



# DoDDS-Europe: Sixty years of influencing personalities

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WIESBADEN, Germany -- In the 60 years since its doors opened, literally hundreds of thousands of American students have found themselves overseas, collecting memories from the classrooms in Department of Defense Dependents Schools throughout Europe, and being influenced by their teachers.

Naturally, many of these students have gone on to become scholars, business professionals, and science and technology innovators. However, a significant number of DoDDS-Europe Alumni have even gone beyond the median to become international movie stars, worldwide sports celebrities, generals, rock stars, authors, astronauts, and universal beauty queens.

As part of DoDDS-Europe's 60th year, we talked to a few.

Among the earliest, and possibly one of the more familiar faces to have graced the hallways of DoDDS-Europe schools is star of stage and screen, Faye Dunnaway. Daughter of Sgt. John Dunnaway, she strolled the hallways of Mannheim Junior High in Germany during her 7th and 8th grade years, 1953 to 1955. Dunnaway's credits include *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Mommie Dearest*, *Bonnie and Clyde* and at least 60 other movies. She also performed opposite Susan Blakely in *Towering Inferno*. Blakely, by the way, was born in Frankfurt, Germany. Her father was a career Army officer. She attended Seoul American High School, was a cheerleader during her sophomore year, and graduated with the Class of 1966. However, Dunnaway and Blakely are not the only DoDDS-Europe Alumni to team up on the big screen.

*Star Trek Voyager's* Jeri Ryan and Tim Russ were both DoDDS-Europe students. Jeri Ryan, better known as "Seven of Nine" in the *Star Trek* series, was born in Munich to an Army Master Sergeant. Many of her military schoolmates knew her better as Jeri Lynn Zimmerman. She also attended DoD schools in Kansas, Maryland, Georgia and Texas.

For seven years Russ portrayed Lt. Tuvok, the Vulcan Security Officer and Chief Tactical Officer for the *Voyager*. He has gone on to direct a *Star Trek* sequel, has recorded several music albums and has ap-



Photo courtesy of Paramount Pictures  
Tim Russ in full Vulcan makeup portrays Lt. Tuvok of the *Star Trek Voyager*, a series that expanded seven years. An Air Force dependent for 18 years, Russ also attended DoDDS-Europe's Izmir American High School in Turkey.

peared in dozens of TV sitcoms.

Russ was an Air Force dependent for 18 years. He said, "When I was growing up, I did not like moving from place to place on average every two years.

The constant making and losing of friends was sometimes very difficult." But, he said, hindsight has taught him a lot. "I could not appreciate the places I lived in as much then as I can now. As I look back, I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to live in different parts of the world."

Russ attended Izmir American High School in Turkey. "I especially enjoyed the times I had in Izmir, Turkey, because I was a teenager then and was able to take advantage of events and travel on my own from time to time with my friends. Growing up as a military dependent not only influenced my choice of career, but also shaped the way I look at life as an adult."



Photo courtesy of Mitch Pileggi

The world normally identifies him as FBI Assistant Director Walter Skinner of the “X” Files, but classmates at Marshall American High School in Ankara, Turkey know him as Mitch Pileggi, a familiar figure on the high school’s football team.

Another student whose time in DoDDS-Europe schools in Turkey brings back fond memories is a 1970 graduate of Marshall American High School in Ankara. Many of his classmates remember him as one of the “fun loving” players on the Ankara Trojans football team. Others know him as Mitch Pileggi. Today, most of the world would identify him as FBI Assistant Director Walter Skinner of the “X” Files.

“My years going to school in Ankara were the time of my life. The lifelong friends I made, the times I had, and the memories I have, are very dear to me,” Pileggi said. “I still have fond memories of the teach-

ers who “tried” to teach me - sometimes succeeding, sometimes not, and not from there lack of trying - and the coaches I played football for.”

Pileggi is one of several notable students who credit a teacher for their success. “I give a huge part of the credit for my pursuing acting to Marilyn Brown, also known as Miss Elmore, Miss E, and Miss B, who made me get up in front of the music class, to the heckling of the rest of my football teammates and sing “Maria” from West Side Story,” Pileggi said. “We were all in chorus because we thought it would be an easy grade. But, it was a moment that opened the floodgates - letting loose the passion of my life. And to this day I still have conversations with her about those times and give her my thanks for the push she gave me.”

Alongside Pileggi in Ankara’s Class of 1970 was Debbie Sapenter. She went on to earn a U.S. Olympic Silver Medal during the 1976 Olympics. Another Olympian, Alonzo Babers, graduated from Kaiserslautern American High School in 1979, five years before catching a Gold Medal in track during the 1984 Olympics. But, they are not the only world-class DoDDS-Europe athletes to have first taken to the field as students.

According to the American Overseas Schools Historical Society’s website, Ronald George of National Football League fame was the first professional athlete to have attended DoDDS schools for all twelve years. He is a 1988 graduate of Heidelberg High School. His mother was a DoDDS-Europe school-teacher.

Shaquille O’Neal may be one of the most recognizable DoDDS-Europe Alumni on the basketball

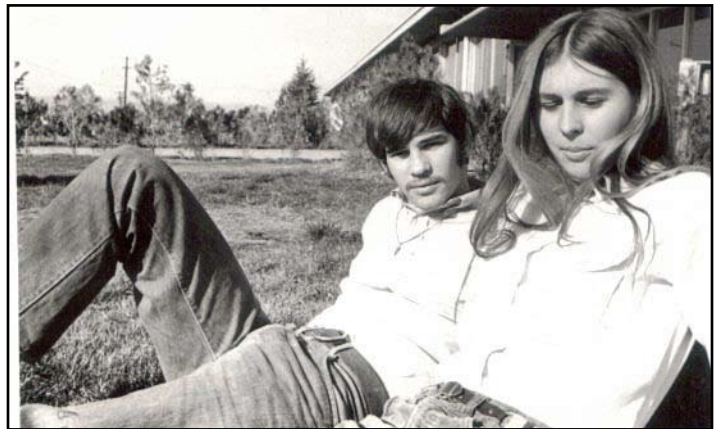


Photo courtesy of Mitch Pileggi

Mitch Pileggi with high school sweetheart and classmate Debbie Andrews take a break between classes. Both are 1970 graduates of DoDDS – Europe’s Marshall American High School, Ankara, Turkey.

court. Shaq, as he is often called, spent his freshman and sophomore years in Fulda High School in Fulda, Germany. Coach Marcus George said he knew Shaquille for three years. "I have many stories. He was a colorful kid, but one with strong convictions and work ethics, even as a young man," George said. George is still an active coach and said he uses several stories about the basketball star during motivational talks to kids. "He was a great kid to work with," George said.

For "Shaq", the memories are slightly different. In an interview, he told Bombo Sports that Fulda High School is where his life turned a corner. He said he "went from being a troublemaker to getting his head on straight and dedicating himself to becoming a good student and basketball player." According to sports writer, Eric Hamilton, "This important part of Shaq's life is not well known, and I think that's a shame."

Several DoDDS-Europe alumni have found their way, possibly inadvertently, into rock and roll history, the most notable being Pricilla Presley. Ms. Presley began dating Elvis while she was in H.H. Arnold High School in Wiesbaden, Germany. In 1963 she withdrew from the DoDDS-Europe school just a few weeks before graduation to join Elvis at Graceland. The rest, of course, is history.

A 1991 graduate of H.H. Arnold High School shares a similar history. Her name is Mayte Garcia. She has become a star in her own right and is renowned for song, dance, and the silver screen. Following graduation she married the artist formally known as Prince.

Garcia spent six years attending DoDDS-Europe schools in Germany and studied ballet in the Wiesbaden State Theater. The city, the school, her history class, and the experience of living overseas meant a lot to her, she said.

"I can tell you that being a part of going overseas with my family has brought out so much in me," Garcia said. "I loved the walk down in Wiesbaden, especially during Christmas when the little kiosks were out on the street and they had Gluhwein, which I didn't know was wine, and waffles with chocolate on them.

"My favorite hang outs were the movie theater where I would drive by and get a bucket of popcorn on my way home from ballet class and go to the apartment where I lived on Florida Strasse on the 2nd floor. "During school, I would go to the food court across the street from the school. I would have a slice of pizza, sometimes fries. Then I would get the gummy

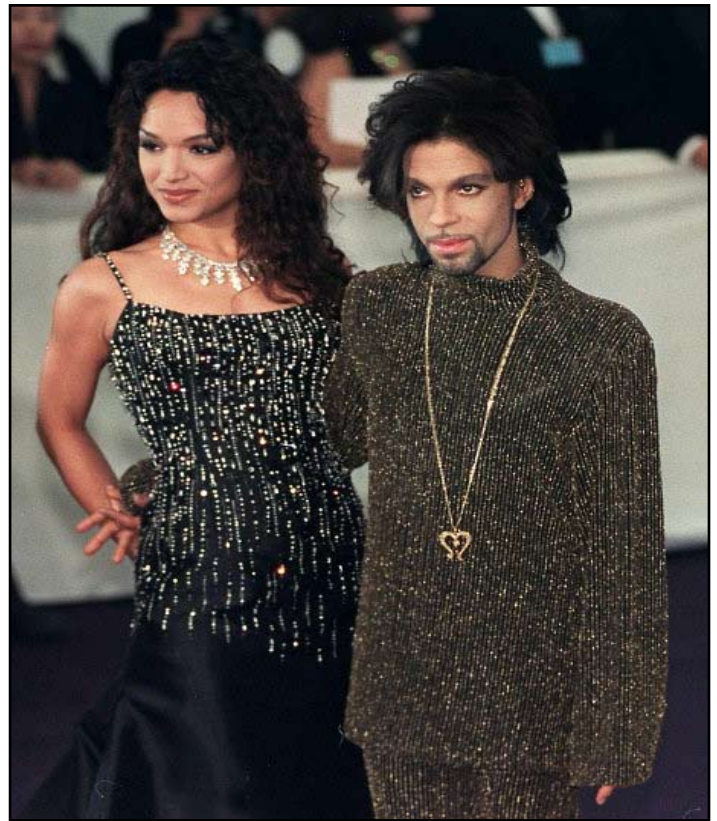


Photo courtesy of Versace

Mayte Garcia poses for photographers during a Versace fashion show with her husband Prince. Garcia is a 1991 graduate of DoDDS – Europe's H.H. Arnold High School in Wiesbaden, Germany.

bears that I would eat during my history class," Garcia recalled.

Garcia also recalls some of the "teen" hardships of being removed from the States. "I would sit (in our apartment) and watch our one channel and sometimes German TV. Believe me, we only had one channel. There was no MTV Europe, VH1, no satellite radio, or Internet when I was there. I know how kids feel being so far away from the malls, the Star Bucks, the every day things that we all live and do in the U.S.," Nonetheless, she said, "I feel blessed to have lived there for six years and it's something I will always cherish."

One group who found their way into rock and roll history found their roots while they were all DoDDS-Europe students. The students, Dewey Bunnell, Gerry Beckley and Dan Peek met at the London Central High School. They graduated in 1969, formed the group "America," and recorded a song that Bunnell wrote while in the dorm. The song, "Horse With No Name," went to number one in 1971.

Teachers with DoDDS-Europe have even had the opportunity to influence a few politicians over the past 60 years.

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, said a DoDDS-Europe teacher shaped his political life.

“When I was a sophomore at Stuttgart American High School my English teacher, Nando Amabile, encouraged me to study national security and write a paper as the only project for my sophomore year. That generosity and flexibility literally helped shape my life, and I am a different person than I would have been if I had not gone to Stuttgart American High School.”



Photo courtesy of Gingrich Communications

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives credits a teacher for shaping his political life. He spent his sophomore year in DoDDS-Europe’s Stuttgart American High School.

stars. Sharing the dorm at London Central with ‘America’ was Robert Davenport, a 1968 graduate and author of “The Book of Lists.”

A high school football luminary who took a different path, made his mark in the military, and found his way into the history books is Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf. He attended Frankfurt High School before moving to Heidelberg where he played football as a junior during the 1950 - 1951 school year.

Sharing the hallways with Pricilla Presley between 1960 and 1963 was John Blaha and Deborah Bryant. Blaha graduated from H.H. Arnold High School in 1960. He joined the Air Force. Before retiring as a Colonel and NASA astronaut he logged more 161 days in space during five space missions. Deborah Bryant, who attended H.H. Arnold in 1963, became Miss America in 1966.

The tradition continues. Geneice Wilcher, a 1998 graduate of DoDDS-Europe’s Bad Kreuznach High School, was just selected as Miss Nebraska USA. She will be in the upcoming Miss USA pageant. Her parents, Butch and Marquita Wilcher are both educators with DoDDS-Europe. Elizabeth Vargas, a 1980 graduate of Heidelberg American High School, is a co-anchor for ABC’s “20/20.” She plans to return to her alma mater after the birth of her child.

Unfortunately, not all famous graduate stories have a happy ending. A Vicenza High School cheerleader, the Homecoming Sophomore Princess, and member of the Class of ‘61 was Sharon Tate. She went on to become an actress with roles in the Valley of the Dolls, Petticoat Junction, Beverly Hillbillies, and many others. She was also among the Charles Manson Cult’s first murder victims in August 1969.

There are many other celebrities and notables that have passed through the halls of DoDDS-Europe schools. There are a number of websites and biographies dedicated to their stories.

Among the alumni ‘superstars’ are Patrick Ryan O’Neal (Love Story, Paper Moon, and dozens of others). He is a 1959 graduate of Munich American High School, Peter Weller (Robocop), attended Heidelberg High School in 1962, Herb Hall (Top Gun and Clueless) graduated from Frankfurt High School, Class of 1986.

Not all of the fame goes to rock and screen

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## Department of Defense schools celebrate 60 years of teaching

WIESBADEN, Germany – October marks the 60th year that Department of Defense Dependents Schools in Europe have been teaching America’s military students overseas.

On October 14, 1946, thirty-eight elementary schools and five high schools, under the newly established Dependents Schools Service, opened their doors to 1,297 American military students.

The night before the grand openings the Stars and Stripes newspaper carried a report on the first PTA meeting to be held in Berlin. The Ameri-

can Forces Network supplemented school music programs with their broadcasts during the weeks that followed.

The Dependents Schools Service eventually evolved into the Department of Defense Education Activity, and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools, Europe.

DoDDS-Europe, in the heyday, had more than 200 schools, and hundreds of thousands of students. Today, DoDDS-Europe has 98 schools, and about 40,000 students.

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