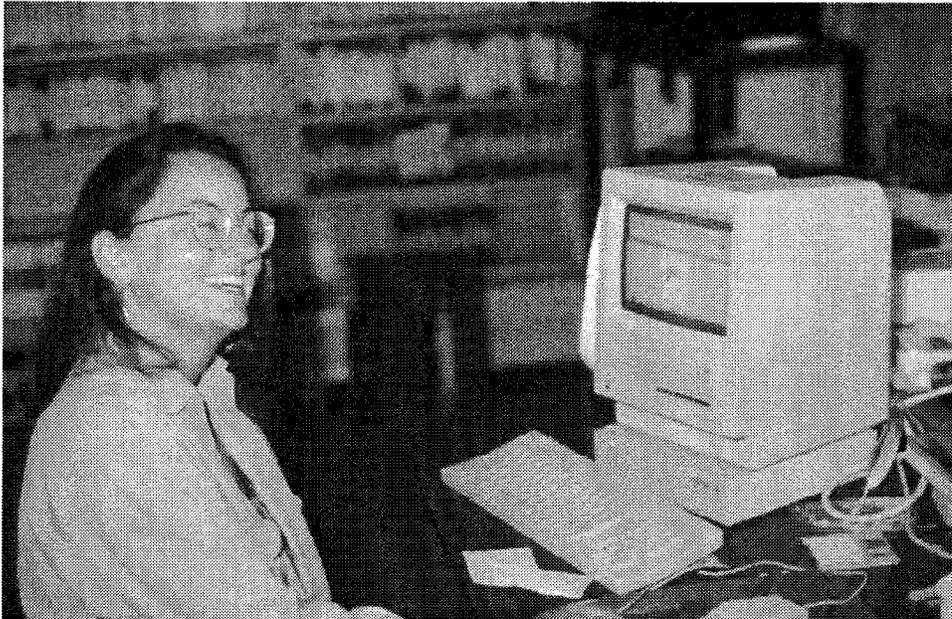


Going Places

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON MICRONESIA AND SOUTH PACIFIC PROGRAM



Kevin Kilduff

Summer in Majuro

by Ari Lee Seligmann

I spent my summer as a technical assistant in the Marshall Islands. My job was to train journalists who produce several newsletters for the government. My primary task was to transfer editing and writing skills to the managing editor of the *RMI Gazette*, a monthly newsletter that serves the government. Other newsletters I had the opportunity to assist with were the *Education Newsletter* and a new newsletter for the Head Start Program.

With the Head Start Program, my job consisted mainly of training staff members in computer skills, including word processing and desktop publishing. We designed a newsletter that would be written in both Marshallese and English. A longtime Head Start employee, Bima Akeke, was the designated reporter who would collect articles, and cleric Sally Capelle was chosen to take care of administrative tasks, such as typing and computer layout. Morris Jetnil, another Head Start employee, was chosen to assist in the production of the newsletter.

The three participants eagerly attended the early morning computer training sessions and even more eagerly awaited coffee breaks when we had a particularly difficult lesson!

My afternoons were spent working with the producers of the *RMI Gazette*. I transferred skills in writing, editing, and computer operations to my counterpart Florian Helkena, the managing editor. I also had the opportunity to work with Sam Jordan, known as Big Sam, a seasoned radio veteran who did a weekly education show on the radio and collected stories for the *Gazette*.

Communications for the government are administered by the Ministry of Education. State of the art video technology and a fully operational print shop are located near the high school. My office was in the media center, the hub of activity for government-requested videotaping and photographing of important

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The overriding concern of the MSPP technical assistance program is to create self-sufficiency by transferring skills from the technical assistant (TA) to the counterpart in the island agency. As we noted in the fall 1994 *Going Places*, the counterpart connection is the critical link in successful skills transfer. Given a good match between counterpart and TA, how effective is the skills transfer between the two? And how can it be measured? These are the questions we seek to answer through the evaluation process for the technical assistance program.

Each TA is asked to complete a two-part evaluation before leaving the island placement. The first part deals with personal experience in the position: what did the TA get from the placement, how can the MSPP training program be improved, what were the unexpected roadblocks, and other items of this nature. In the other part of the evaluation, the TA assesses the project's success from a professional perspective. Were the stated goals of the project met? What was the relationship with their counterpart? How committed to working on the project was the counterpart?

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events. I was fortunate to be in a position to attend many government events with a press pass.

Although work was the center of my life in Majuro, it wasn't all work and no play. Majuro is an urban center, the capital of the Marshall Islands, with modern department stores, clubs, and even a brand new bowling alley with computerized screens. Every Thursday night various government agencies compete in a bowling league. While I was there, I'm proud to say, the Ministry of Education was unbeaten. Although I did not participate myself, I was always invited to watch the team win.

At one end of Majuro atoll, which is thirty miles long and in places merely a stone's throw from ocean to lagoon wide, lies a lovely stretch of beach in a section called Laura. This part of the atoll is relatively undeveloped and unpolluted, and many families come to picnic and swim here on weekends. I had several chances to relax in Laura during my stay.

Off the other end of Majuro, at the tip of the island known as Rita, lies a tiny island one can reach by wading during low tide. Presently uninhabited (although I hear the owner plans to build a house on it for his family), the island offers a close and quiet refuge from the bustle of busy downtown. The other TA and I occasionally kayaked over to the island to go snorkeling.

After working hard for about a month, I had the golden opportunity to visit the closest outer island, Arno. I traveled by boat with a family, who offered me cookies, sandwiches, and drinks along the way, and a grandmother who took great pains to make sure my neck didn't get too sunburned. As soon as we reached Arno, I fell instantly, magically, irreversibly in love with the blue skies, jumping dolphins, and lush foliage of the islands. Erik Heim, the other TA assigned to work in Majuro, accompanied me, and we were hosted by delightful relatives of Alfred Capelle, the director of the

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Marshall Islands museum. We camped under breadfruit trees right on the lagoon, and every day this wonderful family brought us coconuts (ni), breadfruit (meh), pandanus (pup), and reef fish (ek).

While snorkeling in Arno, we saw sea turtles, sharks, an octopus that shot ink at us, and many brilliantly hued fish and coral reefs. As luck would have it, the boat returning to Majuro was cancelled, so we got to spend an extra day on Arno, swimming and enjoying the scenery and hospitality of our wonderful hosts.

That final night, a great storm blew in off the lagoon, and while Erik lay huddled in his mosquito net, I tried in vain to keep my tent from blowing down with me in it! Rain came pouring in

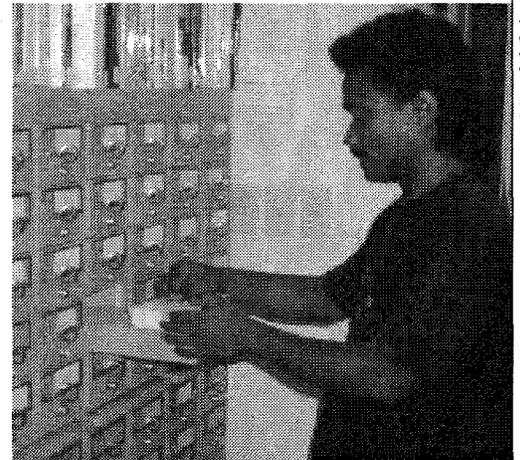
through the sides and top of the tent, and I spent the remainder of the night playing ship tossed at sea: battering down the hatches (trying to keep the rain fly from blowing off); storing the cargo (keeping my gear in the corners of the tent to keep it from collapsing); and swabbing the deck (wiping the interior of the tent with a soon soaking wet towel). At daybreak, I awakened in the very center of the tent, curled into a little ball, and got up and ready to leave. Two friends of the family arrived on a truck to take us to the dock, and what ensued was the wildest truck ride I've ever had: sitting on fish containers ducking to avoid being smacked in the head with palm fronds.

Everyone waved to us as we drove by on our way to the boat. When we got there, a young woman handed me two coconuts for the trip and sat with me along the way to Majuro. I had made a new friend on the boat, and knew that for the rest of my life, I would always have a special place in my heart for the Marshall Islands.

Library Development Program

The MSPP recently helped the library at the College of the Marshall Islands in Majuro acquire a large card catalog. On a visit to Majuro, librarian Margaret Edmundson showed Maradel Gale the sad state of the small, overcrowded card catalog owned by the library. Margaret asked if there might be some way the MSPP library program could help the college obtain a larger card catalog.

Elizabeth Caraker, graduate research assistant for the MSPP, spent some time on the telephone in Eugene, seeking a school that was converting to a computerized catalog system and that would no longer need a card catalog. She connected with Molly Hansbrough, school librarian at Adams Elementary School in Eugene. Molly was delighted to find a home for the Adams card catalog at this distant



Maradel Gale

school. The MSPP library development grant provided the funds to crate and ship the very heavy and bulky item from Eugene to Majuro, where it arrived in late August.

The card catalog has been installed in the college library and is shown here being used by Richard Jally, library technician.

The real story of how the Micronesia and South Pacific Program got started

Oregon's Micronesia and South Pacific Program began back in 1948, as a dream in a young girl's mind. The catalyst was a book by the famous author from Hawaii, Armine von Tempski. The book, recently reprinted, was *Judy of the Islands*. The dreamer was Maradel Krummel, who spent the dark, rainy winters of her Seattle childhood reading books about faraway places. This particular book made a deep impression on her, especially its concern about the well-being of

Returning to the U.S. after six months, Maradel began seeking support for her idea by visiting agencies in New York and Washington, D.C. It was during these visits that she became familiar with the myriad of agencies and organizations working in the international arena. She also met Phil DeLongchamps of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Territorial and International Affairs (OTIA). While encouraging about the basic concept, Phil wanted more information about how the projects would be

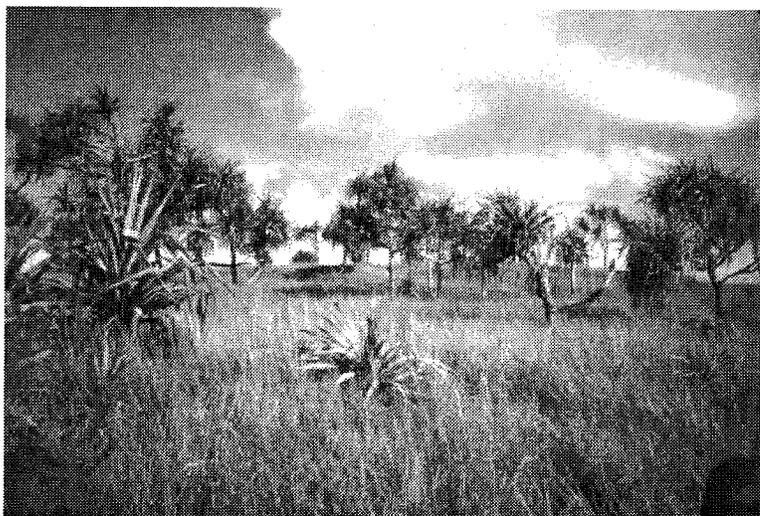
developed, the students selected, and the work evaluated.

The first trip to Micronesia occurred in 1988, when Maradel, herself, funded a graduate student, John Haakanson, to accompany her on an exploratory trip to Pohnpei, Yap, and Palau. Early

throughout Micronesia surveying the status of more than twenty libraries. Both OTIA and USIA provided subsequent funding to continue the library development program, which remains a part of MSPP's mission today.

The first TAs, a group of ten, were placed on the islands of Palau, Pohnpei, and Majuro in June 1990. From their experiences, the program and the training were refined and revised. In 1991, ten more graduate students were placed in the islands. In 1992, Kosrae was added, and that year a total of twelve technical assistants were placed with government agencies. A big growth spurt came in 1993, when American Samoa was included in the placements, and eighteen technical assistants were placed on the islands.

This, then, is the story of the beginning of a unique and exciting program that has become the Micronesia and South Pacific Program of the University of Oregon. It is also the story of a dream come true—a dream that began in a child's mind and was fulfilled when that child became an adult.



Maradel Gale

the original inhabitants of the many islands scattered throughout the Pacific.

Fast forward to a time many years later, when the girl, now an associate professor at the University of Oregon, took her first sabbatical in 1984 to the islands of the South Pacific. Curious to see for herself what these islands were really like, Maradel visited French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, the Samoas, Tonga, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia. On this trip, she studied a wide range of topics, including environmental protection, women's issues and education. During this trip she developed the idea of a program that would place advanced graduate students in the islands at the request of people there who wanted technical assistance with a particular project. The concept was based on a Ford Foundation program that funded graduate students who accompanied faculty researchers to international sites to experience research in cross-cultural settings.

in this trip, while meeting with agents from organizations in the FSM and Pohnpei State governments, Maradel was recruited by the Peace Corps to be the training director for the 1988 Yap training project. After finishing the work of setting up the Oregon program, John returned to Oregon, and Maradel went to Yap for three months.

Designing and delivering the Peace Corps training in community development and her own cross-cultural adjustment provided a framework for training programs to prepare MSPP technical assistants. Living in a small village on the main island of Yap and working with Yapese staff members provided Maradel with an understanding of the situations likely to be encountered by TAs.

The U.S. Information Agency (USIA) provided the first funds for a technical assistance project—assessment of the various libraries in Micronesia. Mary Ann Lund Goodwin was the first TA to represent the program as she traveled

Continued from page 1

How could this commitment be improved? What level of support did they get from the supervisor for the project? What specific skills did they see the counterpart assimilate during the period of service, and how were these demonstrated? This evaluation gives the MSPP staff a picture of progress toward the program's goal of creating an increased pool of skills on the island.

As a final step in the evaluation process, the supervisor is asked to evaluate the success of the project using a standard form. This instrument looks at the goals of the project, the transfer of skills, perceived quality of professional training and preparation of the TA, and cultural appropriateness of the TA. It provides an opportunity for supervisors to give us information about ways we can improve the program.

Julie Walker, Grants Manager for MSPP

The Micronesia and South Pacific Program is housed in the University of Oregon's Institute for a Sustainable Environment (ISE). This arrangement, in addition to offering contact with other faculty members and students who are interested in sustainable community development, provides us with an excellent resource, Julie Walker. Julie is the person responsible for managing grants and budgets for members of the ISE.

A native of England, Julie was an undergraduate geography student at the

University of Leicester when she met her husband, Bob, who was there on a year of postgraduate study. The couple returned to the U.S., and Julie worked at the University of Oregon bookstore while her husband finished his Ph.D. in philosophy. Julie then returned to school to complete her geography degree. When she finished her studies, Julie went to work in the Budget Office at the University of Oregon and from there moved to other departments in the system until she came to the ISE. Julie dreamed of being a recreational planner when she was an undergraduate student, and her long-range plans include returning to the UO to earn a master's degree in planning.

Julie and Bob have a daughter, Briony, who is an elementary school student at a Eugene public school. The family shares its home with two dogs—a three-legged black lab and a Shetland sheepdog—and with a cat they rescued from a wild existence and tamed. They are probably the only people in Eugene with a termite colony they have raised for twenty years. The original termite inhabitants were collected from their Amazon university housing apartment, and they have maintained the colony in a glass termitarium ever since. The Walkers raise bees and harvest the honey for their family's use. They are acquiring an ant colony by slowly gathering the ants that invade



Maradel Gale

their home in the fall and spring. Julie's at-home title is "home pet technician," a job which she shares with her hobbies of quilting and cooking. On weekends, the Walker family often can be found camping in the woods around Oregon.

About her work with the MSPP, Julie says she particularly likes "seeing how the technical assistant's eyes light up when they talk about their experiences in the Pacific islands." Julie manages to make sense of the seemingly endless requirements of the federal granting agencies, private funding sources, the university and the Oregon state system. With skill and perseverance, she weaves a path through the maze of regulations and requirements for each entity. Julie accomplishes all this with a grace and calmness that is impressive to those of us who have the privilege of working with her.

Going Places

This edition of *Going Places* was edited by Maradel Gale, MSPP director.

Articles were written by Gale, Ari Lee Seligman, and Nancy Peyron; layout by Frances Milligan

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<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~mspp/mspp.html> or call or write:

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Micronesia and South Pacific Program

The Micronesia and South Pacific Program was established in 1988 at the University of Oregon to assist with the development of sustainable communities in the Pacific islands. The university affiliation faculty development program links the University of Oregon with the University of the South Pacific and the College of Micronesia-FSM, Palau Community College and the College of the Marshall Islands. The technical assistance program transfers technical skills to counterparts in public agencies and nonprofit organizations in American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. A library development program works with public and school libraries throughout Micronesia.

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