

# Cultural Diplomat

**JOE FISCHER '53** became one of Johns Hopkins SAIS' earliest graduates when he completed his studies in 1953. His education at the renowned international affairs school almost didn't happen.

Although Fischer found the idea of studying international affairs in Washington, DC, attractive, he was set to enter a doctorate program at the University of Rochester. Then he received some news: His education at SAIS would be fully funded. "I immediately accepted!" he says.

As a World War II Navy veteran, Fischer had a front seat on world affairs, something that set him apart from many other

students. His visit to Japan in 1945 had sparked an interest in learning about Asia. Following his time at SAIS, that interest in Southeast Asia deepened. Ultimately, he taught at Rangoon University in Myanmar, Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia and, back in the United States, at the University of California, Berkeley.

Over the course of his academic career, Fischer attended the University of Arizona, University of New Hampshire, and the University of Chicago. But he describes his education at SAIS as having the greatest impact on his professional and personal life. In addition to the strong integration

of economics, international affairs, business, and political diplomacy that is the hallmark of many international affairs programs, including that of Johns Hopkins SAIS, Fischer believes that schools should intentionally consider stronger connections to what he calls "cultural diplomacy." He contends that global leaders and citizens better understand one another through exposure to art, literature, and other aspects of culture.

"SAIS made it possible for me to be exposed to a cultural world," Fischer says. That education spawned the roles, travels, and experiences that shaped his life over the more than 60 years since his Johns Hopkins SAIS graduation.

Like so many alumni, Fischer looks back on his Johns Hopkins SAIS time fondly. He encourages today's students to think strategically, ask good questions, and make sound arguments in the classroom. "There's got to be more to life than accepting what is," he says.

Fischer, born on D-Day in 1926, resides in Berkeley, Calif., with his wife, Clare. He has curated more than 30 art exhibitions and authored eight books. He welcomes contact from former classmates.

Clare and  
Joe Fischer '53

