

The Global Learner

Park University International Task Force

October 2007

Park students, faculty accompany WWII veteran to Croatian crash site for documentary filming

By
Dennis Okerstrom

Janice Gerke stared intently at the ground, looking for a gleam, a disturbance, anything that didn't seem a part of the natural landscape in this field near Krvavici, Croatia. Around her, other Park University students were doing the same while a team of archaeologists swept a metal detector back and forth over the rough, uneven terrain.

The senior major in English was on her first trip abroad, one that she nearly had missed as the overloaded State Department was logjammed with requests for passports. Hers had arrived just two days before the departure of my class for 10 days in Venice and Croatia. We were accompanying Lee Lamar, a bomber pilot in World War II, as he returned to the place where he had been shot down and captured after bailing out of his crippled B-24J.

Now we were at the crash site itself, a place rediscovered two years earlier by Luka Bekic, a Croatian archaeologist, as he was surveying the area around a recently discovered first century Roman villa.

Here, in a remote field surrounded by stone walls in place more than 200 years, he had been walking on a Fall day in 2005 when he kicked up a rumpled, twisted piece of aluminum. Thinking it a part from a local farmer's tractor or other field equipment, Bekic had started to toss it from the field toward the nearest stone wall.

Printing in English on the metal fragment caught his attention: "If this airplane is equipped with a G-6 Starter. . . ." This

and other illegible text ruled out any quotidian use. A quick search had yielded 20, 30, then 100 more pieces of twisted, jagged metal and many machine gun bullets.

That began a year-long odyssey for Bekic to discover the who, the what, and the when of this mysterious crash in now peaceful Istria. Bekic, a combat veteran himself of the deadly wars across the Balkans in the 1990s, said he knew the twisted lumps of metal represented the fate of young men in armed conflict, and he needed to know their stories.



Pilot Lee Lamar and students experience history in Pula, Croatia.

Lamar, 23-years-old when he jumped from his mortally wounded airplane, last fall had been a speaker in my class on the literature and history of World War II in the Air. He mentioned then that he had received an email from Croatia asking if he had been the co-pilot of a plane that crashed near Pula.

The discovery by Bekic of the wreckage of Lamar's bomber, and his dedicated search to learning all that he could about this war-time episode, led to my seeking funding from the university for a class to

accompany Lamar on his journey back into his past.

The project grew in scope, as I envisioned making a documentary film of the experience, as well as writing a book. Olga Ganzen, executive director of the office of international studies, was enthusiastic about the learning opportunity for Park students this trip and film project entailed, and she quickly went to work to make it happen.

Eight students were selected for the trip from 16 applicants, and all were assigned various research projects during the summer, as well as being assigned to a myriad of tasks as part of the film crew. A professional crew was found to do the majority of filming, and Ganzen arranged for their expenses to also be paid by the university.

We left Kansas City on August 3 and landed the next morning, a Saturday, at Marco Polo airport in Venice. We spent two days taking in the sights and sounds of this ancient and memorable city, walking around the Piazza San Marco, exploring the Doge's Palace, riding in gondolas, and shopping for Murano glass gifts. Then it was on to Rovigno, Croatia, by ferry and then to Pula by bus.

Pula is some 3,000 years old, and its civic jewel is the first century Roman Amphitheater. The city sits on the Istrian peninsula, jutting out into the Adriatic Sea, and it is a place of great beauty and genuine, open-armed friendliness.

For the next five days, we met with Luka Bekic and his staff of archaeologists from the Croatian Restoration Institute. He took us to his office in a village north of Pula, where hundreds of pieces of Lee's bomber were spread out on a table. Lee gave Luka a scale model, complete even to the nose art, of his B-24 named Bottoms Up.

Croatia from page 1

From there we traveled to Krvavici, the closest village to where the bomber crashed, and we met several villagers who had witnessed the crash itself. Parts of the war bird were still being used by villagers: a bomb bay door was used by one farmer to cover his firewood; an oxygen tank had been cut in half and was still in use as a pail to feed cows.

We later discovered the spot where Lee had landed under canopy, and where he had buried his parachute before hiding out with the other pilot for a day before being captured. An elderly man from the village was introduced to the old aviator. As a young boy, he and his brother had discovered the 'chute a week later, and he had dashed home with the treasure to give to his mother. She had promptly cut it into smaller pieces and made shirts and blouses for her family from the silk material.

All of this was being filmed, with the help of Park students, for the planned documentary.

About Janice and that field?

Okay, so there we were, kicking at likely suspects in the dirt, examining bits of stuff that turned out to be rocks or old clumps of sea salt. Suddenly Janice screamed, holding up a piece of riveted aluminum twisted in mute evidence of a violent end. She had found a bit of Bottoms Up, and had a memento of her first trip abroad. And not just a trip, an exciting adventure and an authentic learning experience.

Other students were Selvir Abidovic, Adrienne Barr, Tessa Elwood, Darrin Manna, Jackie Sloderbeck, Rachel Tharp, and Stacy Wiedmaier.



Rachel Tharp in traditional dress



University begins The Native American Project

By
Carol Getty

The Native American Project is part of the University International and Multicultural Education Committee. The purpose of this project is to develop mutually advantageous educational programs with Oglala Lakota College (OLC) on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and Sinte Gleska University (SGU) on the Rosebud reservations.

The exact design of these projects is still unfolding and will undoubtedly be different between Park University and each school.

Certainly one possibility is a service learning project modeled after the Brazil Project, but other possibilities abound for participants unwilling or unable to travel outside the U.S. for cultural exchange experiences and willing to travel to South Dakota Indian Reservations.

In August 2007 a delegation consisting of Erik Bergrud, director of the International Center for Civic Engagement; Ann Schultis, director of library services; Carol Getty, PhD, associate professor of criminal justice; and Diane Davis Reed, Park alumna, held several pre-arranged meetings with administration, staff, and faculty at each of these universities.

As a result of these meetings, the following two activities are planned for the 2007-'08 academic year: A delegation from Sinte Gleska will be visiting the Parkville campus, talking with profes-

sors, administrators, students, and staff about the possibilities of SGU teaching online using Park's e-college platform; SGU hosting a delegation of professors and students for a weeklong experience of awareness of reservation life and Native American culture; faculty and student exchanges; using a week or 10 day experience in Rosebud as a service learning component of a course, and other ideas yet to be discussed and developed.

During Park's spring break when OLC is still in session, a group of interested faculty and students will be traveling to OLC for awareness training and continued conversation about programs between Park University and OLC.

A group of interested faculty met on August 29th to discuss possible arrangements with SGU and OLC; the group, now called the Lakota Education Group (LEGs), has doubled in size because of faculty interest. Some LEGs have contacted their counterparts at each of the South Dakota Schools and are having conversations about possibilities. The expanded LEGs will be meeting again with the delegation from SGU.

Any students, staff, or faculty with ideas about possibilities or who are interested in participating can contact Carol Getty, member of the University International and Multicultural Education Committee, at carol.getty@park.edu or 816-584-6336.

Faculty, students study abroad



In June and July of 2007, two Park University faculty, Dennis Kerkman and Brian Cowley, and three students traveled

Upcoming opportunities for faculty

Again in 2008, the Office of International Education and Study Abroad will offer the opportunity for faculty members to participate in the University of Guanajuato's intensive summer Spanish program. Keep an eye out for advertisements soliciting your application.

Over spring break 2008, the Office of International Education and Study Abroad will be taking another group of students and faculty to South America for a service-learning opportunity. They will be looking for new faculty participants who wish to integrate international service-learning into one of their Spring 2008 courses. Keep an eye out for advertisements for those applications as well.

to Mexico to participate in the Intensive Spanish Language program at the University of Guanajuato.

The faculty and students spent one month studying Spanish and living with Mexican families.

From August 3 to August 12, 2007, one faculty member, one staff member, and eight students participated in the Croatia Study Abroad–Film Project as part of a team creating a documentary on the story of an American pilot, Edgar Lee Lamar, shot down over Croatia during World War II. Faculty member Dennis Okerstrom created the project.

The group traveled first to Venice, Italy and then on to Pula, Croatia, to create a documentary about the experiences

of a Kansas City-area World War II veteran who was shot down over Croatia.

From October 11, 2007 to October 22, 2007, a group of fourteen Park University students, four faculty, and two staff traveled to Recife, Brazil on a service-learning study abroad trip. The faculty members who participated were Ken Christopher, Brian Cowley, Michael Fitzmorris and Wen Hsin. Each faculty member worked with students from their respective classes to develop short seminars to present to members of a community center. The group also visited local sites of interest and Brazil's spectacular beaches.

Intercultural training proposed

By
Kimberly Connelly

Living and working in an environment where one interacts and communicates with people from a variety of cultures is rich and fascinating. It can also be challenging and confusing on a good day.

Intercultural communication training is a way to equip oneself with the tools and self-knowledge necessary to navigate any communication waters so that one doesn't drown in the ambiguity and confusion that language and cultural differences can present.

Dr. Cal Downs, internationally known intercultural communication expert, has been working for the past 10 months with

Kimberly Connelly, assistant director of international student services, to design an intercultural communication training series for all Park staff.

The training initiative came out of the goals and objectives formulated by the former Internationalization Task Force, whose aim was to promote internationalization of all aspects of the Park community, including learning outcomes for students, faculty, staff and services.

Recently, Dr. Downs submitted a proposal for a 12-hour training series, which would feature a training manual written by Dr. Downs specifically for Park University and its unique needs. The final training manual's contents will be determined by answers acquired from

questionnaires that will be distributed to staff and students.

Since the submission of Dr. Down's training proposal, it has been decided that the training will also be made available for faculty, hopefully beginning at the Spring faculty conference.

Exact dates of the training for faculty and staff have yet to be scheduled.

All faculty and staff will be requested to assist in developing the training by completing the intercultural questionnaires. The questionnaires are scheduled to be distributed by e-mail during the latter part of the Fall semester.

New committee stresses internationalization, multicultural education; IMEC begins internationalization, multicultural work

The Internationalization Task Force, which had served Park for three years, was phased out in the spring of 2007. It was replaced this fall with the Internationalization and Multicultural Education Committee, a university committee with both elected and appointed faculty members, appointed staff members, and student representation.

The decision to include multiculturalism into the committee's work was logical, we believe.

According to the American Council on Education, "working at the intersection of internationalization and multicultural education provides opportunities to help students, faculty, and staff develop intercultural skills, broaden their attitudes to appreciate complexity in the world, and examine the values, attitudes, and responsibilities of local and global citizenship."

Toward those ends, the committee has developed a draft charge. It is:

The Internationalization and Multicultural Education Committee will provide leadership to faculty, students, and staff as they seek to create a Park University that celebrates inclusivity and embraces international connectedness. To this end, the committee will:

Promote internationalized and multicultural curriculum development and integration;

Promote diversity in co-curricular programs;

Promote diversity in the faculty, staff, and student body;

Promote, plan, and assist in developing international and multicultural faculty and staff development opportunities;

Plan and promote the positive integration of diverse student populations into the Park University family;

Open and maintain a dialogue among all Park stakeholders about internationalization and multicultural education.

IMEC leadership

Steven Youngblood, Chair
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Dennis Okerstrom, Vice-Chair
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Carol Getty, Past Chair
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The committee's charge is consistent with the mission and vision statement, and the core values of Park University.

The Internationalization and Multicultural Education Committee has divided itself into four subcommittees.

These subcommittees have outlined their priorities for the 2007-2008 academic year. These include the International and Multicultural Curriculum subcommittee, which will work cooperatively with the faculty senate's

Internationalizing the Curriculum committee.

Other subcommittees are Civic Engagement, Faculty and Staff

Development, and Integrating Diverse student populations.

Among the goals outlined by The Internationalization and Multicultural Education Committee are:

- Implementing a freshman intercultural experience into SS100;
- Expanding faculty-produced "how to" brochures on internationalization and multicultural education, using a booklet produced last spring as a model;
- Working on a stipend program to encourage faculty to produce new internationally or multiculturally themed courses; developing a global assessment "certificate" program, which would reward students for meeting a certain number of global competencies; distributing a survey about service learning imbedded in coursework; working on the Native American project (see page 2); enhancing awareness of multicultural events; sponsoring intercultural activities and professional development; working to better integrate international graduate students to campus.

Of course, the committee welcomes input about these goals, and about our charge, from faculty, staff, and students. Please don't hesitate to contact us.



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