



Tom Roberts

On July 19, 2019, international education lost a pioneer and a legend. Tom Roberts will always be remembered as a generous and devoted friend, who dedicated his life to integrity and standards in study abroad, and whose people skills and collaborative nature led to the growth of partnerships and opportunities in study abroad for generations of students and professionals.

As another semester has drawn to close, one that bears little resemblance to any other semester we have ever known, I think often of my friend Tom. At the end of each semester he would come off the road, one of the first “road warriors,” crisscrossing the country visiting colleges and universities to encourage students to study abroad, and in the process, gathering old friends for dinner, nurturing existing relationships, and cultivating new ones.

Tom earned his BA in political science from Rutgers University, and an MA in literature from the University of Chicago. He was a member of several honor societies, including Phi Beta Kappa, Pi Sigma Alpha, and Phi Alpha Theta. He was extremely proud of the honorary MA he received from the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. After graduating from Rutgers, Tom served in the US Air Force during which he married his childhood sweetheart, Ursula, while stationed in Texas.

When Tom was an undergraduate at Rutgers, he most likely did not envision a future as one of the most influential figures in study abroad. He more likely saw himself as a university professor or writer, but it was during his time at the University of Chicago, while working towards his PhD, that Tom’s career took a turn. He began to work at what was then called the Institute of European Studies, now IES Abroad, where he soon discovered that he liked administrative work, and that he was good at it. Thus, began a 50+ year career as a trailblazer in study abroad.

After several years at IES, Tom joined the Beaver College (now Arcadia University) Center for Education Abroad in 1979, where he, along with David Gray, was instrumental in making the Center one of the largest study abroad organizations in the world. In 1988, Tom and David Gray left Arcadia to found the

Institute for Study Abroad at Butler University (IFSA) in Indianapolis, along with M. Jean White, expanding the scope of study abroad to include Australia and New Zealand. He retired from the Institute in 2002 but remained on the Board until his death.

It was at IES that Tom met Edward Mowatt, a friendship that led to the development of The Institute of Economic and Political Studies (INSTEP) in London in 1979 and expanded to include INSTEP Cambridge in 1986. Both programs live on today as programs at Wake Forest University accepting motivated students from a group of affiliated institutions across the United States. The Alliance for Global Education, another initiative led by Tom in collaboration with his longtime colleague and friend, David Larsen, was established by IFSA and Arcadia to expand programming in China and India.

Under the leadership of Tom, David Gray and Jean White, IFSA established the IFSA Foundation, that over its five-year history awarded \$7 million to universities and international education organizations, which in turn provided study abroad scholarships to hundreds of students, and funded a number of special projects, including the writing and publication of *A History of U.S. Study Abroad: 1965-Present* by Bill Hoffa.

In his professional life, Tom sought to connect people; his trademark was the establishment of personal, trusted relationships. Tom brought people together across professional interests and generations. He worked closely with the international admissions sector to address study abroad issues, creating the Study Abroad Committee of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). He was instrumental in the creation of the SOTS (SECUSSA Old-Timers), past SECUSSA chairs who continue to meet annually at NAFSA Conferences. He was especially welcoming to newcomers to the field, mentoring scores of new study abroad professionals and serving as Chancellor to GOSAT (Growing Old in Study Abroad Together), an informal gathering of mid-level study abroad professionals who meet annually at NAFSA.

His service and contributions to NAFSA: Association of International Educators were numerous. He held official leadership positions including Member of the Board and Chair of SECUSSA. Tom received Life Membership for his contributions to NAFSA and the Education Abroad Leadership Award for his dedication to and accomplishments in the field. Tom was instrumental in establishing the Lily von Klemperer Award, given each year to a rising mid-level study abroad professional at the NAFSA Annual Conference for their service in mentoring new professionals in the field, named after his dear friend and a leading figure in study abroad at the beginning of the field as we know it.

In 2000, Tom also played a major role in the creation of the Forum on Education Abroad, a then new organization designed to focus on study abroad issues and advocacy. He was an active member of the founding board that helped to launch the organization, which remains vital to the field today.

Upon retirement, Tom dedicated his time and creativity toward writing the book and lyrics for "INDY! The Musical: A Hoosier Fantasy." In May, 2019, Tom's life came full circle as he fulfilled a dream when his play was produced and performed at the Phoenix Theater in Indianapolis.