

Transportation and Disaster Preparedness

Jim Spillane

When I first heard about the Mike Mansfield Fellowship Program, I was working for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as an Air Traffic Control Supervisor in the Oakland Air Route Traffic Control Center in California. The delegated airspace that is controlled by the Control Center shares a large airspace boundary with Japan, and my work unit was involved in flight planning the flexible tracks that are flown by airliners back and forth across the Pacific Ocean from North America to Asia. Having a strong professional interest in the field of Air Traffic Management, future technological concepts and international operations, the Mansfield Fellowship Program was the perfect opportunity to meld all three of these pursuits into one amazing experience.

A few months after applying to the program, my wife, two daughters, and I moved across the country so that I could attend Japanese language training in Arlington, Virginia. Despite the difficulties in learning a new language, I persevered and studied diligently for ten months to establish a basic level of Japanese skills to help me thrive during my year in Japan. Also, I was enrolled in the Advanced Asian Studies Course at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute. This turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to hear from some of the finest minds in Washington, D.C., from academia, industry, and government on Japan-related issues. The intensive language training in the U.S. was immediately followed up with a five-week homestay and intensive Japanese language immersion program in Kanazawa City in Ishikawa Prefecture. This was an amazing experience, which enhanced my language skills and understanding of Japanese culture in preparation for living in Tokyo for a year.

I joined my family in Tokyo, where they had preceded me in order for my elder daughter to begin the school year at the International School. My younger daughter was enrolled in Japanese kindergarten. One of the highlights of the Fellowship year for my family was the sense of community that we enjoyed through our affiliations with the schools. Although quite distinct in nature, both school communities were very generous to my family. We were really enriched by the experience, and we came to have a deeper understanding of the importance of participation and teamwork that is vital in Japanese culture. Due to many factors, including the Great Tohoku Earthquake and its aftermath, the smaller living quarters, the lack of privately-owned

transportation, and subsequent greater reliance upon each other, I believe that the Fellowship year brought my family even closer together.

Professionally, the Mansfield Fellowship Program has been very successful in transforming me into a Japan expert in my organization. I spent six months at a placement in the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB), FAA's counterpart organization. During my time there, I studied JCAB's plans for modernizing their air transportation system and the efforts that Japan was undertaking to globally harmonize its air traffic management systems with its counterparts. I was invited to observe JCAB's interactions with its own internal and foreign governmental counterparts in developing a modernized system. My day-to-day work included analyzing and reporting on various aviation safety issues and the methods that various governments' Civil Aviation Authorities are engaged in to strengthen safety oversight in aviation.

I had a follow-on four-month placement at Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), where I surveyed the basic and applied research that Japan was carrying out in support of its attempts to modernize its air transportation system. I was given the honorary title of "Research Partner" while I was working at JAXA, and filled my days with developing surveys on various aviation projects across the globe to enable the JAXA researchers to keep abreast of research trends.

My final placement, for two months, was within a private corporation, All Nippon Airways (ANA). I observed firsthand the business acumen and decision-making processes required to run a world-class, profitable airline during the first half of my placement at ANA. The final month of my Fellowship was spent at the Airborne Operations Center at Haneda, where the airline's dispatch, maintenance, and crew scheduling takes place.

Additionally, I was given an opportunity to learn the intricacies and complexities that are involved with bringing an entirely new aircraft into operation in the fleet. ANA had purchased the Boeing-787, and was the launch customer for the new aircraft. Finally, this placement afforded me the opportunity to achieve an understanding of the complexities and expense that are borne by the airline when government establishes new layers of regulation and equipment standards on air carriers.

Because my placement focus was on a specific topic, i.e., air transportation modernization, but my placements spanned academia, industry, and government, I developed a broad, deep, and multi-dimensional understanding of the issues. I was able to observe the interactions between researchers, government, and industry and the decision-making process that Japan undertakes in developing and implementing

aviation policy. However, far more important than technical or policy issues, I made numerous professional contacts across the aviation sector in Japan.

The experience I had and the professional relationships and friendships that I formed during my Mansfield Fellowship have become invaluable to me and my agency. Soon after completing the Mansfield Fellowship Program, I was selected as the Senior FAA Representative to the Pacific Rim, and posted at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. I continue to interact with many of the colleagues whom I worked with during my Fellowship on an ongoing basis, albeit in a different role, directly representing the FAA. The cultural and technical knowledge and the language and diplomatic skills that I developed as a Fellow are used on a daily basis in my current position. The Mansfield Fellowship allowed me to transition from a technical, operational position into policy-related work that is directly related to improving the U.S.-Japan relationship related to aviation safety.

Jim Spillane participated in the Mike Mansfield Fellowship Program as a representative of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration from 2009–2011. During his Fellowship year in Japan, he served in full-time placements in Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Fukuoka Air Traffic Management Center, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd. He also completed a placement at the office of the Honorable Keiichiro Asao, DPJ Member, House of Representatives. He currently is senior FAA representative for the Pacific Rim at the U.S. Embassy, Japan.