

the diaspora potrezebie

Alumni Newsletter of the American Community School Beirut

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Our 43rd year of publication

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The President's Message of Gratitude

My dear fellow alumni,

As I write this, we are closing out the week of Thanksgiving here in the US. Which means we are approaching the holiday season for all of us. That made me think about how ACS has touched my life in so many ways.

The first piece of good news is that we raised about \$43,000 for the Faculty and Staff Relief Fund this fall. It was more than I could have hoped for, and the school is so grateful for the contribution. It will go a long way towards easing the economic pains of the people who keep our school alive.

One of the goals for the Alumni Council over the last few years, has been to "close the gap" of the Malcolm Kerr Endowment Fund. What this means is that we are now able to ensure that our students who get the scholarship are covered completely for a longer term. This was accomplished by both the large, very generous donations, as well as the smaller ones. Every dollar matters and I'm eternally grateful to everyone who helped us to achieve this goal together. This is a HUGE accomplishment that should make everyone very proud.

The legacy of Malcolm Kerr affected me personally, through my parents, as I'm sure is the case with many of you. This started me thinking about the number of fellow ACS folks that I've been in contact with over the last 10 days or so. In that time, I

have spoken with the new Head of School (see interview with him in this issue), had an hours long phone call with my friend **Cathy Carson '72**, had a couple of contacts with new Pot editor **Alice Ludvigsen '70**, chatted with my siblings who are all ACS alumni. I attended a Board of Trustees meeting, spoke with Rosie, connected with **Eddy Tamura '73**, and attended a Reunion 2022 Committee meeting. This doesn't include all the interactions on Facebook. This school is a big part of my life. Think about it.... how often does the school come up for you?

The Baltimore Reunion is on track for August 2022. In this issue, you will find more detailed information on the hotel, costs, and more. This time, we are creating a fund to help those who would come, but for financial restrictions. We hope to attract people who have been unable to attend in the past, or whose circumstances may not allow then to come this time. In addition, we are putting together things for first time attendees and much more. I hope to see all of you there.

Have a wonderful, safe, and peaceful holiday season.

My best,



Gina Kano '73

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The Diaspora Potrzebie

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News from the Reunion Committee



Hope to see you in Baltimore!

The 2022 reunion is scheduled for August 4-7 at the Lord Baltimore Hotel in Baltimore,

MD. It is being planned by a group of dedicated alumni with the intention of providing those in attendance an opportunity to re-connect with classmates, faculty, and friends from this special time in their lives. Many of us identify as "Third Culture Kids", growing up in truly unique circumstances with ACS filling an integral part of that experience. Those who attend the triennial reunions have the opportunity to connect with others who share similar stories in their lives; old friendships are strengthened and new ones forged from this common experience and history. Information about the reunion can be found at: www.acsreunion.com.

The Committee has secured an amazingly reasonable price of \$149/night (plus tax) for rooms at this historic hotel and is working to develop a schedule of activities to complement the reunion's goals. The price of \$190 for "Early Bird" registration covers the cost of a Thursday evening reception with cash bar, a Friday Fun Event, and a Saturday banquet with its dinner with dancing along with other incidental activities. This represents a small increase from the reunions of 2016 and 2019 gathering in Boston and Salt Lake City, shedding light on the hard work being done to keep costs down while providing the best experience possible.

At the same time, the Committee recognizes that there are many who, despite their desire to attend, feel that their life situations make these costs prohibitive. To assist, the Committee will be setting up an Attendance Support Fund to help offset the costs associated with travel, stay or registration. Those who need help or are looking for a roommate to offset the hotel costs, are invited to contact the Support Subcommittee at: BaltimoreReunionHelp@gmail.com.

Those generous alumni who can help offset the expense of others are invited to donate to this Fund and help get others to the

Reunion. There will be a special option for this on the registration form that will be available on line and sent by mail after the new year.

If ACS holds a special place in your heart and your personal history, we hope you will join us in Baltimore this coming August and look forward to seeing your name on the registration list.

Alumni Notes

Anthony (Tony) Glockler '54

Congratulations on your first issue of the POT. I loved it, well done. I particularly liked the reference to Mr. Sutton and his driving. I also like the mention of Cordelia Nelson. Her older brother Jan was a classmate and good friend. When we were 14/15 year olds, one of our parents drove Jan, Doug Kerr (Malcolm's younger brother) and I up to the Damascus road. We were dropped off and hiked for two days to the Kerr's summer house in Ainab. We slept out in the open, no tent. None of our parents were concerned for the safety of three teenage boys wandering around the Lebanese mountains alone. That was a different Lebanon and a different world.

My story begins with birth in 1936. We lived on the Presbyterian Mission compound in downtown Beirut. When I was ready for first grade, ACS was too far away so I was enrolled at the College Protestant pour Jeune Filles. Two of my classmates there were **Sam Constan** and **Bill Shanklin**, later of ACS. After three years, I spent the summer learning to read and write English so I could transfer to ACS. We stayed in Beirut during the WWII years experiencing bombing by the RAF and finally the "liberating" of Beirut from the French by English and Australian forces. ACS did not close. In 1947/48, we were on furlough in the US. I returned to ACS for grades 8, 9, and 10. In the summer of 1951 I left for the US to live in the US for five years before age 21 to retain my US citizenship. My father was an Englishman. In the US I attended Mt Hermon boarding school and Colby College in Maine. **John Crawford** is the only other person in the world who had attended ACS, Mt Hermon and Colby College.

However, let me go back in time. My brother **Robin** and I may be your only

readers whose parent attended ACS. My mother **Annie Jessup Glockler** was born in Beirut in 1903 and attended ACS shortly after it was founded in 1905. Part of that time her family was in Sidon. With no BD at that time, she had to live with friends in Beirut during the school year. She also tells of years when there were so few students that only every other grade was taught.

I can go back even further before there was an ACS. In 1862, my great-grandfather, Samuel Jessup, resigned his commission as a chaplain in the Union Army to come to Beirut to join his brother as a Presbyterian missionary. His son, my grandfather, was born in Beirut.

Enough back-talk. I would not trade my time in Beirut with anybody else's early years and ACS is a big reason for that. The mix of students was marvelous, the children of: AUB faculty, missionaries, business, Lebanese, Armenian and European families. I got to ride the tram home every day and, besides my classmates, my playmate at home was Samir. My view of the world and its peoples was broad and still is so today.

Editor's Note: Just after I got this note from Tony Glockler, I had decided to reread "Lebanon's Child" by **Anne Byerly Moore**, where she mentions "my cousin, Tony." I love all these connections.

Rolf Christophersen '56 [Hello Alice, It's nice to connect with someone who knew the Lebanon the way you and your brother know it. I am so sorry to hear of his passing. We never met face to face, but there were a lot of emails between us and I sent him many stories about ACS and my single school year at ACS Beirut.]

My fondest memories of ACS revolve around Wilfred Turmelle. My room was right

across the hall from his suite in the BD's new wing. I had Bill Crays and Gary Cody on one side of me and Henry Dorsey on the other. We were all ARAMCO kids. Uncle Willie's door was always open during study time and before bedtime. Somehow, his demeanor affected me in a positive way and all my years of pranking just melted away. I wanted him to think of me the way he acted toward all of us. ACS had such professional teachers. They dressed and acted the part.

I was at ACS for the 1953/54 school year. Unfortunately, I missed about a month of school. The first term I was healthy, all the way to Christmas break. The ARAMCO kids got on the company Convair and went to Dhahran. The parents met us and we had a wonderful vacation, but I noticed a few mornings a slight headache. In January, we were back and within a week, the headaches got worse. I awakened one morning with a raging fever. I went to Nursie and she put me to bed in the downstairs infirmary. The next day I was in the TapLine hospital with pneumonia. I was sick as a pig! It took two weeks to beat the illness and I lost a lot of weight. When they sent me back to school, my parents had told Dr. Bassett to send me home on the company DC-3, the milkrun. I got to see all the pumping stations on the way down the TapLine. I was in Dhahran the whole month of February. About the first of March, I was back in my room in the BD and happy to be there! There was something about Beirut and that school that still causes me to smile at the comfort I felt.

I went on only one school trip, Krak des Chevaliers. We snuck up to the Cedars once. Bill Crays had money and used to invite us to tour via taxi some Saturdays; we'd take jaunts around the city, out to St.

Continued on page 4

Alumni Notes Continued

Simons, or one of the small towns near the city. On the ACS Krak trip, we "borrowed" a stone ball and brought it back to school. It became a valuable tool to each class- trying to gain ownership and bragging rights by any means.

I used to go downtown and just walk, walk, walk. I ate fresh fruit until I was almost sick. I loved the French influence, the suq, and I used to go to the harbor and just observe the activities. I saw a lots of films on Friday nights at the Tivoli in the Bourj.

I was in boarding school for three years, nothing compared to my year in Beirut.

I am still in contact with Dan Van Arsdale, Bill Crays, Norm Gray, and occasionally Diane McWood, Diane Renfer and Jack Sommer.

ACS Class of 1961 60th Anniversary

Mini-Reunion The ACS class of 1961 and Friends held a mini-reunion November 11-14 in Melbourne, Florida to celebrate the 60th anniversary of our graduation. Attendees were **Diz Caldwell '61** and Trish Caldwell, **Pete Fleury '61**, **Mike Hayes '61**, **Jay Williams '61** and Muffy Williams, **Mike Manderscheid '62** and Denise Manderscheid. A number of others were unable to attend due to varied infirmities, but were with us in spirit. Activities included dinners at Ichabod's Dockside, the Chart House, and Skewers Mediterranean Grill, each followed by desserts and after dinner drinks at the Caldwell's condo overlooking Melbourne Harbor. The dinner at Skewers included many typical Lebanese dishes and was accompanied by entertainment from an excellent belly dancer. On Saturday afternoon the group enjoyed a boat tour of the Indian River Lagoon captained by **Mike Hayes '61**. Saturday evening a Zoom get-together with those who could not attend in person was coordinated by **Pete Fleury '61**. Participants in this session included

Jim Tracy '61, **Burke Walker '61**, **Charlie Kaplow '62**, **Jih Hua Liu '61** and Chi Chi Liu, **Diane Armstrong '61**, Bobbie Fleury, **Tom Dinney '61** and **Anne Haden '61**.

On Sunday we held a farewell brunch on the Caldwell's balcony which included coffee, fresh fruit and Trish Caldwell's world renowned breakfast casserole.



(L-R): **Diz Caldwell '61**, **Pete Fleury '61**, **Mike Hayes '61**, **Muffy Williams**, **Jay Williams '61**, **Mike Manderscheid '61**, **Denise Manderscheid**.



Customized Chart House menu.



Captain Mike '61 and **First Mate Diz '61** conducting the boat tour of the Indian River Lagoon.



Farewell brunch at the Caldwell's.

Barbara Jean Dinney Hudspith '65

I would also like to take a moment to tell you how much I have enjoyed reading [...] so many interesting stories about the families of so many of the students I feel privileged to have been associated with at ACS. I hope you continue to include them in future issues. A thought crossed my mind as I was reading the family histories; none of us would have had the extraordinary lives we have had in our younger years had it not been for our parents. They were the ones that took chances and dared to explore other parts of the world and in doing so we were all exposed to many different countries, people and their cultures which have shaped us all into being what we are today. In addition to being educated at one of the finest schools in the Middle East.

Continue the good work and I look forward to reading future issues.

Anne Peet Carrington '70 posted this on September 20 from San Francisco: "Things have been WAY too exciting...and one of the great events was Richard and Martha's show at Anglim/Trimble, where I encountered two members of the fabulously famous Beirut band, the Bedbugs!!! What a wild afternoon!"

Alumni Notes Continued

A wonderful meeting between Anne, her husband, **Craig Troeller '69** and **Arthur Frick '69**.



Anne and Rodge with two Bedbugs, Craig and Arthur.

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Ruth Harms '73 and classmate **Margaret Kelberer '73** arrange gathering of the Kelberer sisters (**Mary '71, Barbara 75; Elizabeth '78, and Kristine '81**) and it made the **Aruba Today** newspaper on the 23rd of October.

Sisters and Friends of Annie Dircks Kelberer Travelled to Aruba from Massachusetts, Minnesota and North Carolina to Celebrate her 50th Birthday.

By Clyde Harms

ORANJESTAD — Annie's five sisters felt that their youngest sibling should celebrate this milestone in a special way and at the suggestion of Margaret they chose Aruba as the venue.

Margaret Kelberer has been a friend of Aruban born Ruth Harms since 1972 when they attended American Community School (ACS) in Beirut, Lebanon. After graduation both attended Macalester College in St. Paul, in Margaret's home state of Minnesota and Ruth's ties with the Kelberer family became closer. Margaret accompanied Ruth to Aruba on a family vacation and fell in love with the island. She has since visited

Aruba many times and is currently even considering retiring on our island.

Due to compelling professional and familial commitments, two sisters could not join the group, but Ruth Harms and Colleen Desutter, a colleague of Annie's at BeThe-Match were happy to join the celebrations.

The ladies did just about everything that a visitor to Aruba would want to do in the week that they were here. They toured the south coast of the island with "1 Fool and his Boat", did parasailing at Malmok, took the AllAroundAruba tour of the north coast that ended with a visit to the grotto of Guadiriquiri, snorkeled at Mangel Halto and Boca Catalina, did the Red Sail sunset cruise and had a relaxing massage at Manchebo. You name it, they did it.

Between planned activities, the ladies enjoyed Eagle Beach (a favorite of all) and their morning walks along the Caribbean on Linear Park, especially on the wooden walkways. They were also very curious about the monument with the signatures and were impressed by the story behind the signatures. In all, the visitors enjoyed the sights and sounds of the city.

For their meals, the visitors visited several well-known places, among them, West Deck, Pincho's, Surfside Beach Bar, Sultan and the Dutch Pancake House. They also had Aruban "pastechis" at perhaps a lesser known Campeon, a Portuguese family store over 50 years old. They had the Superfoods "Experience" of being amazed at the variety of beers, coffee, cheeses, wines, chocolates and other goodies from all over the world.

Annie and her friends speak highly of the efficient system that Aruba's Health Department had established for checking in the visitors at the Airport. Each had her own choice of what they enjoyed most while in Aruba, but all have nothing but praise for

the professionalism and friendliness they have experienced everywhere they have gone. They all feel that Aruba has great "vibes".

Annie, Colleen, Mary and Kristine are flying back to the United States later today. All have indicated that they plan to come back soon with their families. Ruth has already booked to return with her husband in January, and Margaret might be a resident of Aruba by this time next year.



Ruth and Mug enjoying an Aruba sunset.



Celebrating Annie's 50th in beautiful Aruba.

R&B in DC

When Jay Bruder '74 returned from living in Beirut in 1970, delving into music history was one way he reconnected with American culture. Bear Family Records of Germany has recently released Jay's long-awaited book and 16-CD set on African-American music from the Washington, D.C. area called R&B in D.C. 1940-1960. The project traces the role of Washington-based artists and record companies in the rise of rhythm and blues music from its roots in swing era jazz to the beginnings of soul music. While there aren't many big-name artists featured, the 472 audio tracks give you a comprehensive sampling of the Washington music scene over two critical decades at mid-century. The set has been favorably reviewed by The Washington Post and The Washingtonian Magazine, and featured on local TV news.

Washington Post reporter Chris Richards starts his article with the following:

"With 'R&B in DC 1940-1960,' historian Jay Bruder acquaints us with the sounds of a vanished Washington.

When we listen to a recording of an old song — say, the D.C. nightclub semi-fixture Eva Foster singing "[You'll Never Know](#)" roughly 68 years ago — something excellent happens: the air that surrounds us shakes the same way it shook in 1953. Is there anything else like it? Old music might plunge our imaginations into the past, but more tangibly, it changes the physical reality directly outside of our heads. Listening to an old song isn't a revisitiation. It's a material reenactment. Then happens now.

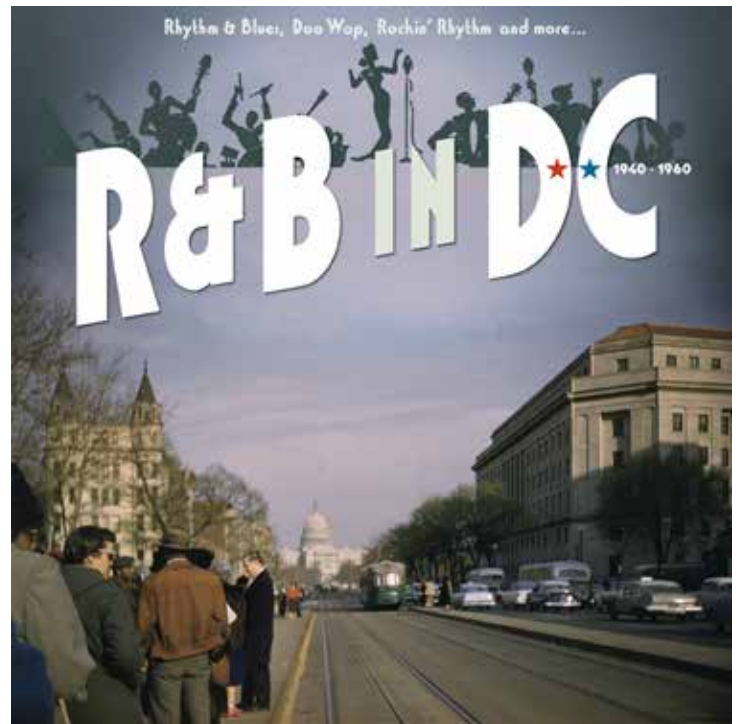
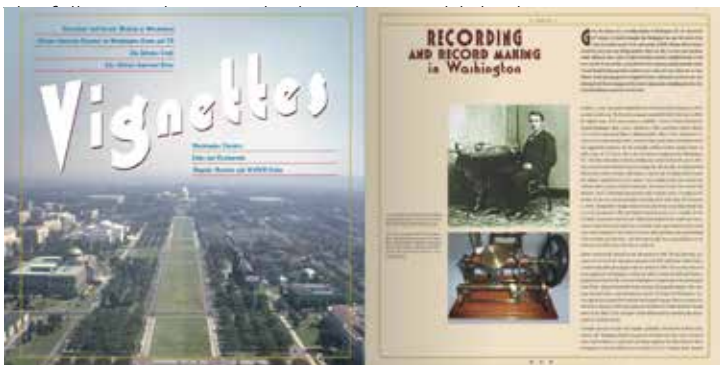
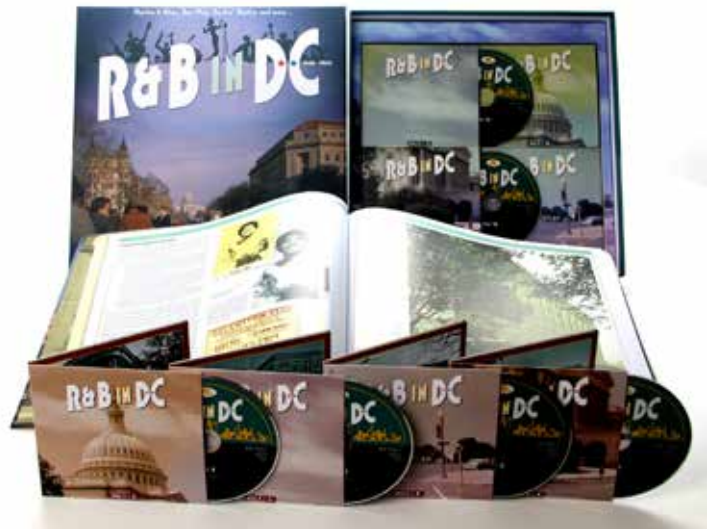
A sweeping and scrupulous new boxed-set, "R&B in DC 1940-60," does this little trick 472 times. Compiled and produced by music historian, DJ and record collector Jay Bruder, and released by the German label Bear Family Records, the set features more than 20 hours of blues, doo-wop, jazz, classic R&B, proto-rock-and-roll and other hybrid styles of Black dance music made in Washington decades ago, conjuring the sound of a largely vanished city in startling detail."

with this amazing creation of Jay's. Find them, click on them, read them, and enjoy!

[With R&B in DC 1940-1960 - Washington Post](#)

[Think you know DC Music? A Huge New Compilation Reveals Treasures From a Bygone Era - Washingtonian](#)

[Box Set Shines a Light on DC's Rich Music History - NBC Washington](#)



In Memoriam

Stephen Richard Shyvers '65



Mike Adrounie '65 writes: Just learned that Steve Shyvers passed away on the 8th of November. He was a member of the Class of 1965. I have no other information to share at this time. He will be missed.

Senior yearbook photo from 1965 - Stephen Richard Shyvers

Some very sad news - **Charlotte Barnard '71** passed away on the morning of November 17th. She was little sister to **Carol '65, Bruce '67** and **Clifford 69'**, whom many of you know.

I found this picture of her in the 1970 ACS yearbook, and this is how I remember her.



Rest in peace, Charlotte.
Alice Ludvigsen '70

Carolyn K. Barney (Faculty 1967-70)



From the 1970 yearbook

Carolyn Konecny Barney, affectionately known as Kelly to most, passed away peacefully in her sleep on Saturday, November 20, 2021 in the comfort of her home where she proudly resided for almost 50 years. Born in Bridgeport, CT on January 9, 1945, she was the daughter of the late Alexander and Sally Dybowski Konecny and sister of Alan Konecny.

She and her brother were raised by loving parents on a small farm in Monroe, CT. She attended Masuk High School and went on to Springfield College in Massachusetts, where she was a member of the college's traveling gymnastics exhibition team and where she met her first love and husband Leon Mackiewicz. She later went on to earn a double Masters degree.

Kelly worked in private and public schools at home and abroad (through the International School System) as a teacher, coach, and guidance counselor. She especially loved her four years spent in Lebanon teaching and coaching gymnastics at the American

Community School in Beirut where they took their own gymnastic exhibition team to perform in Germany, England, and Italy. She and her husband Leon traveled extensively from Scandinavia to Egypt and all the countries in between.

In 1970, they moved to London, England where their daughter Mya was born. Soon afterwards, they moved back to the United States and had a son, Lee Alexander. They lived on a small gentleman's farm in Shelton, CT where they raised their children. They ran a successful gymnastics club for many years. Kelly also taught physical education and art, and was a guidance counselor. She later married her second husband Bill Barney and continued teaching and coaching.

During retirement, she devoted herself to her children and grandchildren. She cherished having more time to spend with friends. She was also able to do more traveling (including Alaska, Australia and China) and loved learning and meeting new people everywhere she went.

She had many talents and loved travel, art, photography, music, dance, books, gardening, sailing, skiing, animals, and in general, living life to its fullest and always enjoyed a good debate. She was very much loved and a teacher and inspiration to many people around the world.

Kelly was a remarkable person who was extremely dedicated to her family. She gave freely to propel those she loved to get ahead. She seemed to always have a smile and an encouraging word. Kelly always wanted the best for everyone, many times sacrificing to help others. Her generosity and steadfast commitment were why so many cherished her friendship. All who knew Kelly well would agree on some of these characteristics to best describe her – loving, caring, patient, dedicated, funny, thoughtful, smart, athletic, creative and helpful.

Survivors include her two loving children, Mya King and her husband Michael of Newtown and Alex Mackiewicz and his wife Ashley of Fairfield, and four cherished grandchildren, Alex and Matthew King and Emmy and Xander Mackiewicz.

A memorial service celebrating Kelly's life will take place at a later date in the spring at Abriola Parkview Funeral Home, 419 White Plains Road, Trumbull, CT.



A photo of Kelly taken in November, which she herself sent to a friend.

In Memoriam Continued

Robert Barrows (Faculty 1968-74)

René Hopen '73 and Cat Essoyan '73 posted this message on the ACS Alumni Facebook page:

We received more sad news today. Bob Barrows, ACS English (and Russian) teacher in the early '70s, passed away peacefully at Pacifica House Hospice in Carlsbad, California on November 5th. His ashes will be interred in his family plot (with his beloved mother) in a cemetery in Rochester, Massachusetts. We kept in touch with him through the years and he visited us a couple of times in the Netherlands. Rest In Peace.



From the 1970 ACS yearbook.

René and Cat have given us permission to print the letter they sent back to Bob's friends who had informed them of his passing:

Thank you so much for your letter informing us that Bob Barrows had died. He was our English (and Russian and linguistics) teacher at the American Community School (ACS) of Beirut in the early 1970s and we were both very fond of him. We had kept in touch with him over the years and he visited us in the Netherlands a couple of times. We also met up with him in Honolulu where Cat's parents lived. Our sincere condolences to you on the loss of your dear friend of so many years.

We shared the news with a couple of Facebook groups of ACS alumni and received a lot of warm responses and we thought it would be nice to also share some of them with you as his friends.

- Very sad to hear this. Such a patient and kind teacher!
- So sorry to hear this. I really loved his classes and learned so much from him...
- He was one of my favorites.
- Very inspiring teacher
- He was one of my favorite teachers too! I came across a report card from one of his classes!
- Mr. Barrows was an exceptional teacher. A very inspiring classroom! ACS during my 7,8,9th grade was such a rich experience.
- I don't think I'd have ever set foot on the ACS stage if he hadn't let me read the part of Elizabeth Proctor in class. He was a kind, sweet man as well as being a great teacher. Made a real difference in my life.
- Oh no. Eddy and I were just talking about him yesterday. How sad. A great teacher
- Mr Barrows always pushed us to think carefully about literature and language. He was a person who inspired and pushed me to work harder to understand.

- What an inspiration he was to me as a young person. Rise in glory.
- I remember vividly how he gave us an assignment to study and learn about another language. For some reason, I chose Indonesian. He opened my eyes to the value and appreciation of things I took for granted. RIP.
- Such sad news! I enjoyed his class. Will keep his family close.
- So very sad to hear of his passing. I will always remember him and give him credit for helping me through my struggles to learn to read at grade level. A great contributor to his students. RIP
- He was one of my favorites!!! It was great to see him in San Diego. "The memory of the righteous is a blessing."
- I was truly blessed to have him as a teacher. He opened my eyes to the value of reading good literature.
- I'm sorry to hear this. I remember taking English and a vocabulary class with him. To this day, I'll hear a word and think "Mr. Barrows vocab word!" One of my favorite teachers and such a gentleman. Condolences to his family.
- Very sad. He was a lovely man.
- He visited me in the hospital in my senior year. He was very kind.
- I will forever remember his reading of Beowulf during summer school between 5th and 6th grade.
- It was amazing that he taught us the Russian class out of the goodness of his heart. And he taught us Esperanto - I think it was during an English class. He was an enthusiastic and wonderful teacher and person. May he rest in peace.

With warm regards to both of you,
Cat and René



Bob at the ACS high school reunion in San Diego with three of our classmates in the graduating class of 1973: Rupen Daas, Bob Barrows, Eddy Tamura and Richie Hanna.

Photo credit: René Hopen

Bill Beebe '56's obituary was in the October issue of the Pot. His sister, Bette Beebe Crane '57, had submitted this photo of Bill and his wife Carol and somehow it got lost on the way. Carol writes that she has been contacted by some of Bill's old ACS friends, and appreciated it very much.



Bill just gave Carol her favorite flowers

Parent Dedications

Friends and Family Plus, by **Rebecca Sibley '70**
(Debra Jan Sibley Roland '68 and Rebecca Ann Sibley '70)

Willis "Sib" Prescott Sibley (1925-2021) met Wanda Quenell Claxton (1927-2014) when she was 16 at an amusement park (The Pike) in Long Beach, California, when he was only 18. They married a year later on July 26, 1945 in Norfolk, Virginia.

Willis served in the U.S. Navy during WWII as a Sonarman (1943-1946) in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, transiting through the Panama Canal on the USS Hugh Purvis. Using the GI Bill to fund his major in Petroleum Engineering, Sib and Wanda lived in married student huts at LSU. They moved to the oilfields of West Texas where (Debra) Jan, was born in Midland, Texas, in 1950. Two years later Rebecca Ann (Becky), was born in Big Spring, Texas.

In 1954 they moved to Maracaibo, Venezuela, where they enjoyed five years in Camp Rexco. Both Wanda and Sib worked, and loved swimming in the lake and club pool, playing tennis and baseball, collecting art and fish, dancing and watching or performing in floor shows. Sib discovered a life-long love for wood-working. Wanda was distraught at having to leave Venezuela, but he had been assigned to the oil producing town of Taft (formerly known a "Moron"), in the San Joaquin Valley, California, for another two years (near Wanda's brother and family in Los Angeles, with the deserts, beaches, and blooming hillsides). Wanda studied psychology at a junior college, while the girls attended elementary school and Sib worked in petroleum engineering in this small oil town.

Sib moved to Teheran, Iran before the rest of his family while daughter Jan, recovered from San Joaquin Valley Fever. After being reunited late in the spring of 1962 in Teheran, Sib and Wanda drove a VW bug and found the snow challenging. The daughters learned some Farsi, Sib worked for the Consortium of Oil Companies, and Wanda worked to organize a library for the engineers. All of the family loved weekend picnics, excursions to the mountains and the Caspian Sea, swimming and playing tennis as members of the Officers Club, and friendships with military and local families. After a couple of years, Sib was transferred to Masjid-i-Sulaiman (MIS) in south-western Iran. While there, they visited Isfahan, Shiraz, Ahwaz, Abadan and Susa, among other places. Since there wasn't an English-speaking school beyond 8th grade, Jan and Becky were sent to attend the American Community School

in Beirut, Lebanon, which certainly changed all of their lives. Wanda came to know Beirut well, especially the Riviera Hotel (the desk clerk knew she preferred the Mediterranean side of the hotel with the balcony view). It took two planes to get to MIS; first flying from Beirut to Abadan in a large jet and then from there in a smaller plane (often a ten-seat "Dove") to MIS. The remoteness meant that families sought their own entertainment. For Sib and Wanda this meant more tennis, learning golf, traditional Scottish and American folk dancing, listening to classical and American folk music, reading, hosting dinners and becoming amateur archaeologists. Wanda worked for the Oil Consortium, as did Sib. They experienced a loud and bright blowout well, visible and audible even at night. It brought internationally famous Red Adair and his crew to extinguish it.

Both Jan and Becky graduated from ACS in 1968 and 1970, respectively. In early 1971, Sib joined ARAMCO in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. He became a work-over well specialist, spending weeks in the Empty Quarter, trying to coax more productivity from old wells. Wanda worked for Government Relations in ARAMCO, which later hired engineers to replace her. They met former ACS'ers and classmates of Becky's and Cliff's (Glenn and Shelley Hughes and Michael Kelberer) while living in Dhahran, as well as friends from their days in Venezuela and Iran. They learned how to brew their own beer and wine and traveled to Spain and Afghanistan with other expats. All the while Sib was playing and winning at golf on the oiled greens; he was featured in an ARAMCO magazine ad.



In the early 1980's, after almost 30 years of living out of the country, Wanda and Sib retired to Hideaway Lake in East Texas and became role models for their family. They concentrated on the positive aspects of having survived the Depression and WWII, lived out of the country, enjoyed their work and led fully engaged lives.

Young Sib and Wanda, just starting out on their adventures.

Parent Dedications Continued



Sib, Debra Jan, Wanda and Becky.

Arabian desert dwellers engaged in traditional game

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Lew Wagner '74

Siblings: Pam '68 and Lester '75

Our father worked for the Ford Foundation first in Syria, then in Iraq. He was a PhD in Economics and was hired by the Ford Foundation to help countries agriculturally and economically. His first assignment was in Syria in 1965-66. It was considered a dangerous posting, so family, apart from our mother, couldn't go. Pam went to Beirut to board at ACS and my brother and I stayed with our grandparents for one year, moving to Baghdad in 1966 when Dad and Mom were reassigned to Iraq at the Ford Foundation office there.

After evacuation from the June '67 war, we went back to the States. After the war was over, Dad moved the family to Beirut, where Lester went into the fifth grade, and I started 6th grade at ACS. Pam returned to the high school section.

We lived in Beirut up until early 1973, when we moved back to the States. I was in the 11th grade at the time. Finished up my senior year at Ben Davis HS in Indianapolis, IN. Lester did a year later.

While in Lebanon, Dad received a national Lebanese recognition and medal for his service to them through the Ford Foundation.

We had a great time while in Beirut and had some wonderful school trips to Europe, Greece, etc. during spring breaks.

Editor's note: There are three volumes of memoirs by ACS alumni published by Al Mashriq. In one of them, "Anything But Ordinary", Pam '68 has written a story called "Life Change".

Elusive Home

Pat Falconer Roland '75

In 1964, the Standard Oil Company transferred my father (hence my nuclear family) from Southern California, to Beirut, Lebanon, on the Mediterranean Sea. Being an intellectual/educational and business focal point of the Arab World, it was a cosmopolitan city, and so dubbed The Paris of the Middle East.

During the time I grew up in Beirut, our family lived in a series of three apartments:

Parent Dedications Continued

1. The Blue Building.

Named for the abstract mosaic of triangles in various shades of blue, that ran down the building's side, on the corner where Rue Abdul Aziz intersected with Rue Bliss.

The furniture, rented from the Boutagy Brothers' firm, included an olive-green couch whose upholstery was decorated with black fibers sprouting up all across it, like some sort of strange animal hide. This piece of furniture was meant to complement the light-blue blinds and chartreuse wall radiator, which ran beneath the windows.

From this vantage point, I could see down below me, the orange-yellow crenellated battlement walls of the American University of Beirut (AUB) across the street, and tram cars running by on their shiny, blue-black iron tracks.

Mom had to use an old-fashioned metal tub with a washboard in order to clean the family's clothes. One day, this shaky contraption overflowed. The water flooded the kitchen and ran out the front door of the flat, down the common hall, to the elevator shaft. Watch out for electric shock!

When the building manager arrived at the scene of the emergency, he was only concerned with whether or not his new Italian leather shoes were being damaged.

2. The Balaa Building penthouse on the thirteenth floor, Rue Sidani.

"Penthouse" was a misnomer, in that this place was anything but fancy: it was merely situated on the top floor. The building's exterior looked like the set of American TV's "Hollywood Squares," with every other balcony framed in beige concrete: a checkerboard.

The tile floor of the living/dining room resembled a Mondrian painting, composed of matte black tiles, interspersed with those in primary colors—a color scheme that would match practically no decor, particularly the (again rented) scratchy Eastern-European-style Boutagy furniture.

In order to reach our apartment, we had to ride the brassy Otis elevator, which lacked a safety screen between the passengers and the brownish-green elevator shaft, with its doors that gave onto each floor as they scrolled by.

My brother, Billy, and I regularly looked for the two-foot-long bloodstain that marked the place where a dog got his paw

caught between the elevator car and his home on the third-floor landing...always fascinating!

The power went out frequently, forcing Mom to lug bags of groceries up thirteen pairs of stairs during the day; and when Dad came home after work, he'd have to face this climb, also, often in pitch darkness.

Our father, Mac, would invite me and Billy to join him on the building's roof, in order to view the elaborate sunsets: sometimes fuchsia, gradating to magenta, purple, underlined by a brilliant strip of fiery yellow-gold at the horizon. Dad also took us up there to experience thunder and lightning storms, which especially captured his attention. (Was this safe, at all?)

3. Mekawi Building, our primary home, where we finally settled (early 1967–1972, i.e., the last five of our eight years in Beirut). Once again, located just off Abdul Aziz.

Standard Oil Company—and hence its subsidiary, the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line Company (Tapline)—had promised to ship all our possessions, and every stick of furniture as a perk, in order to soften the blow of having to leave our brand-new, split-level home and all its trappings in La Habra, Southern California. Tapline was good on its promise: we took delivery of the patio furniture, despite the fact that we now lived on the fifth floor. Hell, we even received a large clay pot filled with dirt from our previous SoCal backyard. And a pewter pitcher with dead pill bugs curled up at the bottom. These treasures had been transported from California to Lebanon on a container ship, i.e., halfway round the world!

In early June of 1967, my mom, Billy, and I were evacuated to Rome, on account of the outbreak of the Six Day War with Israel. Dad, in his role as Manager of Operations, had to stay behind, in order to keep an eye on the pipeline. It originated in Dammam, eastern Saudi Arabia, and ended up in Lebanon, at Sidon (Saida), just south of Beirut. A small part of it ran through Israel, and this was a concern that required Dad's professional attention.

Fortunately, my mom, brother, and I were able to return to Beirut. And in subsequent months, I instituted "The Orphanage Game," in which my girlfriends and I enacted a scenario similar to what we had experienced during the Evacuation: we each chose the few items we prized most (selected from the possessions I had at hand), packed them into one flight bag apiece. The shadow underneath the baby grand

Parent Dedications Continued

piano in the living room formed a sort of cave, and there, we examined these favored belongings, sharing the reasons for their importance to us. The flat's kitchen and pantry halls, the laundry room, and housekeeper's small room, we fashioned into the Orphanage; for, without our families and our homes, we no longer had any place to go!

And so, you can see how home can be a fugitive place: you might have to keep seeking it, for a long time...the rest of your life, maybe. It's what we Expats do.

The Ludvigsen family in Saida

Alice Ludvigsen '70

(sister of Børre-Johan Ludvigsen '64)

In 1950 our father, Walther Johannes Ludvigsen, was offered a job in the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company in Lebanon. He was a captain in one of the big shipping companies in Norway at the time, but was not very happy being away from his little family in Fredrikstad. He and Jorund Margrethe Tønnevold had married at the end of World War II, and were now happy parents of a little boy named Børre-Johan (after his two grandfathers). Back then, the crews on merchant ships were away for 2 years at a time with bi-annual 3-month home leaves. Walther wanted to be with his wife and son, but loved ships and the sea with all his heart. He had grown up next to a big shipyard in Fredrikstad, drawing pictures and making models of ships as long as he could remember. The inside wood panelling of the outhouse at his family home, which Børre and I remember fondly (except for the smell), was covered with drawings of majestic ships with billowing sails, as well as more modern ones and tugs. His also artistic sisters had added beautifully clad ladies and landscapes. Their house was small and crowded, with nine children, so I suppose the outhouse was the place they were given free reign to develop their art. This was the house where Walther, Jorund and Børre lived in an upstairs room because of the housing shortage in Norway after the war. (No running water, a pump and an outhouse in the yard.)

When Caltex advertised for mooring masters at the Mediterranean end of a new pipeline from Saudi Arabia, my dad was quick to apply. He had visited Lebanon during his travels as a seaman, and thought it would be a good place to live and raise a family. It would also let him continue his work on ships, while staying in one place. They discussed it and agreed to give it a try, working there for a few years so that they could save enough money to build a house "back home",

and then go back. They ended up staying 20 years - and wonderful years they were. When Walther had gone through his trial period and had become a Tapline mooring master, he sent a letter to Jorund saying, "Bring the boy and come." He had found a house on a hill above Saida, on the Mieh-Mieh road, overlooking a newly erected refugee camp of tents called Ein-el-Helweh.

One of the first things Jorund had to face was changing her name. When she introduced herself to the mostly American men and women at Tapline, they balked and asked her if she had another name she could use. She hadn't realized that Jorund, pronounced in Norwegian, sounded exactly like "urine". Since her middle name was Margrethe, she became Margaret for the next 20 years.

Walther loved his job, Margaret made friends, had a nice house with running water, indoor bathrooms, a huge balcony overlooking the sparkling blue Mediterranean, and pretty soon they also had a little girl called Alice. Børre and I grew up with other Tapline families around us, but spent a lot of our time with our closest neighbors who had a little farm. Our parents had to get used to us coming home dusty and sweaty - sometimes reeking of garlic - after days spent running around outdoors with our friends Youssef, Elias, Raymond, Alice, Nada, and the rest of their brothers and sisters. Of course, this also made us fluent in Arabic, which was good to have as a "secret language" because our parents never were.

They celebrated Christmas the Norwegian way, on Christmas Eve, turning down invitations to the annual Christmas party at Tapline every year. One of the pictures included with this story is taken by a photographer who came to our house to take a whole series of Christmas pictures they could send to the relatives back home. The Tapline community provided a complete package of social events, as well as our schooling. All the families got together and worked on creating the Zah-rani Country Club golf course, there was an amazing beach that belonged to "us" where we spent endless days playing with friends, swimming, and often ending the days with barbecues as the sun plopped down at the farthest edge of the sea. Sometimes we were even lucky enough to see sea turtles lumbering out of the water to lay their eggs in the soft sand in the dark.

Børre has written a story in the book "Anything But Ordinary" called "The New Yorker", which describes Walther's first ever

Parent Dedications Continued

car. It took us everywhere we wanted to go, and was eventually traded in for a Plymouth Belvedere that even took us to Norway for summer vacations.

With time Børre and Alice were sent off to ACS, leaving Walther and Margaret to go about their business without little children around. Walther built ship models in his free time, including two big dioramas of the Tapline complex at Zahrani for the Tapline offices in Beirut and Sidon. (See picture.) He also did a bit of book-binding, and made a whole series of bound Disney comics for Børre and me. Both our parents were avid readers, and we spent many hours at Khayat's bookstore in Beirut whenever we went there for shopping. Margaret became an excellent golfer, participating at tournaments both in Lebanon and along the Pipeline. She also sewed most of her and my clothes, trawling the old souks in Saida for wonderful fabrics and accessories. (The men of the family got their clothes mostly from Alfa tailors in Beirut, as I remember.) They had close friends among the Tapline families, and there was a group of Norwegian families with whom they could keep up their traditions, nostalgia and recipes; the Tronstads, Odegaardens, Hopens, Jespersens and Nesheims. There were also friends and colleagues from the Netherlands, Italy, England, America, and of course Lebanon.

Long summer vacations in Norway were always highly anticipated and much enjoyed. Walther and Jorund both made sure Børre and I learned to read and write Norwegian properly at an early age, so that we could write letters to our grandmothers, aunts and uncles and cousins. They also ordered Norwegian books once a year, around Christmas time, so that we learned to enjoy reading as well. All of us Norwegian kids in Sidon spoke English to each other and Norwegian with our parents. We all have a shared memory of parents in the background saying "Snakk norsk!" ("Speak Norwegian!") whenever they heard us babbling away in American English.

Walther and Margaret had mixed feelings about their last few years in Lebanon, after the war in 1967. There were skirmishes between the Palestinians in Ein-el-Helweh camp and the Lebanese army camp right across the road from our house. Børre had gone to study in England, Alice was at ACS, and neither of us really knew what our parents were going through in these troubled times. I have the diaries that Margaret kept from the last two years, 1969 and 1970, and they are filled with descriptions of: no electricity, no water, mail strike, missing Norway, wanting to "go home", trouble at

the border with Israel, fighting at the border with Syria, no government, etc. - complete with newspaper clippings from The Daily Star. By the time Walther got to take early retirement, mainly due to the pipeline being blown up by Palestinian fighters, and they could pack up their belongings to go "home" for Christmas in December 1970, they were ready to say goodbye to Lebanon, that beautiful little country they had loved and called home for 20 years.



Christmas Greetings from the Ludvigsens in Saida, photo by Soussi Photo.

They lived a long and happy life in retirement, their family growing with four grandchildren whom they doted on. There is a funny little anecdote where Walther was admitted to the ER in Fredrikstad, a mid-sized town in Norway, after a mild stroke. He thought the nurse in charge looked Mediterranean and asked her where she was from. "I'm from Lebanon," she replied. So he told her that he had lived in Saida for 20 years with his family. She was from Beirut she said, so he told her that his kids had attended ACS as boarders, and that we knew the city well. "ACS!" she exclaimed. "My family home is very close to ACS. Perhaps your children know my brother Kameel who had a small shop connected to our property?" Which we did, of course. She was just about to travel back to Lebanon to meet with her siblings in order to sell their property because all of them were leaving Lebanon. The rest, as they say, is history.



Captain Walther Ludvigsen with his Tapline diorama at the head office in Beirut.

An Interview with Tom Cangiano

By Gina Kano '73

Transcribed by Alice Ludvigsen '70



A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to get on a Zoom call with Tom and ask him some questions. Here is a transcript of our interview. I hope you find this interesting, as I believe we are very lucky to have him as our new head of school.

Gina: Counterintuitively, maybe we should start at the end, because the first question I get asked is,

“Why did Tom come to Beirut right now? Maybe you can tell us why you did that.”

Tom: A lot of things had to come into play here, part of it is the stage of my career - where I had the luxury of going, where I want to go. My wife and I are empty-nesters, so that adds to that freedom of movement and decision making, Historically I had worked for a school that had a very similar mission in Bulgaria, and that's when I first met Nina Joukowsky Koprulu (ACS Board of Trustees Chair, Class of 1979) was when she was on the board at Robert College. The high school in Bulgaria comes from the same origins as Robert College, and I was trying to make that historical connection with Robert College which had lapsed because our school had closed, and in response to that Nina was in town, in Istanbul, and came to visit my school with her head of school. That's how I met Nina for the first time. I knew of her family because of my Lawrenceville experience. So I knew of ACS early on in my administrative career, and I knew it was the kind of school that would really resonate with me, as did ACS in Bulgaria, The American College of Sofia.

I was a head of school in Chicago, and it was a different - my first for profit school that I had worked for. It was interesting; it was challenging; it was compelling; it was not something I wanted to do forever, but I was glad that I did it. That's when I got in touch with the recruiter because I saw the opening here. Take all that together; wrap it up; I found ACS to be compelling, particularly at this time in its history, and I really wanted to be a part of helping the school weather this current storm.

My short answer, when I was asked this at one of the meetings prior to my installation. I believe in the transformative power of education, so I think it's vitally important for a school like ACS to be thriving in Beirut now, and into the immediate future. I think that what we do with our kids; the values we inculcate; the way that

we get them to think about citizenship and diversity, and diverse viewpoints. All that is so needed in Lebanon right now, and our hope is that these kids will go off to university or they'll go to AUB, hopefully some of them will make a decision to stay in Lebanon and be part of that transformation of Lebanese society and the political system.

I just see it as a really fulfilling professional opportunity, and one that I really believe in from a mission and importance standpoint.

Gina: It's interesting because you don't realize the impact of an education until you have the benefit of hindsight. At the time, I felt like it was just another experience, but now looking back, you really understand the difference. I mean, it makes a difference to my day to day life, because I'm able to write properly and speak properly, express my thoughts properly, and that's what you're talking about: that lasting impact that they won't understand until later. As a child of an educator it was drummed into us.

What's the most challenging part of being in Beirut right now?

Tom: You know, the most challenging part is, I think, trying to keep a spirit of positivity and positive morale at the school. The students have it, because they're just thrilled to be at school, love being back on campus, they're (some, of course are dealing with the stress of everyday life in Beirut), a bit insulated from it and school is such a refuge for them. Our faculty and staff are also excited to be back - we're all feeding off the energy of this return to normalcy - but they are dealing with lots of craziness and stresses in their day to day lives. The most challenging part is how can we as a school figure out a way to ease some of those burdens, most of which are financial, but to help facilitate things that have just become harder to navigate, like health insurance, and getting petrol for cars, and things like that. We've been able to help facilitate some of those things as the crisis was worsening, and I think it's offered some relief and taken some of those regular stresses which are much bigger and more significant now than they should be, and helped them become a bit more manageable. This is one of the things that we as a school are trying to do.

I think the other big challenge for us is - yes, we're excited to be back and school is going on fairly normally, it feels remarkably normal, to be quite honest. I don't want us to obsess about this real-time crisis that we're living through, I want us to be always looking forward to what we need to be doing as a school, thinking about our programs, where there are opportunities to improve or modify what we're doing, and even beyond that, thinking about where we want to be 5, 10, 15 years from now, which has to do with dusting

An Interview with Tom Cangiano Continued

off our campus master plan and thinking about when there would be an opportunity for this all to come together. Getting people to continue to look forward, beyond the immediate crisis year, towards something that will be much brighter and positive down the road.

Gina: When I talk to people and try to fundraise, we really need to provide what I would call a differentiator. We really need to get that nailed down and a vision for the future.

What's the hardest part for you personally to being in Beirut?

Tom: For my wife and me it's really having our kids so far away. They're older and they're independent; two are in university and one is finishing up boarding school this year, but it is hard for us all being so far away. It's a lot easier with Zoom and Facetime calls, we have the ability to talk to them every day and they can reach us, so that makes it easier. My wife and I fully appreciate the fact that we live in a kind of protected bubble on campus, and that we have 24/7 electricity and we have things that most Lebanese do not have the luxury of having, and we're aware of that, yet we try to really get out and about and understand what people are living through. We have a sensitivity about it and try to live like the Lebanese to the extent of how we're able to do this, in terms of how we eat, what we do for fun, how we travel or not travel in this crisis, etc. It's been challenging, but it's also allowed us to have a better understanding of what people are going through. It's really funny, we, this place, this is a school in a country that my wife and I were extremely excited to come to, despite all the craziness and deteriorating situation, which got worse all summer. Despite all that, we are thrilled to be here, it's been an amazing experience. We both missed being overseas, particularly in a complicated, interesting place like Lebanon. To be here has been such an energy boost to both of us, intellectually, and just soaking it all in. It's like having the constant adrenalin rush that we had when we went to Budapest in the early '90's when we were young kids on our first overseas assignment. We were there right when Budapest was in the throes of transforming from a communist society to a capitalistic society, and a democratic one at that. It was just a fascinating time to be there. We sort of feel that same energy in Beirut right now, and it's been extremely fulfilling for both of us, it's wonderful.

Gina: That sounds wonderful. Thank you for saying that.

Can you talk to me a little bit about your core values, what I call the non-negotiables? I think those are things that drive what I do, and I'm wondering what they are for you?

Tom: For me, being in schools throughout my career, it's about inculcating true values of citizenship, and really being invested in

your community, whether you're talking about hyper-locally on the school level, neighborhood level, city level, country level, or just being a citizen of the world. That idea that when you're given a lot, you have an obligation to give back, and I think our kids are given a lot, by virtue of the fact that they go to a school like ACS, and I hope that we can do a good job of teaching them the importance of giving back in one way or another, caring about your school, caring about your city, caring about your country, beyond your family. I would say that's a really important one. To me, as a leader, I really value transparency and communication and I don't want anyone to perceive me as someone who is detached or remote. I want to be viewed as somebody who is involved and knowledgeable about the school, and the personalities at the school, and the issues at the school. I try to break down the perceived barriers between the head of school and other constituencies, whether students or employees, and to create a sense of teamwork mentality, that we're all in this together. We won't always agree, but to me it's vitally important that we have open, candid conversations, and express our viewpoint about things. Explaining why decisions are made, and what factors played into those decisions. That kind of transparency and honesty in communication is hugely important to me as well. Another one has to do with never being satisfied with yourself personally or with a school institutionally, developing a culture of constant self-reflection and assessment of what you could have done better in a given situation or decision that you made. As a school, thinking all the time about what we can tweak to improve or evolve. Constant change, but with a feedback loop that comes from your own inquiry and request for feedback from other people.

Gina: Trying not to have regrets and rather using those experiences as a learning experience.

Tom: Exactly. When I took my first head of school job I was only 42, and I'd gone beyond being a department chair. All of a sudden, I was running a school of 700 kids, 150 faculty members in a foreign country, where I also had to get culturally up to speed. When you're young you have to have a certain degree of confidence to function in that role when you're thrust into that position, but I think there is also an inherent defensiveness because you don't truly have the confidence in your ability. You're less welcoming of that feedback that could help speed up your own personal development. As you get more experienced, as you realize you can learn from mistakes, you get less defensive, and I think that's what's nice now, at my age, at this stage in my career, I welcome feedback, I want to know what we're doing well or not doing well, how I can improve as a leader. You don't bristle at it, or get defensive, you embrace it and try to be better.

An Interview with Tom Cangiano Continued

Gina: What do you look for in a teacher and your staff? How do you decide whether somebody is a fit or not?

Tom: To me, I think it's an art more than a science to find the teachers who are going to work in our particular community, but I would say throughout my career, when I've been an administrator it's been trying to find out whether the teacher has the ability to have that magical connection with the students. If a teacher is able to connect with students, to motivate and inspire students, and if they have, secondarily, the academic background and credentials that will help them be more effective in the classroom, that's the kind of package I'm looking for. But to me it's the ability to have that really constructive, positive, supportive relationship with students whatever age they are, to make them feel good about being in school, being learners, and being up for the different challenges they're going to face without being frustrated or defeated by things. The teachers who can move their kids from point A to whatever point and get those kids to think differently and more positively about themselves as learners, those are the truly remarkable teachers. Being able to instill in kids that they can do it, whatever task, whatever skill they are trying to master with the support of the teacher, those are the kind of teachers I'm looking for.

Gina: Do you interview all prospective teachers?

Tom: I think this year I will try to do as much of that as I can. When I was overseas in Bulgaria I was involved in interviewing all the teachers because that's the way the recruiting process was set up. When I was in Pittsburgh there were several layers of interviews and I was involved at the latter stages, when they had the candidates down to two or three per position, but I do like to definitely interview everybody that's coming in.

Gina: I'm anxious for you to be in Baltimore, where hopefully you'll meet some of the faculty that taught us, who are members of our Facebook page, and to this day still remember us and still teach us to this day. I hope you get to meet some of them, because they were and are really special.

(Tom enthusiastically saying "Yes!" in the background.)

Gina: What is your general philosophy on education - big picture?

Tom: (Pauses, thinks.) I'm very much a liberal arts person, I believe that all kids should be generalists for as long as they can and learn something about everything. So from the academic program side of things I want kids to not identify themselves as math or science, but to be universally interested in different academic areas. And again, that's where I think the teacher magic comes in because I've

heard so many times when a student didn't like a particular subject all of a sudden had a wonderful teacher, then that became their favorite subject. To me that's incredibly important. I'm a firm believer in promoting - I don't know if this is the right word, but - soft skills. In the trajectory from nursery school through grade twelve, having students become self-confident learners and independent thinkers, rather than being adept at a particular subject area, being able to communicate effectively, both the spoken word and in writing, are the things that are centrally important to me. Also, when I think about the broad-based knowledge that I want all students - all people - to have is just to be curious and to want to learn about the world in which they live, trying to create this innate curiosity in students so that they do want to learn more about as much as they can before they begin to focus in on something that might be pre-professional or career-oriented path. I was a literature major undergraduate and took a lot of history too, and I remember when I was in graduate school studying history, I remember how focused I was becoming as I headed towards my dissertation and I really hated it. 95% of my energy was focused toward a very narrow academic area. That's when I made the decision I didn't want to be a professor, because I thought my life would be too narrow in some ways. I just want students to feel competent in who they are as learners and people and what they can accomplish. I know that's maybe cliché but I do think some schools do a really incredible job of that, of empowering kids to feel that they can do anything; they won't necessarily be awesome at everything but that they certainly can do a lot of great things.

Gina: Sort of off the record, but it doesn't have to be, have you read the book *Range* by David Epstein? It's about this very thing. When I read it, it opened my eyes to this idea of specialization that we are really forcing on kids pretty young at this point.

Tom: No, I haven't. When you think about the reality of young people coming through university and going to work, they will probably change jobs and even careers multiple times, so having the ability to pivot is something that I think education can help kids with too. If we can get them accustomed to not having to identify going down a particular path. If the path is always changing and they can embrace that, they certainly will be happier. The worst feeling anyone can have about anything is that they're stuck or trapped, and changing that mentality - that there's always an option to do something else.

Gina: What do you think is the ACS differentiator, what's their reason for being, and what's going to attract more students and more money?

An Interview with Tom Cangiano Continued

Tom: I hear this already, and I haven't been there very long, but I do think - often times- we're compared to IC and the program IC offers, the pedagogy IC employs, and there's a rigidity, I think, in the IC program - what I hear from parents, particularly parents whose kids have been to ACS and gone on to university. They talk about how their children are so self-confident and independent in their thinking. They have a can-do, anything-is-possible mentality. Those are things that are very different at ACS from any other program that's being offered in Lebanon right now, and I think that's our mainstay: we have created a school in which kids can see lots of different possibilities and they're very creative in their thinking on how to approach life, how to approach a career, how to approach a lot of things. And they're self-confident. Being able to do a pitch - for example the students had a pitch to get money to support the TedEx program that they're doing at the school and the gentlemen at the foundation where they were doing it were blown away. These were seniors and juniors, who were not only professional in how they did this but articulate, convincing, and they walked away with about \$6,000 coming out of that meeting. It was pretty amazing. So, that part is huge, and I want to do more, I want to introduce seminar-style teaching, I want to get into high level discussion configurations, especially in senior and junior classes. Finding ways to be more trans-disciplinary in terms of courses that we're offering and projects that kids might be working on, that's also important. Culturally and demographically our school is very different from any other school in Lebanon, not only do we have a very large contingent of international students from all over the world, we have 18 embassies represented at our school right now, but we're 50% Lebanese, half of whom are dual passport and half single passport Lebanese. Obviously, we have representation from all the different religious sects in Lebanon, which is also very different. There are kids who are growing up in a so many different faiths and traditions in Lebanon, and they have all chosen ACS for the values we promote. To me it was mind-blowing that their parents were seeking out an American-style education - inculcating the best of American values for their children, who are going to school side by side, hand in hand, with kids who are from other religions in Lebanon, or other countries, and I think that is hugely important for the future of the country too.

Gina: What you just described is really an uphill climb for the Lebanese people, you're not only changing the school but it's bigger than that. IC has sort of complied, but you're really fighting a bigger cultural and educational battle in the country, particularly for girls.

Tom: Absolutely, but I think being bold about asserting this - this is who we are; this is what we do; choose us if you want this for your

children; don't battle us if you hear that your son or daughter is a little more independent minded. I think it's working well for us at the moment, culturally.

Gina: What can you tell us - or do you want us to know - about your family; on the personal side of things, what do you would like people to know about you?

Tom: I'll start with my wife Linda. She was in finance early in her career and the breadwinner until I moved into administration.. It wasn't her favorite thing to do from an appointment perspective: she much more wanted to be a State Department kind of a person, or have something to do with the arts, which she since has done. Her willingness to support me when I was getting jobs, first in Bulgaria, but also in other places, has been pretty remarkable. I will say this, this is the job she was most excited about me getting, in my entire career. She really wanted to come here, she's fascinated by the country, she's already studying Arabic, really trying to figure out a way that she can be engaged, not just with the school on some level, but also with the community and thinking about what she can do there. She has been a remarkable support to me and to our family.

Our kids support our decision to come here because they know that - we all went to Bulgaria when they were little and they know how impactful that was for them - for all of them it really broadened their perspective. When we moved to Pittsburgh from Sofia they had a hard time because they found Pittsburgh to be so provincial and inward-looking and they were not like that. It was a bit of a cultural adjustment for them to go home, that home in the States. I think that experience has really helped to shape them as people. They would view for example marrying a person from another country or living in another country quite naturally, whereas a lot of Americans don't really see things that way. Our son is a senior at the University of Denver: Our daughter is a junior at Brown University, and our youngest daughter is applying to NYU to go into a contemporary voice program - she's a singer.

Gina: When I was in 8th grade, my dad decided to go to Pittsburgh for two years to write a book. So we moved from Beirut to Pittsburgh. (Tom in the background, "Oh my gosh!") I felt like I was about two years ahead of my class, and I think the Pittsburgh suburb we were in was very provincial, such a small-minded place. It's so interesting to hear that your children had the same experience, so many years later.

Tom: It was the worst culture shock. They came home, and they felt so out of place.

An Interview with Tom Cangiano Continued

Gina: Is there anything I haven't asked you that you want us to know about?

Tom: No, I don't think so. I'm really hoping I can get back in the classroom next year. That's one of my goals, to be able to figure out how to do that. It's not easy, but it's so important to not lose that contact, not to lose what it means to be a teacher. That's why we all got into this profession, and when we move up in the ranks of administration, we sometimes get removed from that, and to me it's so important. I taught a class when I was in Chicago because we didn't have all the classes covered, and it was right when Covid hit. Then we had to make the transition to online learning - to me as an administrator it was incredibly helpful. I knew first-hand what the teachers and students were dealing with and it was extremely beneficial. I think that keeping that contact with the teaching part of the job is important.

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