

Interests

Continued from Page 3

the freshest meat available. Flies constantly swarmed around the food, she said.

Over the years, Ross and her family saw powerful changes. In 1980, the country was considered third world. By the time of their departure, Malaysia had expanded its commerce and had created health codes.

The once outdoor central market was now converted into a commercialized mall focusing on the tourist market.

Four years after her arrival in Malaysia, Ross became a page for the Malaysian Embassy at the tender age of 10. A Girl Scout at the time, she gave tours to people who came to visit the embassy.

"I probably got the job because I love to talk to people," Ross said, "especially adults."

Her interest in world politics began at an early age through friendships with ambassadors' children.

"My best friend in Malaysia was the Turkish ambassador's daughter," Ross said. "It was an eye-opening experience going to the home of an ambassador."

The houses were elaborate with dining room tables seating up to 25 people, she said.

"The lifestyle of ambassadors makes 'Beverly Hills 90210' look like nothing," Ross said.

While in middle school, Ross attended state dinners and international parties.

"We were at that age when we just wanted an excuse to dress up," Ross said.

Foreign embassies dazzled Ross much more than the American embassy, she said. And to many American students, the American embassy was more of a place to hang out and go swimming.

Ross never lost that childhood interest in foreign policy. In the summer following her senior year in high school, Ross interned

in Washington, D.C., for Sugar Land Congressman Tom DeLay.

While in D.C., Ross said she worked long hours at the Capitol doing everything from handling constituent mail to giving tours of the building.

"I loved it," Ross said. "There is such an energy in the air. Everyone around you is involved in the government."

Toward the end of her internship, Ross said she was given the privilege of working on a bill for Congress. She said she began work by researching the bill, and after writing it, was required to call for co-signers.

"It was really cool because I was only 18 years old at the time," Ross said.

This experience helped Ross to see the differences between the U.S. and Malaysian governments more clearly, she said.

From her personal experiences in Malaysia, Ross became aware of the strict censorship there.

After once voicing her opinion in school concerning the role of Malaysian women, Ross took a warning from her teacher.

"She told me that I had to stop

saying these things or my family would have to leave the country," Ross said.

Ross soon realized that by voicing her opinion, she was merely imposing her American ideals on a completely different culture. These women were going to be third or fourth wives to men, she said. Ross was the one who needed to understand that this was the Malaysian culture.

Working internationally has become a goal for Ross because every day is a new experience, she said. Most companies would love to hire people who are willing to work internationally, Ross said.

"Even if you go abroad and it's not what you thought," Ross said, "you're going to make the best out of it and you can turn it into a learning experience."

Kingsley Ross, a junior journalism major, cites the country of Malaysia, where she lived for 9 years, as the source of her cultural interests.

Photo by Kyle Burnett/THE BATTALION



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