readily repeat this experience, and I can only hope that my future internships reach a similar standard as well.

My article was published as a cover story in the September issue of Taiwan Business Topics (http://www.amcham.com.tw/content/view/2832/431/).

Kyoto SCTI 2000 Plans Reunion

Alums from SCTI 2000 are planning a 10-year Japan reunion in Tokyo and Kyoto from March 28, 2010 to April 4, 2010. Alums should expect to hear from organizers by February 1, if not already. If interested in joining all or part of the trip, contact Emilio Antunez (eantunez@stanford.edu) or Alan Teo (alan.teo@stanfordalumni.org).
Germany XXIII Returns To Beutelsbach

Alison Wenke Dillow ’72 joined 15 other alums from Germany XXIII at Landgut Burg in Beutelsbach for a fortieth-anniversary reunion.

Sixteen alums and partners danced, dined, hiked, laughed and conversed at a 40-year-reunion in Beutelsbach, site of the Stanford-in-Germany program in 1969. The hilltop campus, long since transformed into Hotel Landgut Burg, provided us the chance to reminisce on the same soil, so we parked ourselves there for three days in early October.

As we arrived at the Burg, we first noticed the changes from 40 years ago. The spiffed-up hotel offers rooms more fitting for our ages than the campgrounds and youth hostels we frequented as students. And the town of Beutelsbach has been swallowed up into a conglomerate of towns called Weinstadt.

But then we remarked on what felt the same, looked the same. The Burg still retains a quaint romanticism, sitting as it does atop vineyard-draped villages. Buildings look the same, the dining hall is situated similarly, our “volleyball court” remains a grassy courtyard, and the nearby woods are virtually unchanged. By chance, we encountered (and toasted) Frau Dr. Kindt, whose family has owned the Burg for many decades and who remembers fondly the many groups of Stanford students who spent time on her property.

What prompted our group to take another look at the Burg now? Was it the memory of a tranquil setting and curiosity about what it’s like now? Was it because now, at retirement or almost-retirement age, we’re reflecting back and want to revisit a more innocent time in our lives? Maybe we’re just a genial group, as even outsiders have remarked. But I’d argue that the timing of our stint in Germany was another key.

It was as if history went into overdrive during our six months abroad. Apollo 11’s moon landing in July. The Woodstock phenomenon in August. The Beatles’ album, Abbey Road, in September. Increasing Vietnam War protests at home. And on December 1, naming of birthdate draft numbers, modifying the military draft into a lottery system. Add to those the ongoing 1960s’ developments in feminism, civil rights, the sexual revolution, and the start of gay rights. Viewing these historic moments together from afar created a closeness among our group that may not have existed otherwise.

So now, as we gathered around the dining table or trekked around town, sharing the shape of our lives came easily, sharing emotions not far behind. There seemed to be a psychic comfort among us, a lack of judgment. Conversation flowed easily, laughs were plentiful, memories were diverse, bonding over the emotional threads of our lives seemed effortless. The sorts of juxtapositions evoked in a reunion setting—old/young, confident/insecure, grounded/questioning—simply seemed intriguing, not confusing.

Now that the anticipation has given way to reality and we’re looking back on the memorable Burg weekend we put together, we have new grist for the mill. As the 16 of us said goodbye, we left each other with this proposal: “How about meeting in Berlin—or again at Landgut Burg—for our 45th reunion?” I’ll do my best to get there; I suspect the others will too.

BOSP’s Newest Center Opens in Cape Town

Dr. Timothy Stanton, Director, writes briefly from Cape Town.

Stanford’s newest overseas studies center opened in Cape Town, South Africa, on January 4 with 24 students in residence. It is Stanford’s first academic program based on the African continent. Located near the University of Cape Town in an old blanket factory remodeled to house small business start-ups and non-profit organizations, the new center will offer its students a diverse array of academic courses (taught mostly by local university faculty members); cultural programming; and service-learning and community-based research opportunities in diverse Western Cape communities.

From the early planning days faculty and staff involved in developing this program have sought to find ways of involving participating Stanford students with their South African peers at local universities. This goal will be met through jointly planned cultural affairs and service-learning activities as well as “co-matriculating courses,” which enable Stanford and local students to meet and study together. The Center will offer two sessions, each of one academic quarter, for 24 students each in its first years with hope of expanding to three quarters in the future.