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# Graduation '90

## Drozdiak takes long road home

**I** was able to enjoy the best of both worlds," he says.

At the time, Bill Drozdiak was talking about being able to compete both on the court as a University basketball player and in the intellectual realms of political science and economics during his University years.

But he could just as easily have been describing his globe-trotting career after graduation as an international correspondent in Europe and the United States — experiencing the best of those worlds.

After graduating from the University in 1971, Drozdiak's adventures ranged from driving down basketball courts in countries around Europe to dodging artillery shells in Iraq, from reporting on the 50th anniversary of Hitler's rise to leader of the Third Reich to covering the U.S. State Department in Washington.

And next week, he will bring his 19 years of international observations to the University. Drozdiak, foreign desk editor for *The Washington Post* and soon-to-be chief of European coverage, will speak at this year's graduation commencement June 10.

In a telephone interview last week from Wainscott, N.Y., where he was vacationing, Drozdiak, 40, gave a glimpse of what he will tell graduates, their families and friends.

"It is important for America to stay involved in Europe. To retreat into isolationism or even a Pacific Rim mode of thinking would be a bad development and also historically dangerous," he said.

"The striking thing about developments in Eastern Europe is that even with a U.S. budget deficit and financial leverage being pretty small, many leaders of Eastern European revolutions, like Lech Walesa in Poland and Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia, often cite the U.S. Constitution

and the Bill of Rights as inspirations for their causes," he said.

"... The United States could contribute with other countries toward a grandiose Marshall Plan for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that would be a major contribution toward the future of world peace," he said.

These opinions and many of Drozdiak's other insights into European politics have developed during his nearly two decades of reporting for *Time* magazine and *The Washington Post* in cities throughout Europe and the Middle East.

### An academic athlete

But Drozdiak's interests in politics and international affairs predate his European experiences. In fact, they began to take root in Eugene when Drozdiak was a 20-year-old University student.

A full-tuition scholarship to play as a guard on the University's basketball team lured Drozdiak from his hometown in San Jose, Calif. in 1968. He received his bachelor's degree at the University in political science and economics in 1971.

Steve Belko, then head basketball coach, remembers the 6-foot-5 Drozdiak as "a top student with quite a sense of humor" and a deadly shot.

"Bill was one of the best outside shooters I've coached in 26 years of coaching, Belko said. "If we would have had the three-point shot then, he would have feasted on it."

Indeed Drozdiak's shot was good. He still stands as the University's second-best career free-throw shooter, averaging 83.5 percent. And he ranks 15th on the University's list for career points.

But Drozdiak's talents were apparent off the court as well. Political science professor James Klonoski remembers him as a Rhodes scholarship finalist who "wasn't just a good basketball player — he



**Bill Drozdiak**

was a good student."

After Drozdiak graduated from the University, he received an NCAA fellowship to study in Europe. While studying European politics and economics at the Institute of European Studies in Brussels, Belgium, he began to play the European basketball circuit. Two years later, Drozdiak continued his studies at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium.

Drozdiak described his seven-year European basketball career as a paradox. He said it was easier than the American professional scene, yet especially demanding on American athletes.

"The game in Europe is much more wide open, chaotic, even anarchic in a way," he said. "It was far less structured, so you had to play all over the court. That's what made it quite good."

"The playing schedule in Europe is far less demanding than the pros in the U.S. — 30 to 35 games a year and only on weekends ... But American players were supposed to be the dominant force on the team, and if you don't score the points, you won't be playing for long."

### Typical war stories

Drozdiak said he eventually "drifted" into journalism

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