

The Washington Post
June 9, 2005

Foreign Policy Guru Frederick Holborn Dies

By Joe Holley

Frederick Holborn, 76, a senior adjunct professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, died June 3 at his home in the District of arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease.

Mr. Holborn, who had been a legislative assistant to John F. Kennedy when he was a Massachusetts senator and a special assistant to the White House when he was president, had been at SAIS for more than 30 years. His colleagues considered him the school's institutional memory, and at the time of his death he was writing a history of the 60-year-old institution.

Mr. Holborn, an educator with a gift for combining the practical and the theoretical and who had an inexhaustible cache of stories and anecdotes no matter the circumstance, taught courses on the conduct of foreign policy, Congress and foreign policy, domestic determinants of foreign policy and American foreign policy from 1914 to 1945.

He originated the school's well-known crisis simulation exercise and seminar, and from 1988 until his death organized and directed the event, which takes place annually over a long weekend. He also conducted an annual seminar on the American political process and foreign policy for foreign diplomats posted to Washington.

"He was the person who knew every student, who kept in touch with everybody, who was well-plugged-in to government and to Washington and to the Hill," said Dr. Michael Mandelbaum, director of the American Foreign Policy Program at SAIS. "In a way, he was the most accessible member of the faculty."

Mr. Holborn was born in Heidelberg, Germany, in 1928. His father, Hajo Holborn, was a renowned professor at the Institute of Politics in Berlin, and his mother, Annemarie Bettman, held a doctorate in classical philology. When the elder Holborn's research on the Weimar Republic came to the attention of the Nazis, he was dismissed from the institute, and in 1934, the Holborn family was forced to flee the country. After a year in England, Mr. Holborn's father became a professor in the History Department at Yale University, where he taught for 35 years. He also was an early SAIS faculty member when, during the summers of 1946 through 1949, the school moved "lock, stock and bookcases" to Peterborough, N.H., to escape Washington's summer heat.

Mr. Holborn grew up in New Haven, Conn. He attended the Taft School and graduated from Harvard in 1949. He was a management intern for a year with the Department of the Interior and the Displaced Persons Commission in Washington. From 1953 to 1957, he was a fellow of the Littauer Center at Harvard, where he received his master's degree in public administration, and, from 1954 to 1959, a teaching fellow in government at Harvard and an instructor in political science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He served as a legislative assistant to Kennedy from 1959 to 1961 and was a special assistant to the White House from 1961 to 1966, drafting letters and speeches and handling White House communications with the foreign press. He also served for two years in the attorney general's office and in the State Department.

In 1968-69, he was on the staff of the President's Task Force on Telecommunications Policy. At the same time he was associated with the Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research while studying the changing role of White House staffs since World War II, particularly in foreign policy.

He joined SAIS in 1971. During most of his tenure at the school, he was a consultant to Congress and the Congressional Fellowship Program of the American Political Science Association, serving as acting director of the program in 1976-77.

In addition to teaching and advising hundreds of students over the years, he also hosted the school's biennial election night party. In a 1999 article in an SAIS alumni publication, a former student recalled that "the event featured the ubiquitous \$2 Rolling Rock beers, cold pizza, live CNN coverage on multiple TV screens and our very own in-house political analyst -- the professor himself."

Another student recalled that on a school-sponsored overnight camping trip to retrace the steps of Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson on his 1862 Shenandoah Valley campaign, only one person volunteered to wake up at 6 a.m. to start breakfast for all 30 SAIS campers. That person was Mr. Holborn.

Mr. Holborn retired in 1999 but continued to teach seminars as an adjunct professor and to oversee the school's crisis simulations. At SAIS's May 26 commencement ceremony, he received the Johns Hopkins Founder's Award for his outstanding service.

Away from his professional life, Mr. Holborn's abiding passion was music. His sister, Dr. Hanna Holborn Gray, recalled that he was a good clarinetist in his younger days, and although he didn't continue with the instrument, he remained a music connoisseur. From 1970 to 1991, he was secretary of the Washington

Performing Arts Society and more recently chair of the program committee. He also was a devoted fan of Johns Hopkins lacrosse.

Dr. Gray, the first female president of the University of Chicago and a resident of Chicago, is his only immediate survivor.