

David W. Plath, Ph.D. Biography



David William Plath, Ph.D. - Class of 1948 - b. December 8, 1930 d. From the EHS Yearbook: Maroon 3, Mirror 3, Football 1-2, Basketball 1.

While in EHS 1947-48 part-time reporter *Elgin Daily Courier-News*.

BS (Journalism)
Northwestern University, 1952.
1952-55 U.S. Naval Reserve
Officer on active duty, Pacific Fleet,

during the Korean Police Action. Taken around East Asia I was stunned by how little I knew about the world outside the U.S., and was eager to learn more: so entered graduate training. Harvard University MA (1959) and PhD (1962) Anthropology and Far Eastern Languages.

Academic appointments: University of California – Berkeley 1961-63; University of Iowa 1963-66; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 1966-98. Visiting appointments: Konan University (Kobe, Japan) 1972-73, 1976, 1995; Kyoto University 1972-73; National Institute for Media Education (Chiba, Japan) 1992-93.

Also 1969-70 served as Field Director for the International Honors Program, leading 2 professors and 31 students on a 9-month round-the-world study tour.

While at Illinois-Urbana served 3 years as Head of the Department of Anthropology; developed and directed the University's Year-in-Japan study program, now in its 40th year; and developed its Asian Educational Media Service.

More than 10 years of various intervals of research, teaching and producing educational and documentary media in Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand. Often in collaboration with my wife, Prof. Jacquetta Hill (Emerita, Anthropology and Educational Psychology, Illinois-Urbana) whose field research for 40 years has focused on the Lahu people of northern Thailand.

Publications: 6 books, perhaps the most widely read being *Long Engagements: Maturity in Modern Japan* (1980 Stanford University Press); 60 articles in magazines and scholarly journals; 120 book and film reviews.

Documentary and educational films: since 1975 have served in varied combinations of roles (writer, designer, producer, camera operator, narrator, on-camera host, etc.) in more than three dozen different projects and 2 TV series. *Japan: The Living Tradition* and *Japan: The Changing Tradition* (1975-79) was a 2-semester television course created by the University of Mid-America, a short-lived consortium of Midwestern state universities. A decade later we transferred parts of the course to a short-lived medium called *videodisc*, soon made obsolete by CD and DVD formats.

David W. Plath, Ph.D. Biography

In 1991 I partnered with Prof. Jackson Bailey of Earlham College to develop a computerized (pre-internet) database of educational media for teaching about Japan. After his untimely death in 1996 we brought the database to Illinois-Urbana and expanded it to become the Asian Educational Media Service.

Our production unit, the Media Production Group, has been issuing documentary films on Asian topics since 1992. Several have won awards, and some have been broadcast over regional PBS stations around the nation. Among the more widely viewed: *Candles for New Years* (1992, Lahu people of northern Thailand); *Fit Surroundings* (1993, Japanese shellfish divers); *Makiko's New World* (1999, diary of a Kyoto housewife for 1910); *Under Another Sun* (2001, Japanese in Singapore); *Can't Go Native?* (2011, 50 years of fieldwork in a Japanese town); and *So Long Asleep: waking the ghosts of a war* (2016, repatriating the remains of Korean men forced into slave labor for Imperial Japan during the Asia-Pacific War).

Awards: In 2010 the Society for East Asian Anthropology established its *David Plath Media Award* given out biennially for new productions. And in 2013 the Association for Asian Studies gave me its annual award for Distinguished Contributions to Asian Studies.

Also listed in Who's Who in America.