

My first Visit to the USA — as ‘Foreign Leader’ Title 69A

My first step towards writing the ITU Centenary Book was to make sure that I had the necessary information from all Member Countries, but I soon discovered that I missed most of the historical background from the USA. I discussed this with Mr Gerald Gross, the Secretary General of the ITU, himself an American. He assured me that I should go to America and interview Government Officials and Industrial experts who could inform me. It took only a few weeks before I received an official letter from the US Embassy in London in late December 1963 “Inviting me as a participant in the Foreign Leader Program to visit the United States for a period of sixty days”.

I was then sent Form DSP-66 from the State Department entitled ‘Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status’ and Form DS-1006 which stated that I would have economy jet transport to and from the US, but first class jet transport from Washington to San Francisco. I arrived in Washington D.C. on 4 January 1964 and stayed at the Cosmos Club, as the Club had reciprocal guest facilities with my London Club, the Savile Club [see Title 63 A] of which I was elected in 1958 and still am a member today. In 1986 I was also elected a Member of the Cosmos Club in Washington [see Title 306] and in 1997 became an Emeritus Member.

The first memorable impression of the visit was the flight itself, and in particular the vast ice fields which we crossed on our northerly route over Greenland. These I had never seen before, and I was glad of the safety record of British Airways. On my many subsequent flights to and from the States I took safety for granted, and flying over Greenland became routine. IAD, the official name of Dulles Airport, about 40 km outside Washington, was equally impressive; its very modern and grandiose architecture as well as its location in the open countryside, very different from my European travels.

The first famous American I met was Senator Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate for the Presidential Election of 1964. The State Department official who received me at Dulles Airport knew him well enough to introduce me briefly and Goldwater, like a true politician, addressed a few polite words to me. From my first impressions on, which could not have been better, the whole visit turned out to be a great success. I stayed later at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, at the special academic rate of \$ 25 a night and drove down by car with Geoffrey Brigstocke, then a Counsellor at the British Embassy in Washington and a very good friend, [see about his tragic death Title 281] to Cape Kennedy in Florida, where we both were fully briefed by NASA officials about the American Space Program. We were lucky and watched the launch of a small satellite.

Back to Synopsis

To... Ciba and ITU - Hard work for ITU in the USA. Title 69B