

Andrew P. Sundberg (Massachusetts and New College, 1963)

(1941-2012)

The paradox of Andy's life is that while it was animated by a passionate American patriotism, he lived in the U.S. for only a small portion of it. Born in New Jersey, he grew up in a military family, finishing grammar school in Japan and high school in Germany. A graduate of the Naval Academy, he served as a naval officer on destroyers in the Caribbean during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and in the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam War in 1967-68. In 1968 he moved to Geneva, Switzerland and lived there until his sudden death this year.

His consuming cause of these last forty-plus years was the defense of the interests of overseas American citizens vis-à-vis Washington. I first got to know him in the 1970s, when he was campaigning to change a feature of citizenship legislation (so-called "Cinderella" clause) under which young Americans whose families were living overseas risked losing their citizenship unknowingly, unless they resided in the U.S. for a certain number of years within a certain age bracket. My daughter fell into this category. This action succeeded; the law was changed. He then founded an organization, American Citizens Abroad (americansabroad.org), to represent the interests of overseas Americans on a range of issues including voting rights and modalities; social security and Medicare; representation; and taxation. The ACA now has members in over 90 countries.

His international business consultancy took him to many parts of the world and exposed him to a variety of issues. He also launched and brought to market one of the first internet service providers in the Geneva area. But he was energized more by a concern for peace and justice, politics and public policy than by business. He helped create the Swiss national chapters of both the U.S. Democratic and Republican parties. He was a member of the Democratic National Committee from 1981-89. In 1988 he was a favorite-son presidential candidate in the overseas Democratic Party primary, coming in third after having won the vote in five countries. The aim of this campaign was to call attention to issues and policies affecting overseas American citizens.

He also created and chaired with seemingly effortless grace and wit an English-language dinner discussion group (all-male, to the amusement or consternation of many wives), called the Burlamaqui Society. Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui was an eighteenth century Genevese *philosophe* who is credited with having originated the phrase "the pursuit of happiness", used by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. The topics of these discussions reflected the wide range of his interests: history, politics, religion, humor, music. He maintained this and his other interlocking worldwide networks through an aggressive use of the internet to circulate a huge amount of material on these and other topics.

He had a seemingly endless capacity for indignation and outrage in the face of injustice, especially injustice in government policy. At the same time, his many roles as convener and organizer were always marked by a sense of fun. He once said that there must be something to the idea of reincarnation, since this life of his had been like a sabbatical.

Unfortunately his diligent efforts to bring about changes in U.S. policy towards overseas Americans have not borne much fruit, at least not on the scale of his ambitions. There is still no representation in Congress, still no focal point for overseas American affairs within the Executive Branch, and little if any progress in changing the perception of the general U.S. public that overseas citizens are on the whole “fat cats” of questionable loyalty, motivated mainly by the desire to cheat on taxes. In recent years, especially in tax policy, he perceived with some justification that there had been a drift in Washington attitudes towards overseas Americans from indifference to hostility, despite the role overseas citizens play in a globalized world in representing U.S. economic and cultural interests. In these circumstances Andy’s caring voice became shriller. His frustration was visible that the “city on the hill”, the idealized U.S. polity of his hopes, was not living up to expectations.

Ironically, within days of his death one of the potentially most significant of his initiatives came to fruition: the publication of the report of a Working Group that organized a series of Town Hall Meetings held in different Swiss cities earlier in 2012 (www.amiswg.org). Catalyzed in large part by tax-related developments, this broad-gauged and impassioned review of how various U.S. policies impact citizens abroad is aimed at belatedly getting these issues on the radar screens of Washington policy-makers. Andy was a moving force behind this exercise. Its outcome may be considered his memorial.

He is succeeded by Chantal, his French-born wife of over forty years; two daughters; and one granddaughter.

Jon McLin
(Arkansas and Wadham, 1960)