ALUMNA MASTERS LANGUAGES AND A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

Linda Murphy Marshall (BA '72, Spanish) didn't know where her degree in Spanish would take her - until she became a multi-linguist for the United States Department of Defense.

Today, after a career in fields of translation, interpretation, and government language analysis, Marshall has had the opportunity to formally study 12 languages, and has professionally worked with more than 20 languages (Romance, Germanic, Slavic and African languages). She has also traveled all over the world in support of dignitaries, including the President of the U.S., the First Lady and the U.S. Secretary of State.

"Being at DU was really the catalyst that led me to believe that I could pursue a career in languages; it was the seed that was planted and burst forth my junior year in Spain," said Marshall.

"I was drawn to DU by its reputation and by the natural beauty it's set in," added Marshall. "I have always been drawn to languages, and to literature, to the idea of having a unique view into other cultures, other points of view, by virtue of being able to read and understand other languages. It felt like entire worlds were opened up to me, giving me a rare glimpse of these other cultures."

Marshall feels fortunate to have had two professors that cemented her love of Spanish while she was at DU. She had considered studying elementary education but after taking the Spanish placement test as a freshman, was encouraged to continue with Spanish, which she had studied in high school. She cites this guidance as a pivotal experience for her because it ultimately led her to major in Spanish and spend her junior year in Spain. It also led her to continue the journey she had started at DU.

After graduation, Marshall returned to her hometown of St. Louis and began working on her master's at St. Louis University, where she also worked at the time. "I was drawn to DU by its reputation and by the natural beauty it's set in," added Marshall. "I have always been drawn to languages, and to literature, to the idea of having a unique view into other cultures, other points of view, by virtue of being able to read and understand other languages. It felt like entire worlds were opened up to me, giving me a rare glimpse of these other cultures."

After graduation, Marshall returned to her hometown of St. Louis and began working on her master's at St. Louis University, where she also worked at the time. "The more courses I took, the more convinced I became that I wanted to continue my studies in Spanish and Portuguese language and literature and to continue with my Ph.D. I wanted to continue the journey I had started at DU."

This path eventually led to what she calls a "very interesting" career with the U.S. Department of Defense.
“I was in Zambia during a coup attempt, in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the war there, was sent to South Africa for work shortly after apartheid was abolished and saw firsthand all the changes beginning to occur in South Africa,” Marshall stated.

She was also sent with an investigative team to Nairobi, Kenya with the FBI after Al Qaeda bombed the U.S. Embassy there (and in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania), and was on a team traveling with President Bush, the First Lady and then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Kenya in 2008.

Marshall went on separate language immersion trips to Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, Australia and Portugal. As a result, she has been to Africa on work-related trips 12 times, but also to Thailand, Portugal and Germany as part of the Department of Defense. These trips, along with mastering the respective languages in each country, have been the highlight of her career.

Marshall cites her continued friendships with fellow DU alums as one of the most meaningful experiences after graduating.

“These are lifelong friends. It is such a gift to know that, regardless of where life has taken us, both geographically and career-wise, we are all connected by this common experience we had and will always be friends. I still see many of them, several times a year, and DU is the thread that links us. I don't think I ever anticipated that this would be the case, 40-plus years after graduation,” she said.