

TRIBUTE TO HARRY W. MORGAN

The World Press Institute, founded by Harry W. Morgan at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where Harry served as the director of the International Center, is his most enduring and successful enterprise. From 1961 onwards, a steady stream of young, outstanding foreign journalists has come to the United States to participate in a program of work, travel and learning about our country and our people in all of our rich diversity.

The World Press Institute fits wonderfully into Harry's life themes: understanding, friendship, communication and internationalism. From his boyhood in Salinas, traveling first to the United Nations, then to Holland, through the Air Force, and at Rutgers College, he kept involved in these underlying themes, culminating in the Ambassadors for Friendship program.

After graduation, Harry went with his new wife, Catharine, to Macalester in 1960, with the help of DeWitt Wallace, Harry's lifelong friend and patron. Ambassadors for Friendship recruited foreign students for grass-roots, goodwill tours of the United States, meeting the high and the low, the rich and the poor, "warts and all," seeing the majestic mountains and prairies, the great cities, the vastness of America—always letting each person make up their own minds about America. This was at the height of the Cold War and attracted many sponsors, host families and volunteers wherever the Ambassadors went. Wallace's Readers Digest magazine promoted this work in a series of articles on Harry's work.

From these beginnings emerged the World Press Institute, with Harry reasoning that journalists would multiply the effect of a stay in the United States through their media exposure and readers. Each journalist selected, many personally by Harry, would spend a year in the US under the auspices of the Institute including a semester at Macalester living in dorms and with host families, studying American history, politics, culture and journalism. There would be travel throughout the country in the same Rambler Ambassador station wagons George Romney had contributed to Ambassadors for Friendship, now to the WPI. Three months would also be spent working on a large American newspaper, radio station or television news department.

Culminating with a graduation dinner at Macalester and inauguration into the Omega Upsilon Tau (OUT) fraternity, complete with WPI lapel pin and certificate, the WPI would then send off the graduates to their homes and careers, many accelerated by this remarkable America experience.

Over five hundred journalists would have this experience, always evolving in content and time spent, but always within the framework of Harry's grand idea, to expose foreign press to the fullness of America and let them experience it, not just New York and Washington, which most foreign correspondents rarely left, but the entire country. Journalists portaged canoes in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota, lived on Iowa farms, met with presidents, cabinet secretaries and congressmen, worked on small town media, traveled over ten thousand miles, interviewed hundreds of leaders and ordinary people, and lived our life for a year.

With Harry at the helm, there was always excitement. He could get the impossible interview for the group, complimentary dinners at the interesting restaurants, free hotel rooms from Hilton, invitations to conferences and closed meetings, including national presidential nominating conventions and a whole host of other activities aimed at giving the fifteen "Fellows" insight into the people and processes of the US.

Harry was always inventing, innovating, making the program better. When he met a recent Pulitzer prize winner and learned that the prize consisted of a letter of congratulations and a check, he organized a Pulitzer Prize Winner- WPI Fellow conference at Macalester and invited all of the Pulitzer journalism winners to Macalester for two days of talks between the "best in the US and the best in the world." This event continued for over fifteen years, creating goodwill and earning national recognition for the program.

The WPI alumni always remained Harry's friends. He would articulate his belief that the WPI experience was a life-time experience, "personally and professionally" and he kept up active friendships with as many of the alumni as possible, many of whom went on to very distinguished careers in journalism, government and international organizations.

In 1964, Harry began a transition that resulted in his transferring with his wife and two young sons, Howard and Kipper, to New York and a position with the Readers Digest. Harry continued to help select journalists, fund-raise and serve on the Board. In fact, he remained on the Board through the rest of his life, meeting hundreds of journalists participating in the program, scores of Board members and six WPI directors, attending meetings in person and by telephone link-up when he was not in the country. Always ready to take on assignments and offer welcome advice, he continued to be a significant influence on the program.

The World Press Institute, which continues to the present, and has recently announced a renewed and revitalized program, is a living and fitting monument to Harry W. Morgan. His inspiration, guidance and vitality still infuse the WPI with the spirit of friendship and understanding that he so personified. And the results stand as a tribute to his vision that people from different parts of the world can achieve mutual understanding and learn to live in peace. May God bless Harry.

Submitted on behalf of the World Press
Institute's Board of Directors

January 23, 2008