

Bizi Biz YAPANLARDAN



C. Mark Smith

The first part was published in the April edition of Bizletter. The second part is below:

From Tarsus to Tacoma...

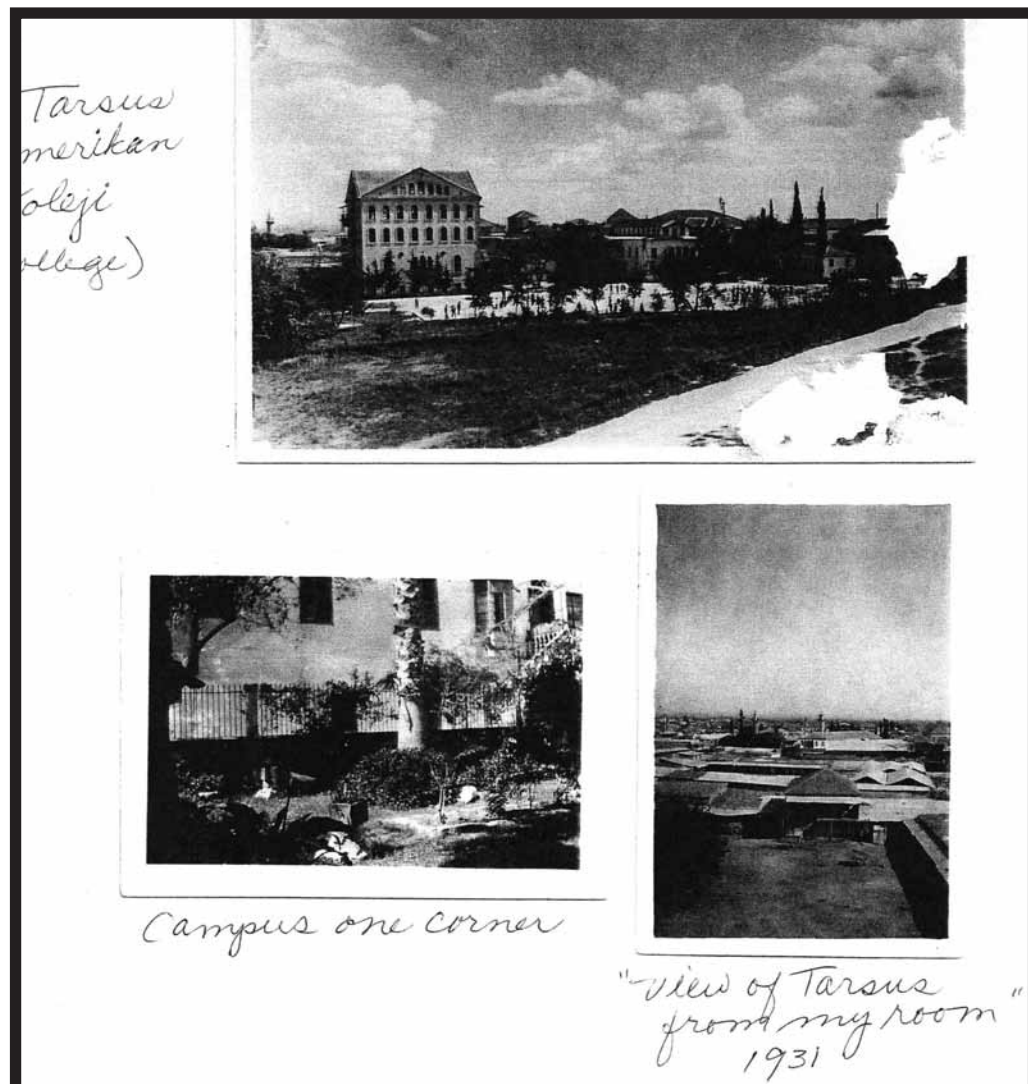
The Remarkable Career of Professor Lyle Stanton Shelmidine

He arrived sometime in January, according to a letter written by Georgianna Mathew Maynard from Tarsus to her mother in Illinois on January 30, 1944. Georgianna and her husband Richard Maynard were teaching at the American College and she told her mother of return of a former teacher whose memory had not been forgotten. "In every school there are teachers whose reputations long survive them. Here there were a pair of tutors named Shelmedeen (sic) and Matteson whose exploits have been referred to so often that I think a statue should be put up in their honor. They got the boys to speak English during games; they made the printing press work; they joined the business men's club in town; and rode horseback all over the countryside, etc. Today one of them came back to Tarsus. I felt as if I was meeting someone as fabulous as Paul Bunyan when I met Shelmedeen (sic) and, true enough, it did seem incredible when he said he had left New York ten days ago, [and] had spent a week of that time in Cairo waiting for the plane to Adana. No ordinary person does that even in these speedy days."

It is unclear what Shelmidine's specific duties were as Morgan's assistant. Almost certainly, he served as Morgan's interpreter and advisor but he would also have taken the opportunity to reconnect with his former students and important contacts, many of whom now held important positions in the Turkish government. Georgianna

Maynard's letter suggests as much when she says, "He is on some high priority government mission. Conversation was divided equally between his questions about what had happened to Tarsus during the nine years since he left and our questions about what has happened in America during the last three months since our last mail."

Shelmidine remained in Turkey until mid-July 1944. He and Gail Morgan were feted to a festive going away party by at Karpic, Ankara's finest restaurant, on July 13. Karpic played an



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unusual role in wartime Turkey. At least seventeen foreign intelligence services operated more or less openly in the capital. It was not unusual to see them all - along with government officials, diplomats, newspapermen, and even interned Allied airmen who enjoyed the freedom of the city during the day - dining at the same time, and sometimes together, at Karpic. Everyone was equally welcome, and it was even possible to keep track of who was arriving from the music being played by the restaurant's house orchestra.

In September, Gail Morgan, now promoted to commodore, left Turkey to command the United States' naval air station at Midway Island in the Pacific. He took Stan Shelmidine, now

promoted to lieutenant commander, with him as his executive officer. They stayed at Midway until the war ended in August 1945.

While stationed at Midway, Shelmidine wrote the only known history of Midway Island to that time (finally published in 1948). An article in the island's newspaper, the *Midway Mirror*, on October 26, 1945, announced Shelmidine's reassignment to the Office of Naval History in Washington, D.C. "He played a most important part in every decision regarding this station during the regime of Commodore Gail Morgan" and was a man who civilians would call a "swell Joe." The article also suggested that Shelmidine continued to be involved in intelligence work at Midway Island, noting that "most of Mr. Shelmidine's service [here] must be shrouded behind the veil of 'military security.'"

As a historical officer in the Office of Naval History, Shelmidine wrote, "The History of Naval Communications to the Outbreak of the War." It was one of the many chapters of the massive *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II* which chronicled the administrative rather than the combat history of the war. He was promoted to the rank of commander in March 1946. He remained on active duty until September 21, 1946.

After his separation from the navy, Shelmidine returned to the College of Puget Sound in October 1946, as a full professor. His knowledge of Turkey and the Middle East, bolstered by his experiences during the war, made him much in demand as lecturer, writer, and visiting professor. He once again became active in the community and was an active board member of the Tacoma Philharmonic, the Tacoma Art League, and the Tacoma Drama League. He belonged to the World Affairs Council and the English Speaking Union.

In his spare time, he read, conducted research, wrote, and repaired his prized oriental rugs (which he loaned out to his friends like libraries loan out their books). He wrote, but never published, a pictorial history of America through the stamps



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that it issued - the *Stampictorial Outline History of the United States*. He found time to pass on his love of biblical history to new generations of Sunday school students at Tacoma's First Methodist Church.

At the start of each new school year his trademark Middle East history class would be treated to the spectacle of his unrolling a prayer rug across the top of his desk, followed by his climbing up on it to exhibit the five positions of Muslim prayer while reciting the appropriate prayers in near-perfect Arabic.

Martha Dalke Hindman, class of 1965, took the course because she needed an extra credit. "One day, Dr. Shelmidine was talking about Istanbul and the St. Sophia Mosque. I raised my hand and asked him, "Where in relation to St. Sophia Mosque is the Blue [Sultan Ahmed] Mosque?" He stopped his lecture, looked me straight in the eyes, and asked, "Miss Dalke, how do YOU know about the Blue Mosque???"

Frightened, she told him that a friend at the University of Idaho had showed her pictures of the various mosques in Istanbul, and the Blue Mosque had been one of them. "All I was asking for was information, but I listened intently as he took the rest of the class period to explain more about the St. Sophia and the Blue mosques."

He always enjoyed mentoring promising students. Winifred Hertzog Sihon, class of 1960, remembered that, "In 1960 as I applied to become a teacher for the American Board in Istanbul, I was scheduled for an interview with Dr. Shelmidine. Why? Because he had been a teacher in Turkey. The school I was going to was in Üsküdar, and Shelmidine sang a song to me in class that tells of a girl going to Üsküdar."

Richard Wiest, class of 1963, recalled how much Shelmidine valued his "friendship with [Turkish President] İsmet İnönü... he said he could get me a job at the school in Tarsus or Izmir after UPS, and looking back I sometimes wish I had done that instead of going on to graduate school."

A number of his former students confirmed the importance of Shelmidine's high standards of scholarship. Robert Keller, class of 1957, and now a retired university history professor and the

author/editor of five books, believes that Shelmidine determined the course of his future career. "In graduate school at the University of Chicago I silently thanked him again and again for what he had taught me. His classes operated beyond the usual survey level, teaching one how to think carefully, how to inquire, how the study of the past must be rigorous and demanding, how to see connections. His classes also took students into the history of the Near East, a subject usually neglected at the time. For the first [time], I learned details about the creation of modern Israel, information, questions and interpretations that 50 years later inform my understanding of the Arab world."

On the night of May 5, 1966, Stan Shelmidine passed away as the result of a massive heart attack while talking with a student on the telephone. He was only 59 years old. His memory lives on in the **Shelmidine Rare Book Room** of the Collins Memorial Library at the University of Puget Sound and in the memories and life accomplishments of his thousands of students, both in Turkey and America.

C. Mark Smith is a 1961 graduate of the University of Puget Sound with BA degree in history. Dr. Shelmidine was his faculty advisor and mentor. Smith spent forty years managing economic development organizations in the United States at the national, state and local level. He retired in 2005. Now a full-time author, he published his first book, **Raising Cain: The Life and Politics of Senator Harry P. Cain**, in 2011.

