

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND WITH THE OLMSTED FOUNDATION

By Commander Kevin Ringelstein '07, USN

One morning in Mahan Hall back when I was a midshipman, a history professor approached me between classes and asked if I wanted to travel to Istanbul, Turkey, for a week excursion during spring break. While a proposal like this might seem unusual at a civilian university, it was yet another extraordinary opportunity one may encounter at the U.S. Naval Academy. My professor went on to explain how the trip would be part of a fully-funded, cultural and educational program with other midshipmen, U.S. Military Academy West Point cadets and Turkish diplomats. It was an offer I could not refuse. When I asked the professor which entity would sponsor the trip, he replied, “the Olmsted Foundation.” Fifteen years later, the Olmsted Foundation continues to impact my life, providing my family and me with extraordinary opportunities to travel, study overseas and broaden our understandings of the world.

Founded by the highly-accomplished Army General, businessman and philanthropist, George Olmsted, the Olmsted Foundation sponsors and enables experiences abroad through two programs—the Olmsted Undergraduate Overseas Travel and Cultural Immersion Program, and the Olmsted Scholar Program. The former is available to students at each service academy and select military colleges and ROTC programs and the latter is available to military officers of all branches, which now includes the



The Olmsted Foundation experience as a midshipman in Turkey in 2007 and as an officer in Italy in 2022.

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Space Force. The undergraduate program provides a rare glimpse into foreign cultures as part of trips lasting one to three weeks for soon-to-be officers, facilitating the development of cultural curiosities before setting out on active duty. The graduate program is a full-time, overseas tour lasting two-and-a-half to three years, in which officers and their families (if applicable) assimilate in a foreign culture, gain language fluency, pursue graduate studies abroad and travel extensively. Scholars engage in life-changing experiences and acquire an in-depth understanding of foreign cultures; thereby further equipping them to serve in positions of great responsibility as senior leaders in the U.S. armed forces.

As a midshipman, I gained new insights into another country’s culture, politics and social dynamics, which greatly influencing how I led and engaged allied partners upon graduating. As a result of this experience, I knew I wanted to dive even deeper and become an Olmsted Scholar during my naval career. Thanks to my history professor and other mentors who introduced me to the extraordinary opportunities offered by the Olmsted Foundation, I am fortunate enough to write this from an overseas location as such, immersing myself in a foreign culture while speaking the host nation’s language.

To alumni—if you know midshipmen who possess an adventurous spirit and want to broaden their horizons abroad, inform them of the Olmsted Undergraduate Overseas Travel and Cultural Immersion Program. To active-duty officers—if you aspire to represent the U.S. and the Navy overseas, assimilate in a foreign culture and develop new skills by confronting diverse challenges, apply to the Olmsted Scholar Program. Such experiences will undoubtedly change your perspective of the world and life forever.

More information for both programs may be found at: www.olmstedfoundation.org. ⚓

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