

## Remembering St. Olaf's First Global Semester

By Michael Garland

One of the paradoxical glories of an education on the Hill has always been the emphasis on studying abroad. In truth, this wasn't much on my radar when I started off as a freshman in September of 1967. A little less than a year later, I boarded a plane headed to Italy (and ten other countries) with Professor Oliver Olson and 29 other students on the college's very first Global Semester. The world was literally before my eyes, and I plunged in, ready to have my life changed. And it was. Oh, yes!

What a gift. As one of the five sophomores of the group, and someone who had never traveled out of my own country before, this was a remarkable awakening. Everything was new. Different languages, cultures, arts, food and sights. Fifty years hence the memories still burn bright-

The Colosseum at night, just the cats and us; swimming in an azure Aegean in the shadow of the temple to Poseidon at Cape Sounion; men in black at the Wailing Wall on a Friday night in Jerusalem; haggling for a Coptic hand cross in an Addis Ababa open air market in Ethiopia; running around the Taj Mahal barefoot under a full moon in Agra; funeral pyres on the Ganges followed shortly thereafter by the entire group laid low by dysentery (not recommended); my first exposure to cilantro in Chiangmai, Thailand (thumbs up!); Japanese rock gardens and ikebana flower arranging classes in Kyoto; and a searing walk through the streets of Hiroshima.

Just some of the extraordinary experiences during those five months (August January) in 1968-69 - still vivid to me today.

And now after half a century, our group is the dearest of friends and continues to stay in-touch. Oliver Olson in his nineties is still going strong! My lens on life changed because of Global Semester, and I am forever grateful for the experiences I had which resonate with me even today. Thank you, St. Olaf!