

# the diaspora potrezebie

Alumni Newsletter of the American Community School Beirut

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## Time of Transitions

### Message from the President

This year has been one of transitions for many of us, as we get used to a new way of living and learning with the COVID pandemic which has affected almost every aspect of our lives. In addition we have faced a presidential election here in the U.S. and will be transitioning to a new administration. ACS is encountering its share of them too, with the pandemic, financial crisis, as well as the aftermath of the explosion at the port.

The alumni association in the U.S., largely supported by classes from the '60s and '70s, is also in transition. The group of people stepping up to volunteer is growing smaller as we prepare to hand off to the "post war" generation. We have been searching for a new editor for the *Potrezebie* for months. With no apparent heir to Linda and Jay in sight, we are likely looking at March as our final issue in its current format. If you are willing to take this on, please let me know. But, short of someone stepping up, we will likely move to a new form of communication which will take less time and effort, and may only be available online.

My term as president will end in January 2022, and discussions are already taking place as to the future of the association. Do we try to find younger alums to take it on? Or, do we move the function to the Development Office in Beirut? These are all questions being asked. I bring this up not to be negative or pessimistic, but rather realistic. So, in the interest of full disclosure and transparency, I'm sharing the council's thoughts with you, our beloved community.

As you all know, the most important fundraising goal of our association has been the Malcolm Kerr Endowment Fund. We got a little sidetracked this year as we put together a solicitation for contributions to the Relief Fund. However, we want to keep our eye on the Kerr Fund, and to that end, are asking once again for your donation so that we may close the remaining shortfall of \$40,000. This will allow ACS to provide a full scholarship for four years to the recipient.

What makes this more exciting is that we have a VERY generous donor who has offered **\$10,000 as a matching fund. Greg Soghikian '77** made this donation in honor of his mother, **Juanita Soghikinan-Swedenburg Fac**, telling me: *"this donation is in honor of my mother as a past faculty and board member. ACS holds a very dear place in my heart, most of*

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All correspondence should be sent to AA/ACS, 1922 Rollins Drive, Alexandria, VA 22307. Our legal address is: 3 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 8th Floor, New York NY 10017-2303. *The Alumni Association of the American Community School Beirut. (AA/ACS) does not take positions on religious, political, social topics, or issues and does not endorse the positions or opinions given from time to time by contributors to this newsletter.* © 1990–2020 Alumni Association of the American Community School Beirut.

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## President's Message Continued

*my best memories growing up were centered around ACS and the friends I met there. Those friends are still some of my closest friends. ACS continues to evolve and change as it needs to in order to survive a changing environment, but I hope that the core values of a high level broad education and good fellowship continue to drive its future success."*

This will match ALL donations up to \$10,000 and should we max it out, it will get us halfway to our goal which we hope to achieve next year.

We ask that you to consider donating to the Kerr Fund by credit card: [www.acs.edu.lb/page.cfm?p=1805](http://www.acs.edu.lb/page.cfm?p=1805) so we can help a deserving student receive the same education that was afforded us.

Why not make the donation in memory of your parents, many of whom made a huge difference to ACS when in Beirut, and perhaps even knew **Malcolm Kerr '47**; or, acknowledge another family member or a faculty member who made an impact on your time at ACS?

Thank you so much for your continued support for ACS, the community, and the country we all love so much.

Gina Kano '73, President AA/ACS

Mail a check, payable to AA/ACS, to:

**Gina Kano**  
**1920 McKinney Way Unit 17L**  
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## Diaspora Potrzebie Archives Available and Searchable

You may visit the *Pot* archives on the school website. We digitized over 40 years of back issues, and they are searchable: [acs.edu.lb/POT](http://acs.edu.lb/POT). Password: Alumni\_Pass\_ACS

# Carrying Milk from ACS to Afghanistan

By Nancy Myer '63

It was coming up on Christmas vacation and I was thinking about what to pack to take home for Christmas when I got a call from the bursar at ACS, **Mr. Sellers Fac**. He'd received a call from my dad that the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan had been closed for quite a while. All of the food for the Foreign Service Personnel was trucked into Afghanistan from Pakistan, picked up by the Marine security guards, driven through dangerous areas, and through the Khyber Pass to Kabul. Then it was distributed to outposts like Lash Kar Gha. Because of the closed border there were no deliveries getting through and there were quite a few babies in Lash; they had no milk. Could I please bring powdered milk for Christmas?

Mr. Sellers wanted to know how big a suitcase I had. He came to the dorm and I showed him my two big suitcases. He measured the inside and said he could get probably a good 20 boxes in each one. Could I carry what I needed in a smaller sized suitcase? I assured him I could do that but I didn't have a smaller suitcase. My roommate lent me hers.

It was funny because Mr. Sellers was not exactly a friendly man but when somebody mentioned babies didn't have enough to eat, that somehow turned him into a dynamo of energy determined to get

as much powdered milk into my suitcases as he could. Of course the suitcases were so heavy I couldn't lift them but we dollied them out to the taxi taking me to the airport. The porters at the airport carried them to the airline and when they found out what I was carrying they wouldn't charge either.

I arrived in Afghanistan with about 40 boxes of instant milk. The airline hadn't charged a thing for those two heavy suitcases so they could help keep babies fed. It was a wonderful outpouring of Christmas spirit and I will always remember that.

My mom made a lot of red, white, and green candy canes to decorate the tree. You couldn't find anything like that in stores anywhere; everything was red and white. She hung the candy canes all over the little Christmas tree that my dad found somewhere. One of the unfortunate side effects of the heat in Afghanistan was that the candy canes began to drip slowly with long drips of sticky candy. Every morning my mom would go in and pull the drips up and over the next branch. By the time I got home to see the tree it was loop, after loop, after loop of candy cane. It was hilarious. Even though there were prettier Christmas times when mother had more to work with, we did laugh for years about the dripping candy canes on the Christmas tree.

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## On the Importance of Reconnections

By Donna Harms-Hansen '74

Since moving back to the US in 1974, just after graduation, I have had the opportunity to reconnect with many of my friends and former teachers at the triennial reunions, their house or apartment, at a restaurant in a new city or town, or mini reunions such as what **Glen Grubbs '71** coordinates at his home. Each time, I have cherished the experience and, if necessary, rearranged my schedule or drove a bit of a way to ensure that the meeting can happen, even if it was just for an hour or two. Each meeting was a reminder of the bonds we had developed at ACS but also a reminder of what ACS, its students, and teachers meant me during my formative years. While I only attended for two years, they were two of the most impressionable. I have so enjoyed each of the reunions I have been able to attend. I remember when I was coordinating the Boston reunion; Jay Bruder kept reminding me that it was important to just give people time to be together; that this was one

of the most important goals of the gatherings... I totally get it. I, for one, relish the times I can reconnect with my ACS extended family even if it's just for short visit. An example that comes to mind was being able to spend an afternoon with **Larry and Martha David Fac** at their house in Topeka in the early '80s, sharing memories and playing flute with Martha. Before they died I was able to write and thank them for what they meant to me and my education. That gave me peace.

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## Wondering about the Next AA/ACS Reunion?

The Alumni Council continues to revisit this topic but plans and possible dates are on hold at this time.

# Alumni Notes

**Mary Ledbetter-Tabakow '62** wrote to note the retirement of **David Kurani '61** from AUB. The Kurani family legacy at AUB was celebrated in the Spring 2020 edition of AUB's *Maingate* newsmagazine. The family patriarch, Habib Amin Kurani, worked with Daniel Bliss from the earliest days of the Syrian Protestant College, later renamed as the American University of Beirut. Many other members of the family served AUB over the generations. David Kurani has been a professor at AUB since 1968. His son, John Kurani, was carrying on the family tradition until his tragic death in 2018 while under treatment for a blood disease.

**Barbara Saylor '64** reconnected recently with **Alex ter Weele Fac.** Barbara ran across one of Alex's books, *We Escaped A Family's Flight from Holland During World War Two*, and realized they had been at ACS at the same time.

She is now in New Haven, Vermont; he in Virginia, but they have been reminiscing (by email—darn that Covid-19!) about **Bob Thomas '64** and their favorite faculty members including **Jane Monroe, Bob Brown, Elsa Turmelle, Diana Orton** and of course **Dwight Knox**, headmaster at the time.

**Dr. Barbara Porter '71** handed off her leadership role of ACOR (The American Center of Oriental Research) in Jordan to Dr. Paul Pearce Creasman in March 2019. Barbara spent 14 years as Director of ACOR and guided the organization through many acclaimed archaeological, preservation, and information access projects. ACOR celebrated its 50th anniversary year in 2018 under Barbara's leadership. In spite of the pandemic Barbara was able to return to the U.S. and settled in Washington, D.C. over the summer. She served on the ACS Board of Trustees from 1996 to 2019.

**Delinda Curtiss-Hanley '73**, executive editor of *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, made *The Washington Post*. She was featured in the column, "John Kelly's Washington" dated November 4, 2020, for her stories about the back yard nuclear fallout shelter attached to the Curtiss family home in the Washington, DC suburb of Chevy Chase, Maryland.

**Ruth Harms '73** was honored when a loud caravan of at least 30 cars, some of which were decked out with signs and balloons, paraded into the parking lot of Groff Park on Saturday to give her a send-off. She was a case manager at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County who will soon retire after almost 30 years. Harms, dressed as the late Supreme Court Justice

Ruth Bader Ginsburg for Halloween (one of her favorite holidays), quickly disregarded the chair her colleagues had placed for her as each vehicle carrying family and friends drove by to congratulate her in the chilly fall afternoon. "This is the best party ever," remarked Harms to a nearby friend as people in at least ten more honking cars waited in line to talk to her.



**In preparation for the Saturday drive-by parade in Amherst, MA, in honor of Ruth Harms '73 and her service with the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, Donna Harms-Hansen '74, writes a retirement to-do list for her sister on her car windows.**

**Helen Zughaib '78** is participating in "Art in Isolation; Creativity in the Time of Covid-19." The exhibit runs through January 2021 at the Arts & Culture Center of the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C. and is viewable online <https://mei-viewingrooms.com/viewing-room/1-art-in-isolation-creativity-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>

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# In Memoriam



**Dr. Peter Oliver '47** died three hours shy of his 90th birthday and he would have it no other way. Life was to be enjoyed and when it wasn't enjoyable, it was time to move on.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, he came to the USA at the age of 15. He attended Westtown School, Haverford College, and Boston University Medical School. For his entire professional career he practiced at the

Lahey Clinic in the Department of Otolaryngology, serving as chairman for ten years and on the BUMS faculty.

He was an avid golfer, skier, and traveler well into his 80s. He loved to stimulate a good political debate, but always ensured it was accompanied by good food and wine to keep it friendly. He loved his wife, his dogs, his children, his grandchildren, his great-grand daughter and extended family.

**Marvin McFeaters '62** passed away on the morning of September 10, 2020 in Falls Church, VA, due to a heart attack. He was a decorated Vietnam War Navy combat veteran who served two and a half tours. He was a passionate supporter of services for veterans and at the time of his demise, he was leading the CWV's participation in the TUS-100 initiative to commemorate the Centenary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in 2021.

Marvin was born March 31, 1945 in Arlington, VA and because of his father's service with the U.S. Agency for International Development; he grew up in multiple locations and graduated high school from the American Community School at Beirut, Lebanon. After his military service he obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree with honors from Columbia University in New York City. He then went into the life insurance business, working for several national level firms before starting his own insurance brokerage firm in 1979, operating as sole proprietor and principal until he retired from the business in 2019.

**George Michael Tukey '62** It is with great sadness that I report

the passing of my brother on September 19, 2020 after a long illness. He fought a courageous battle with Parkinson's. Mike and I attended ACS in the 50's when Beirut was the Paradise of the Middle East and often walked on the beach with our French poodle. Those were the days! I have nothing but fond memories of our six years in Beirut. Mike spent years in the Navy and then had his own mortgage business in Savannah, GA. He retired to Morgantown, WV where he lived until he died. He is survived by his wife Paula Zaharko, two children, and three grandchildren.

Submitted by: **Mary Abigail Tukey-Jones '58**

**Simone Lanson-Lasilaa '64** died on September 22, 2020. (USPS notification)



**Toni Ann Morgan '69** died on August 30, 2020, at her home in Conyers, GA. She was born January 5, 1952 in Baltimore, the daughter of the late Jean L. (Pflugfelder) and Thomas E. Morgan. Toni attended high school at the American Community School in Beirut, Lebanon and Judson School in Scottsdale, AZ. She graduated from the United States International University in San Diego

where she studied theater. She is survived by her brother **James W. Morgan,'71** Leucadia, CA. She was predeceased by her brother Tucker Morgan.



**Christine B. Graham-Brashears '71** passed away on August 25, 2020 in Bellingham, WA.

It is with a heavy yet rejoicing heart that we share the news that Christine passed on from her physical body after a very short hospitalization for complications from lung cancer. Christine, dearest

## In Memorium Continued

wife, sister, mother, grandmother, teacher, and friend, joined the great Love surrounding and filling us all; she was 66 years old.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, Christine spoke Arabic fluently. She came to the United States for university, where she met her husband Gary. She was the mother of five children and a talented artist and sculptor. She completed her undergraduate degree in education when she was 50 years old then a Master's degree in Adult Education and found her calling in teaching English as a Second Language. She worked at both Whatcom Community College and Western Washington University in Bellingham where she was beloved by students and staff alike.

She is survived by a loving family: her husband of 45 years Gary Brashears, her sisters **Catherine Graham-Kelly '68**, **Rose Mary Graham-Cavazos '70**, and **Sheila Graham-Smith '73**, a daughter, four sons, and three grandchildren.

Diagnosed with cancer just two weeks prior to her death, it quickly became clear the disease had progressed much more rapidly and extensively than was expected. Christine accepted this news with her typical grace and peace. Despite the restrictions in the age of COVID-19, Christine was surrounded by her husband and children in her last moments. In her final hours she had joyful and affection-filled video conversations with all three of her sisters and her grandchildren.

For those of you who had the privilege of knowing her, you undoubtedly experienced her fierce love, her selflessness, and her advocacy for those encountering any of life's challenges, especially her beloved international students who were far from their families. You witnessed the most loving heart that we have ever known. Thank you for seeing her for who she was, a fiercely loyal and loving person with no thought to her own wants or needs, a woman of incredible faith and service, a genuine Love Superhero with whom we were so greatly blessed to share our lives.

As a parting love offering, Christine bestowed the gift of sight to two individuals via corneal transplant.

The family so appreciates the outpouring of care and support during this difficult time and asks that any donations in her name go to the charitable organization Kids Alive International, which supports refugee children in her beloved Lebanon. To donate visit <https://www.kidsalive.org>.

Submitted by **Glen Grubbs '71**

Also reported by **Evelyn Lambert-Saunders '71** who noted: She was a dear friend of mine through junior high and high school at ACS.



**Randal "Randy" Barnes '74, Fac** as submitted by **Steve '81** and **Mark '83 Barnes**.

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of our brother Randy. His involvement in ACS came in two time periods. He arrived as a sixth grade student

in 1967, as part of the Baptist missionary kid bunch. He was active in the school during the exciting pre-war period that was the late '60s and early '70s, and participated in many activities including wrestling and playing bass guitar in the stage band. In his senior year, Randal won the ACS award for Sportsmanship. He graduated in 1974, the last graduation before the outbreak of hostilities in the spring of 1975.

The second phase started in the summer of 1979. Randal was visiting us in Beirut after graduating from Vanderbilt, following a senior year abroad at the University of Regensburg, in Germany. He went by ACS to say hello to **Mrs. Turmelle Fac**, and returned with a stack of textbooks, excitedly reporting that his first job out of college would be teaching at ACS. While his degree was in history, he filled in wherever he was needed. He taught history and geometry, coached basketball, and conducted the band. He taught there for two years until returning to live a full life in the US. He eventually settled in St. Louis, accumulated a collection of graduate degrees, and continued to teach until he retired a few years ago. We could not have imagined the hole he has left in our family, but we are so happy that we had such a thoughtful and humane person with whom to share our lives.

**Donna Harms-Hansen '74** submitted this: So in 2016, when I was given the OK by my boss to attend a professional conference in St. Louis, MO, and knowing that Randy Barnes was living there and I hadn't seen him since a visit to Nashville in 1974 on my way to college, I arranged my trip to be able to have a meal with him at a downtown restaurant. Randy was the bass guitarist for the Road Show stage band, when I played tenor sax and flute in the band. This "family" of musicians, or musical wannabees such as me, was

## In Memorium Continued



**Randy Barnes '74 and classmate Donna Harms-Hansen '74.**

a close bunch as we rehearsed and played at different venues, including a road trip to Cyprus. Led by **Larry David Fac**, the stage band crew played a key role in my time at ACS. Randy and some of the other members became like my brothers and sisters over the two years... While I am so jealous of those who spent more time at ACS, my heart is full of love for the two years I did get to have and the good friends I made there. With Randy's death, I am reminded how fragile our lives are and how important it is take each opportunity to reconnect with friends to replenish those relationships. I am so grateful that I did... That I got to see him, talk to him, share memories, jokes, and give him one last hug while I could.

**Paul Ferwerda '74** remembered Randy as a thoughtful person, and Randy's last Facebook post on May 12, 2020 proved the point most eloquently: "Imagine a long suffering teacher toward the end of the semester confronted by a lackadaisical student who has not applied himself much during the semester. The student pleads for an extension on the final project. "OK", she replies, "You can have two more weeks, maybe three, but I'm not sure it will make any difference."The student realizes it is true. Without a change of heart, the insights and production of his project will still be about the same in a couple of weeks. Prettier formatting will not change the substance. If there is any value in his project, the seeds must be there somewhere already.

I am that student. I got a good report from the oncologist yesterday. Essentially, I have a few more weeks in which we may try some other treatments that may be more effective. My life, however, is not going to change substantially in that time. I am not on the verge of finishing writing a great book, I have no ideas about a cure

for cancer, my insights are difficult for me to interpret and evaluate. I am not in despair. I try to live well, which involves remembering to keep appointments, take medicine, and showers regularly. I do look for insights from my experiences in life and books that I have read. However, I am just as likely to search for diversions such as reading Keith Richards' autobiography, which really isn't that bad. I try to pay attention to the people in my life more. Many of them are trying to form memories of me that they can pull up when I am gone. I appreciate that.

Pain can get in the way sometimes, but for the most part it is under control. They have developed some pretty good pain killers. Still, I worry about ending in pain. It's always something.

My perceptions of life have changed. I value more and more seeing people be kind to each other. I wish I had prioritized kindness more throughout life and highly recommend it. I am lucky to be surrounded by loving family and friends. I feel surrounded by love.

So as I gnaw my pencil and try to improve my life project I appreciate the friends I have who may read this. I wish I had been more kind, more trustworthy, but we live out who we are.

Thanks, Randy"

**Anne Nelson Fac** has passed away. Her husband **John Nelson Fac** posted a beautiful photo tribute on Facebook.

**Marilyn Strandwold-Major Fac** has passed away.

**Borghild Whittington Fac** passed away on July 3, 2019. She was 98.



## Lost Alums

Mary Thweatt-Smith 1955	David Taylor 1974
Terry Albright-Shultz 1960	Leslie Cobb-Fonteyne 1976
Edwin Moore 1960	Jay Lomac 1977
Valerie Murphy-Seastrom 1962	George Miller 1977, Fac
Geoffrey Braun 1968	Cynthia Calvert-Hollifield 1978
Mary Brown 1969	Mark Barnes 1983
Gerald Fitzgibbons 1970	Victoria Sams 1986
Frank Anguilo 1971	Nadine Samara 1998
Richard Pauptit 1972	Sarah Ajami 2001
Louise Laufer 1973	Sophia Roehr 2006
Donna Meyer-Anguilo 1973	Patti Mattingly UNK



Interim Head of School Karim Abu Haydar handing out back to school kits.



## Malcolm Kerr Endowment Fund Matching Challenge Announcement

Thanks to the generosity of **Greg Soghikian '77**, AA/ACS is very pleased to announce that all donations up to a total of \$10,000 will be matched, dollar for dollar.

You may donate by credit card:

[www.acs.edu.lb/page.cfm?p=1805](http://www.acs.edu.lb/page.cfm?p=1805)

Or you may mail a check, payable to AA/ACS to:

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**1920 McKinney Way Unit 17L**  
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