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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# A Summer to Remember: Mickey Glantz, IAESTE alumnus (1961)



***“Why would a ‘rich’ kid from America want to travel to Europe just to spend time working in a dangerous, decades-old steel making foundry?”***

*When it comes to professional exchange programs, we’ve been at this quite a long time. In 1961, Mickey Glantz spent a summer interning at a steel mill in a small town in France through the [IAESTE](#) program with us. Last year, 55 years later, he returned to the same town and was shocked by what he found. Here is his story:*

In December 2015, I was invited to give a lecture at the Université de Savoie (Chambery, France). The lecture was about the societal consequences of an El Niño event. It was an honor to have been invited and to know that my research on climate, water, and weather issues was of interest in other countries. But the bigger honor for me was my chance to return to a small town, a village really, in the French Alps called St. Michel de Maurienne. You see, I was not always a Political Science professor. My first college degree was a B.S. in Metallurgical Engineering in 1961 from the University of Pennsylvania.

To be honest, I don’t remember how I discovered [IAESTE](#) and its work abroad program. I decided to apply for an engineering internship in a mining company or steel mill.



The author, Mickey Glantz, in St. Michel de Maurienne during his IAESTE program (1961).

Places I considered included Kobe Steel or Mitsubishi in Japan, King Solomon Mines in Israel, Tsumeb mining in Southern Africa, or copper mining in Chile. There seemed to have been several great choices.

I wanted to see a place outside the United States, to be in a country where English was not the spoken language. I also applied to, and was selected by, a small, antiquated Renault factory (SNUP) making specialty steel auto parts in St. Michel de Maurienne. Only recently did I learn that the steel mill was built in the 1920s. We wore wooden shoes called *les sabots*, the root of the word sabotage. Every ingot molded was moved by wooden carts—no modernization. Workers were allowed to drink wine in the workplace as late as the 1960s!

I spent the summer there 55 years ago. It was the start of my career and a life-enhancing experience. In fact, I was a naïve 21-year old university grad who had essentially ‘parachuted’ into a remote part of France.

I was viewed as an oddity at first, probably with suspicion: Why would a “rich” kid from America want to travel to Europe just to spend time working in a dangerous, decades-old steel making foundry? It took me some time to realize France was still in recovery mode from World War II. The workers were relatively poor and I was coming from the United States. They saw me as a young kid on vacation. By the end of the summer, I was accepted as a factory worker, putting in full days. I made friends at the factory and with the family that owned a small hotel at the edge of the village.



The steel mill where Mickey worked in St. Michel de Maurienne (Photo by Mickey Glantz, 1961).

The invitation to lecture at the Université de Savoie turned into a blessing in disguise, not just for the honor of being invited by scientific colleagues, but by providing an opportunity to visit St. Michel de Maurienne after 55 years.

As we entered the main road along the Arc River, I could see that the factory was gone. It had closed decades ago. The town seemed the same, with much of it built around a steeped hillside village church and above it a medieval rock lookout tower. I found a village information office to seek help in finding some of the guys I worked with in the factory. The women were so young they could not recall a factory! An older guy in the room overheard me ask about the people I worked with in 1961. He was from the village and knew of their names. Most had lived in the village until they had passed away some years ago. At 76, I realized that most of the men had been a decade or more older than me.

I mentioned the name of a coworker, sparking the memory of an older French guy also in the tourist office. He recalled that someone with that unusual last name worked on the village newspaper. He called. Made contact. Told him that an American was in town inquiring about his family and he had worked in the foundry with his father in 1961. He mentioned that I had been hoping to reconnect after all these years.

He called. Made contact. Told him that an American was in town inquiring about his family and he had worked in the foundry with his father in 1961. He mentioned that I had been hoping to reconnect after all these years.



About 15 minutes later, I met the son of my old factory co-worker. He was now 55, over 6' tall, balding, mustached, married with kids and grandkids. We talked for an hour on Main Street where I had spent my spare time. He told me about his father and others who worked till the steel mill closed.

Before I left for France, I recovered some snapshots from the summer of '61 that I wanted to share with those I worked with. I gave him several photos of the village I had taken AND, more importantly, photos I had taken of his family. It turned out that he was the 1-year old in his mother's arms in the photo. It was an amazing moment for both of us. For me, I had closed a circle by coming back to the site of the foundry and for him, it was a chance to see a friend of his parents from decades ago. I imagine I was the only American to ever have spent a summer in its steel mill or maybe even in St. Michel de Maurienne.



A view of St. Michel de Maurienne (Photo by Mickey Glantz, 1961).

Since the visit, I have given a lot of thought to that internship and the impact it had on my life. When I returned to the United States, I took a job with Westinghouse and later with Ford Motor Company, where I got to work on the first Ford Mustang in '64. I later returned to graduate school at Penn for a doctorate in Political Science.

But the IAESTE experience and my engineering degree have been a mainstay of my career pursuits, which by the way still continues: Once an engineer, always an engineer.

## Mickey Glantz

IAESTE alumnus  
Summer '61

## UPDATE:

Thanks to this blog post, we had the pleasure of reuniting with Mickey at our Cultural Vistas Alumni Get-Together in Denver this week. Thanks to Mickey for joining us and getting to know other Cultural Vistas alumni!



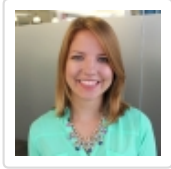
Alumni Relations Officer Richard Bobo (L) and IAESTE alumnus Mickey Glantz (R) reunite at the Cultural Vistas Alumni Get-Together.

Since its inception in 1948, [IAESTE](#) (pronounced “eye-ess-tay”), or the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experiences, has exchanged more than 350,000 students worldwide, playing a key role in the development of young engineers and scientists.

Through IAESTE, over 80 countries on all continents collaborate to provide university-level students in technical fields (primarily science, engineering, and the applied arts) with paid, course-related, training abroad and employers with highly skilled, motivated trainees for long or short term projects. The program was established in the United States in 1950, where it is administered by [Cultural Vistas](#).



*Want to have an experience like Mickey's? Learn more about IAESTE and how to apply.*



## Lauren Aitken

Communications Officer at [Cultural Vistas](#)

Ever since semesters abroad in Senegal and Austria, Lauren has been committed to promoting the impact of international experiences. She has a passion for social media and will dog sit your corgi for free.

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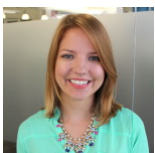
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**Published on:** February 8, 2016

**Author:** Lauren Aitken

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