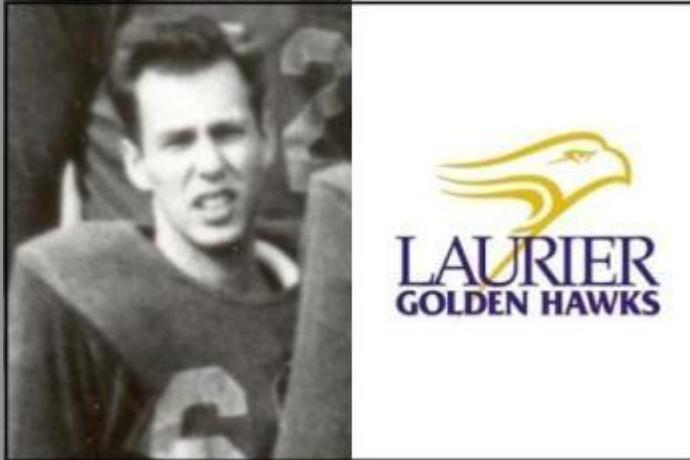


CIS 50th Anniversary Success Story (Week 1): Paul Heinbecker



Laurier multi-sport star turned down CFL for career as a diplomat which spanned numerous countries, Prime Minister

by Kevin Campbell

On a Spring day in the mid-60's, destiny arrived in Paul Heinbecker's mailbox, in the form of two letters.

One came from the Edmonton Eskimos, notifying the WLU defensive half-back, who had pulled triple duty as quarter-back and punter, that he had been drafted to the Canadian Football League.

The other envelope's return address was Ottawa, offering a job in the Canadian Foreign Service.

A choice had to be made, and the star athlete, more than apt at track and field, hockey and basketball, too, checked his inner

It was not a decision he had planned to make.

"After football practice one October night, it was too cold and too wet to walk to the bus stop. I saw a sign on the bulletin board held that night. I knew I was going to have to get a job if I didn't make it into the CFL," recalled the Laurier graduate, "so I w

"It was pure serendipity."

As well, Heinbecker wasn't exactly Canadian winter's biggest fan.

"[Edmonton's field] used to be called Clarke Stadium and every time you watched late fall Eskimo games on television, the sn sidelines," said Heinbecker. "The foreign service sounded a little more romantic, like the foreign legion. At least it was going t

And the rest as they say is history.

Shortly after arriving in Ottawa, Heinbecker found himself given his first assignment overseas.

"They called me in and they asked me if I'd like to go to Ankara, and I said, "Sure, great. Then I went back to my office and I would have gone anywhere."

The Turkish capital was the first stop in propelling the diplomat's government career, but it also launched a much more intima

It was in Ankara where at the age of 25 Heinbecker met his wife, Ayse Köymen. A couple of years later, he returned to Ottawa

Turkey, a country growing in prominence in the world.

The Heinbeckers' next foreign assignment was to Stockholm where he learned the intricacies of Swedish neutrality, industrial

Next stop was France. In Paris, at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Heinbecker learned the va economics.

After polishing his French, Heinbecker returned to Canada in 1979, where he drafted speeches on foreign policy for Prime Minister Clark.

Later, the Canadian diplomat was off to Washington, serving as the political section head of the Canadian embassy. There Heinbecker dealt with rain, arctic sovereignty, international security, arms control and the Middle East.

Between 1989 and 1992, Heinbecker served as Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's chief foreign policy adviser, meeting world leaders like to Boris Yeltsin and Nelson Mandela. He was named Canadian Ambassador to Germany in 1992, where he promoted investment in Europe over fishing off our shores. Four years later, he was back in Ottawa advising Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy on international trade. He also lead negotiator of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

The new millennium brought new frontiers for the by now accomplished diplomat when he was appointed Permanent Representative to the UN. "It's the best jobs any Canadian can have, I guess," said Heinbecker.

It was at the UN where Heinbecker promoted human security worldwide through Canada's 'Responsibility to Protect' initiative. "It's a single fondest memory and most satisfying moment in his career, helping to keep Canada out of the Iraq war..

"There was some perception in Ottawa that if America chose to invade Iraq [in 2003], that we would have to go too. I told them it was fraudulent and that it would be a mistake to get involved," said Heinbecker.

Canada didn't get involved and the country avoided perhaps the single-most ill-advised war in modern history.

Heinbecker is still the last Canadian to sit on the UN Security Council, since the Harper government failed to win election in 2006.

Now, a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation and the director of the Centre for Global Responsibility, he is found commenting and lecturing on Canadian foreign policy and helping Laurier master's students in International Public Policy in Ottawa. He tells them not to get discouraged when 9,900 applicants out of 10,000 don't make it into Canada's Foreign Service. "It's a tough job when he was a kid.

"The chances of getting into the Foreign Service aren't favourable, but there are lots of other international careers these days. The world is more integrated than it used to be... no one should jump off a bridge because he or she didn't pass the Foreign Service exam.

Living in Ottawa now, he's in the midst of writing his second solo-effort book, this one a book of anecdotes. Says Heinbecker, "It's interesting stories to tell... I think I've got a few."

Heinbecker has two daughters, Yasemin and Céline. Both are Foreign Service officers.