

MARIAN WASHINGTON'S 25 YEARS ■ CLASSROOMS WITH A VIEW ■ HOOD COUTURE

KANSAS ALUMNI

NO. 3, 1998 \$5



The Envelopes, Please

Match Day drama reveals med students' fate

Students get a jump on life's journeys with the help of KU's Office of Study Abroad

ABROAD MINDED

Margareta O'Connell was only 5 years old when she took her first trip abroad. Her parents bought a tandem bicycle, perched O'Connell and her brother in baskets on the front and back and set off on a tour of Denmark.

Even as a younger girl, O'Connell knew of a world beyond her native Sweden. When she was sick, her mother would open a blue-leather box of mementos from a year of study in England in 1936. Carefully she would show her daughter spoons from Edward VIII's coronation, a royal crown brooch and cufflinks adorned with hunting scenes.

But what O'Connell remembers best is sitting on the back of that bike. Pedaling on back roads through the lowlands of Denmark, the family began a great adventure.

The adventure grew when her parents got a car. "It was like we had wings," says O'Connell as she recounts summers motoring through Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Italy. By age 15 she was hooked, spending the summer studying in Germany. In 1969 she made the trans-Atlantic leap, arriving at Illinois State University to teach French.

She didn't have a car, so a local church gave her a Schwinn bicycle. O'Connell still rides it. It has only one gear, but it has a basket on the front.

**AS DIRECTOR OF THE
OFFICE OF STUDY ABROAD,
MARGARETA O'CONNELL
(LEFT) HELPS STUDENTS
TAKE OFF THEIR TRAVEL
TRAINING WHEELS**



BY MARK LUCE

O'Connell directs the Office of Study Abroad. She came to the University in 1996 because of its stellar reputation in international study. Every year, KU sends 800 students to more than 70 programs in nearly 50 countries—for a year, a semester, a summer and now even a spring break—and every year the students come home changed.

Students who study abroad are self-confident, independent and flexible. They can handle finances, overcome homesickness, adapt to various circumstances and take initiative. In short, O'Connell says, students who study abroad grow up.

"Every day we see how we can change individuals' lives for the better, create really exciting opportunities and enable students to do things they never would have done," she says. "We see the students before they leave and when they come back. They are so much more mature, so worldly, so confident. Most of us who work here have studied abroad, we know the personal benefits, and we have a love for sharing that with others."

But sometimes, O'Connell admits, it is hard to share. About 500 KU students participate in KU study-abroad programs, whose depth and

breadth attract an additional 300 students from other universities. In his first Faculty Convocation speech in 1996, Chancellor Robert E. Hemenway said he would like to see 2,000 students studying abroad by the year 2000.

"Only 500 students for such a large school is still a small percentage," O'Connell says. "Philosophically, I would like to see everyone who wants to study abroad have the chance to go. We should think of study abroad as something for everyone."

O'Connell has been thinking of everyone as she invites various departments and groups for tea and cookies to describe the study abroad programs KU offers. She has souped up public relations by hiring an outreach coordinator, Doug Schenkelberg, who organizes information

fairs and meetings and maintains the office's web site (www.ukans.edu/~osa).

Funding, of course, is an issue. Study abroad programs cost \$3,000 to \$12,000, depending on location and length of stay. Currently the office awards \$36,000 a year in scholarships, usually in \$200 and \$1,000 chunks. O'Connell, with the help of the Endowment Association, is working to establish an endowed fund of \$100,000, which would add another \$5,000 to annual scholarships.

"It will only be \$5,000, but it is a step in the right direction," O'Connell says. "I often tell students, 'I don't care where you go, just go somewhere.' If they need to take a loan it will be the best loan they ever take, because it's a loan that will reap lifetime benefits."

A loan that will begin a great adventure.

Ted Noravong's first trip abroad was in a canoe at 3 a.m. Although he was only 4 years old then,

Noravong now recalls the cool night, the large, choppy river and the fear on his parents' faces. The family was fleeing the economic and political turbulence of Laos. To make the dangerous escape, they bribed the right officials with furnishings from their home.

By morning, the Noravongs were in a Thai refugee camp, where they stayed for four hard years. The family came the Kansas City area in 1984.

While making that trans-Pacific flight, Noravong, c'97, b'97, could not have imagined that 10 years later he would begin another great adventure, visiting relatives in France and Belgium, studying Stendhal and hiking around Italy.

Noravong spent the 1994-'95 school year in Besançon, France, through the Office of Study Abroad. He thought a deeper international background would complement his business administration major. He saw the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, lounged in Greece and spent an unforgettable lunch in the Italian country-

side with a friendly farm family.

He returned with a shining entry for his résumé, a stack of snapshots and a Benetton-ad collection of friends. He also discovered something not taught in any classroom. Himself.

"The trip gave me self-esteem, that feeling that I was capable of doing anything," Noravong says. "When I stepped off the plane in Paris, I knew this was going to be good for me. I never had a doubt."

The trip opened the doors that he now walks through as a research assistant at AMC Entertainment International Inc. Noravong recruits U.S.-based foreign students to run movie theaters overseas, a job that tests his business moxie and his dexterity in international relations.

The loans he took to cover the trip test his business skills as well, but, much like every student who borrows to study abroad, Noravong says the investment was the best he ever made. He also believes a year abroad should be a requirement of KU curriculum.

"If you don't go, you just can't understand," Noravong says. "It is just limitless; there are so many opportunities, so many things to do. It also helped me understand and value our own culture and freedom. I realized how much I took for granted."

In his mind, Noravong continues to travel back to the day in rural Italy: the children's smiles in the sun, their fascination with his phonecards. The farm family couldn't understand a word he said, but they fed him bread, chicken and pasta. Noravong calls the day "a dream come true."

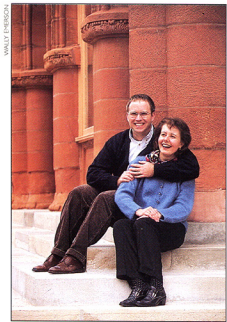
Marc White's great adventure began in a McCollum Hall elevator in August 1988. He saw her standing there—brownish-blond hair, strange black shoes with buckles, an odd-looking blouse, and those jeans with patches sure didn't look like Levi's. She was not an American.

She was Estelle Gay, j'92, a student from France, and a few days later Gay and White found each other in the seventh-floor lounge at McCollum, where they watched an Olympic volleyball match between France and the United States. Their relationship grew, and so did White's world view.



TED NORAVONG

WALLY EMBERSON



MARC WHITE and ESTELLE GAY

White, c'92, hadn't been around much and didn't really plan to get around much more. His family was filled with Kansas lawyers, and White had come to KU intent on joining the family profession, most likely in his uncle's practice in El Dorado.

But the summer after his freshman year, White boarded a plane and flew to the foothills of the French Alps to meet Gay's family.

"It was amazing," says White, now a staff attorney for the state's Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services. "I had never even dreamed such an experience before. For a Midwestern boy it was a whole new world."

So the Midwestern boy studied French in addition to history. And he plotted a way to return—and, just maybe, to stay for good.

White studied in Besançon and Gay joined him for half the year. The Midwestern boy relaxed in cafes, traveled as often as he could, never got homesick and learned, as he says, "the great art of humility."

Even the most mundane conversation is strong brew for a foreigner, but when you add a splash of residual anti-American sentiment from the Gulf War, the mix can turn sour, White says. Such potential for trouble confronts many students on study abroad trips, so at orientation meetings—both at home and abroad—the Office of Study Abroad gives

tips to help ensure students' safety.

White says most of the steps to minimize danger are simply common sense: Don't speak English in a group; don't draw attention to yourself; be polite. In short, immerse yourself in the language, in every aspect of the culture, even if you don't do things that way in Wichita.

"My time abroad made me appreciate that there were others out there," he says. "Sometimes we are caught up with the attitude that America is No. 1, that there is no one else out there. I probably used to have that attitude."

He doesn't anymore. Because of his time overseas, White says he is flexible, adaptable, self-confident and internationally oriented. He would like to move to France soon—with Estelle Gay, of course. They were married in March 1994.

In 1991, Elizabeth Weinberg Gualtieri walked into an anthropology museum in Florence, Italy, to spend an idle afternoon. She walked out a few hours later with direction, a promising idea for a career and a burning desire for a pricey book that would help her create what she had just seen.

Gualtieri had read about the Etruscan process of granulation while studying jewelry design at KU, but it was a passing mention in a survey course. To actually see examples of the ancient art form that flourished for 600 years—the 22-carat gold, painstakingly heated and tediously set to produce a stunning treasure—made her a believer.

"The minute I saw those pieces I knew my life was changing," Gualtieri says. "I was floored by their amazing scale and the detail of their technique. It gave me focus. There are a range of things to do in jewelry making, but this one just clicked for me so phenomenally."

It clicked so well that, after walking down the Hill, Gualtieri went to Albuquerque, N.M., to perfect the craft. Then, with confidence in her design and technical execution, she left for Portland, Ore., where she now has her own granulation business, Zaffoli, with her husband, Jack Gualtieri, f'92. They sell their upscale jewelry in places such as Saks Fifth Avenue.

Gualtieri's great adventure had begun on a KU language and culture program in

Florence, where she sharpened her Italian, soaked up the art, architecture and jewelry she had seen only in books, and learned to whip up a mean tiramisu.

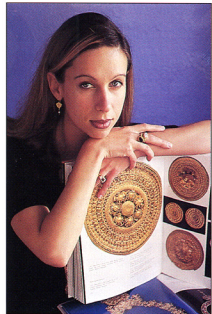
"About a week and a half into the trip I had a dream in Italian," she says. "It was a huge revelation, a wall that I stepped through. That could not have happened in an Italian class at KU."

Though her career soon began to sparkle even more than she had dreamed, Gualtieri always regretted not buying the book on granulation when she was in Florence. "It was too expensive for a student budget," she explains.

But she finally got her wish. During their honeymoon tour of Italy in 1993, she and her husband bought the 10-pound tome on granulation, *L'Oro Degli Etruschi*.

The book took up far too much space in her backpack and its weight was a burden as she and Jack trekked through Italian hills.

But Gualtieri didn't care. She had found her romantic treasures.



ELIZABETH GUALTIERI

These stories aren't special, Margareta O'Connell says. They are typical experiences of impressionable students, forced out of our culture of convenience.

When you live with less, O'Connell says, you can get more out of life.

So begins a great adventure. —