



LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

2015 EDITION

# panorama

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

**Full Circle:**  
John Harlin III makes  
his return to Leysin  
after a 50 year  
journey.



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“Developing innovative, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world.”



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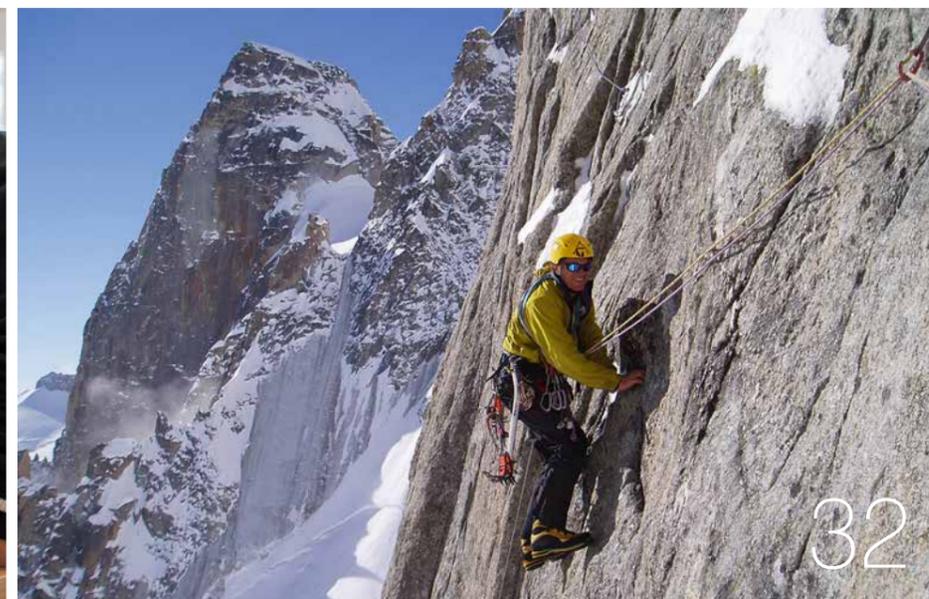
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2015 Edition  
On the Cover: The Eiger at night.

# Letter

FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Alumni, Parents & Friends,

As we have come to the end of one semester and embarked on another, it is an excellent opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved at LAS and where we are heading.

LAS continues to develop very positively. In Admissions, we have reached the next stage of maturation, which means not only limiting enrollment by some nationalities (for balance), but also becoming increasingly more selective. As a result, we have seen significant growth enrollment in the IB Diploma Programme. This year, the percentage of 11th graders enrolled in IB Year 1 went from 48% to 74%. At the same time, we continue to welcome wonderful ESL and mainstream students across all grades that will complete an excellent U.S. High School Diploma; many augmented with multiple IB certificates.

Another positive development is the strengthening of a "culture of giving" among our parents, alumni and at the school. Each year, more alumni and parents are making generous donations to the school's LAS Foundations; supporting all we do around the mission statement. On campus, our students and faculty participate throughout the year in fundraising projects and volunteer efforts that have local and global impacts.

Looking to the future, our priority Capital Improvement project is the full renovation of our gymnasium. The "Goat House" was built in 1972 and has served its purpose honorably. Today's students deserve a modern facility.

This project could not be possible without the generous support of our alumni and parents. As of early January, we have received approximately 500,000 CHF in pledges and gifts. To realize the full scope of the envisioned renovation, we still need more support. You will find more information in the article written by our Director of Development.

In academics, the significant new program, which is planned, is the introduction of a 7th grade. This will allow for the creation of a "Middle School" for grades 7 and 8 and will provide the following benefits to LAS:

- It will give the school the ability to create a largely self-sustained program around the unique needs of the youngest students on campus.
- It will focus and strengthen our academic programs around a two grade-year alignment: 7th & 8th as the Middle School Program at the Savoy Campus, 9th & 10th as the High School Program at the Savoy Campus, and 11th & 12th as the Diploma Years Program at the Belle Époque Campus. This model better fits our 2-campus layout, dormitory configuration and better serves the academics needs of our students.



- It will increase retention as more students will stay on and move up grades through well defined programs.
- It will better prepare our ESL students, which we anticipate will be mostly in the Middle School, for the Diploma Years Program.

We are very excited about creating our own Middle School Program. We will be able to incorporate the most recent research-based concepts and ideas. The Middle School Planning Committee has already decided to incorporate a dimension of experientially learning, which will offer much more than a traditional curriculum for 7th and 8th grade.

For example, some afternoons students will go on excursions centered on what they are learning in class. They may go into the forest to take soil samples for science class or they may visit museums and attend concerts for art and music classes. The purpose is to create an experientially learning program that awakens passion for learning in a well-structured residential environment. We expect to launch the Middle School Program at the start of Academic Year 2016/2017.

Finally, we are starting to work on our 10-Year Accreditation Self-Study. The results of which are due Spring of 2016. Accreditation, which LAS first earned in 1987, is an excellent opportunity to receive outside peer review and recommendations in all areas of the schools operations, especially academics. As with past accreditation renewals, I am sure this will help LAS to continue to develop as a school.

There is a very positive feeling at LAS. I am convinced LAS - your school - is heading in the right direction. Our alumni, parents and friends continue to show their belief in our mission and efforts by sharing ideas, referring new students and supporting our fundraising efforts.

Thank you for your trust and support of LAS. I hope to welcome you back to your school in the future and I wish you all best for 2015!

Cordially,

Dr. Marc-Frédéric Ott  
Head of School, Managing Director

# Who will decide my future?



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# Innovative, Compassionate, Responsible

Mr. William Johnson  
Dean of Belle Époque Campus



These are the three qualities upon which LAS is built: we encourage our students to push boundaries and think differently, to share a common international sense of humanity, and to take care of themselves, their communities, and their world; we as faculty experiment and take risks in our teaching, care for students both intellectually and on a basic domestic level, and model accountability for ourselves and for others in our daily lives. It is the distribution of these three qualities in both adults and students that makes LAS unique.

The last several years at LAS have seen a great deal of thinking about how the institution itself can model these qualities in the structure it provides for students and faculty, and these thoughts have manifested into what is now a famous six-letter word here on campus: merger.

Six years ago, LAS purchased the Grand Hôtel and incorporated it into the school's academic and residential programs. Christened the "Belle Époque Campus" (BEC), counterpart to the Savoy Campus, it is the largest single building at LAS, housing two full dormitories and over twenty-five classrooms, and is about a 15 minute walk from

the Savoy building. Growth of and strengthening of our IB Diploma Programme coincided with this acquisition, leading the decision to make the building a showcase for IB academics. Until this year, the only students living and studying at BEC were IB Diploma students, creating a rich, shared atmosphere between a narrow range of young people with very specific common interests.

The other side of this coin has been a split in our 11th and 12th grades. Some of these students opt to pursue the IB Diploma, moving to the BEC, while others elect to pursue the US High School Diploma, staying on the Savoy Campus. As result, for six years, our 11th and 12th grade have roughly split in two halves, each half studying in a distinct physical space.

Has this been a problem? Yes and no. Smaller numbers of students at the BEC have allowed us to adapt more slowly to the building, and it has certainly helped us to grow our IB Diploma Programme in a small subset of 100% participation. But, it has not gone unnoticed by students: when I first visited Leysin three years ago to interview for my current position, the buzzword was "campus culture."

Separate campuses for 11th and 12th graders made a sense of community more difficult to achieve. In an interview with Student Council, I was asked a killer question by the Student Body President: "how will you improve upperclassman campus culture?" Of course, I had no answer then, no magic rabbit to pull out of the hat for that concerned group of student representatives. But, I am happy to report that we now have the answer to that question, and it's that six-letter word I previously mentioned: merger.

"Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, all 11th and 12th graders - regardless of academic program or diploma track - will study at the BEC."

Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, all 11th and 12th graders - regardless of academic program or diploma track - will study at the BEC. We anticipate having 180-190 students (of 340 total) studying in the Grand Hôtel, completing the final two years of their LAS experience together.

This merger represents a massive change in both paradigm and logistics for the school, but LAS is committed to the change because it sees our mission statement living within the motivations for it. First, we aim to create space for students to innovate. One problem we had with two distinct diploma tracks was in economies of scale. While we have diverse course options, these are not all available to all students in the 11th and 12th grades. By having two physically separate tracks, our students were less able to mix and match the best qualities of each. Part of innovation for our students is being able to take calculated risk in the form of academic course selection, to push themselves within their individual levels of ability, and to set goals that are right for each student. As part of the merger, we foresee students living with the ability to innovate their own curriculum as they see fit.

Second, we aim to build responsibility in our group of students as a whole. Like in any school, our older students set the tone for our younger students. However, with our older students living and studying in diverse locations, it has been challenging to promote a singular vision of model comportment, and to provide vision for the outstanding leadership skills that our 12th graders show us every year. As of next school year, we look to build a stronger sense of this identity as all upperclassmen move up to the BEC together. We hope that in sharing this experience, our students can demonstrate even more responsibility at their home away from home.

Third, we know that this merger will bring out even

greater compassion in our students. The most wonderful part of LAS, in my humble perspective, is the way that the school institutionally trims its students to their essence, and compels them to leave behind their national views, personal fears, symbols of status or great wealth, and all other culturally contrived distinguishing marks. By breaking down these barriers, our students stand a much better chance of making the connections that affect a lifetime of action, and which our alumni certainly remember as the real essence of LAS education: Arab and Israeli roommates, Chinese and Taiwanese classmates, Christian playing sports with Hindu, and on and on. This merger will break down the last of these barriers between our students, that of diploma track and intensity of course of study, funneling all of our students through a shared experience from start to finish, and allowing them to even further experience compassion for humanity through one another.

LAS prides itself on change, innovation, if you will. This merger is certainly a dramatic shift for the fabric of our school, but we all believe that it will improve an already strong structure dedicated to teaching innovation, compassion, and responsibility to our true citizens of the world.





# Living as a Citizen of the World

BONJOUR. بيجرت لل فاتة. ПРИВЕТ. 你好. HELLO.

Mr. Phil VanDenBrink  
Dean of Savoy Campus

“Developing innovative, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world.”

All schools have mission statements, few mention them on a frequent basis, LAS utilizes its mission in all aspects of school life.

The first time I visited LAS, the mission statement was described and explained to me by Dr. Marc-Frederic Ott. In all my eleven years working in education, I had never heard a mission statement being mentioned in such a venue. Personally, I was pleased. The LAS mission statement fits well with my background and my thoughts about how an individual should fit into the global community. For my first Panorama piece, let me introduce myself and speak about an appealing phrase from the mission statement that applies to me, “citizen of the world”

I was born and raised on a working dairy farm in rural Michigan. As the third of eight children, I learned about innovation, compassion and responsibility at young age. In my late teens and twenties, I also became a citizen of the world. So, how did a farm boy from rural Michigan become a citizen of the world? Thanks to a high school teacher and a generous scholarship.

In grade 12, one of my teachers encouraged me to apply for the Congress-Bundestag Scholarship. The Scholarship, jointly funded by the US Congress and the German Bundestag, provided a study abroad year in Germany. During that year, the “travel bug” bit me and led me to study German, International Business and French at University. Once my undergraduate studies were complete, I took a job teaching English in Paris while simultaneously earning my English Teaching Certificate. This time in Paris allowed me to learn more about other cultures and customs. Living the struggles and hopes of a foreigner in a foreign land opened my eyes.

After Paris and before LAS, I worked for an international boarding school for nine years in two countries: first in the United States and then in China. Living in other countries caused me to reflect upon my own culture and develop the idea of using lifelong learning to become a global citizen. In China, like in Paris, I continued my education. I took Chinese lessons, violin lessons and learned I to swim. These had always been goals, but living abroad gave me the courage try new things while immersing myself in the local culture. I even ran a half marathon on the Great Wall.

Life abroad left me thinking about my values and beliefs in a positive manner while enriching my compassion for others. I realized I had become a third culture adult, a citizen



of the world. As a result, when applying for various positions last year, I sought a place with this focus, which led me to LAS.

LAS is a third culture school. This means, our students and faculty are so varied in their ideas, beliefs, and backgrounds that it is impossible to place anyone into one specific cultural category. American is in our name, but we are less of a “melting pot”, as the ideal of mixing cultures prevalent in America might suggest, and more of a Chinese “hot pot”, with different ingredients in the same pot changing the flavor, while still retaining their distinctions. Here at LAS, mother tongues are appreciated. Students learn each others’ languages, while retaining their own. The school further encourages this through its mother tongue program and by offering advanced language study courses, which often are at a level not offered until a master’s degree program at University. One such course is “Linguistics and Languages” taught by Dr. Paul Magnuson. This new course is student motivated, meaning students are given the tools needed to acquire language and guided by the instructor but not subjected to the traditional boundaries of a textbook or a lesson plan.

LAS assemblies are started much like this article, the greeting in one of the languages represented by Switzerland or the student body. As a person who has studied both linguistics and educational leadership and who has lived in various countries, LAS is a dream come true. I am proud to be a member of the LAS family and continue my development to be an innovative, compassionate and responsible citizen of the world.

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# Boarding School Teacher: The Ironman of Educational Jobs

A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION TO THE LAS DEAN OF STUDENTS

Mr. Paul Fomalont  
Dean of Students & Ironman

"I can't believe you do that!" This is the exclamation that I get either when I tell people I do Ironman triathlons or that I am the Dean of Students at a boarding school. Both are notoriously difficult but provide great satisfaction and personal reward.

An Ironman triathlon is three long distance events combined as one race. It was created in 1978 in Hawaii when athletes were debating what was the toughest endurance race on the island. To settle their argument they decided to do all three in a day and proclaim anyone who finished an "Ironman". They first swam 3.8 km, then biked 180 km and finished with a 42.2 km run, a marathon. From this humble beginning, the Ironman phenomenon grew and today there are more than two dozen Ironman races per year worldwide.

Part of the allure of triathlons are that you get three sports for the price of one. There is a fourth discipline that is equally critical - the transition. You finish the swim and need to get out of your wetsuit, find your bike, don your helmet and race number, and then run with the bike until you are allowed to mount. Part of the technique is to have your shoes already attached to the pedals and after you get on you pedal on top of your shoes and then put your feet in them. After you finish the bike you remove your feet and coast to the changing area. You jump off the bike and run it back to its place. Then you stuff your feet in your running shoes and you are off again. A quick transition is a must if you are looking to place well.

The most sought after boarding school faculty is the "triple threat". This is a person who is a skilled teacher, a competent coach/supervisor, and experienced at duty in the residential program. In the fast pace life of boarding school, the triple threat also must be good at transition. You teach classes and then have to change in a few minutes to coach followed by a quick shower and then redress for dorm duty at night. It is a must that you have good system in place and be organized to be successful.

I first started working at boarding schools in 1997 after working as a rock climbing guide following my college graduation in 1993. I enjoyed climbing but I knew that it was not sustainable and that I needed to find a "real" job. From working as a guide, I discovered that I loved teaching people. This prompted me to look for teaching jobs. One night over dinner, a friend from university told me that there was an



opening at the boarding school he was working at and that I should apply. I did. I was offered the job and I began my boarding school journey.

I knew almost nothing of boarding schools. I had some Victorian era *Oliver Twist* images of children sitting on long wooden benches learning their lessons and then locked away at night in sparse bedrooms with little comforts. I had visions of the teachers as draconian overlords who ruled over the students with brutal authority.

That first school I worked at shattered these perceptions. At the Blue Ridge School in St. George, Virginia, USA, a christian boys school, I quickly learned that boarding school promotes community rather than division. This was a great contrast to the giant public high school that I had attended. I barely knew my teachers and felt more like a product in a factory. At Blue Ridge, the fact that you were teaching, exercising and living with the boys for an entire school year created an incredible connection. You were really

part of their lives and made a difference beyond teaching them a single academic subject.

I really enjoyed working at a boarding school. As I mentioned, boarding school life is intense. Twelve to fifteen hour days were the norm. All those hours are spent surrounded by students. For many people this is too much. At the different boarding schools I have worked, I have seen lots teachers come and quickly go because they didn't want to be this involved in their work. For me it was great. I enjoyed the life of a "triple threat".

In 2009, after working at the Putney School in Vermont, USA, for six years, I knew that I was a boarding school person. I started looking for another job that fit my personal interests. I had met a teacher from LAS and he told me to consider the school when I started applying. Not long after, I accepted a job at LAS, moved overseas, and I went right back into the boarding school rhythm - teaching IB math, doing duty in the Belle Époque dorms, coaching the boy's soccer team, and working with the honor council.

I have always enjoyed sport in my life. I started playing soccer when I was seven years old and I continued to play it through high school and college. My favorite part of the season was the weekend tournaments where I would get to play in many games in just a few days. After, I stopped playing soccer and started rock climbing, I was always inspired by the "big day". One of my most memorable adventures was waking up at 2:00 in the morning, hiking 12 km to the base of Half Dome in Yosemite National Park, climbing 800 meters up the face to the summit, descending the back of the mountain, and hiking back to camp. I arrived at midnight completing a 22 hour day of adventure.

When I arrived in Switzerland, I did a few running and bike races and I really enjoyed them, however, I was looking

for more. My second year, I decided I needed a new sport, I noticed that there were a lot of triathlons on the Swiss sporting website. Soon after, I signed up for my first one. It was an Olympic distance competition with a 1.5km swim, 40km bike and 10km run. I loved it.

As soon as you start competing in triathlons you learn about the Ironman. Most people think it is "crazy", but to me it sounded "so cool". I wanted to do one and I set this as my goal. Two years ago, I completed in my first one in Zurich. It took me 13 hours and 27 minutes to complete. As I lay in the finish area exhausted, too weak to move, my entire body aching, I knew that I had found my new "big day" sport. This past year I did three more Ironmans - Los Cabos, Mexico, Klagenfurt, Austria, and Zurich again. My best finishing time is now 11 hours and 27 minutes.

Three years ago there was an opening to move into the administration. It was a step I wanted to take. I had spent my working career in boarding schools and I knew that was my calling, but now I wanted to be involved on a more macro level. The analogy I make is being a musician compared to a conductor. The musician

plays a instrument but the conductor plays the orchestra. I applied for the position, got it and started my career in school administration.

This is now my third year as Dean of Students, often considered one of the toughest positions at a boarding school because you have to deal with the discipline of student. However, I look forward to the challenge that each day brings just like I am drawn to the challenge of each Ironman competition. The connection to the students, the constant activity and the consistent transition between roles suits me. I love boarding school life and think that I will probably work in them for the rest of my life.

"I look forward to the challenge that each day brings just like I am drawn to the challenge of each Ironman competition."



# Q & A

with Shane Lory '11  
Executive Director, Co-Founder &  
Volunteer of Colorado Springs Food Rescue



>>> **PANORAMA:** What was the best part of your LAS Experience?

>>> **SHANE:** What I enjoyed most about LAS was the opportunity to explore the beautiful mountain terrain that was just a minutes walk from my dorm. Miles of forest trails wound up through the hilltops right behind campus. Leysin is a gorgeous town set in an environment that really caters to those with an affinity for the natural world.

>>> **PANORAMA:** Ski or Snowboard?

>>> **SHANE:** During my time at LAS I was an avid snowboarder. The proximity of the lifts and the lessons offered by the school really took my abilities to the next level. There were times I was able to get out on the slopes 4 days a week!

>>> **PANORAMA:** While you were at LAS you were very engaged as a songwriter and in the Rock School activity. To what extent are you creating music now?

>>> **SHANE:** After graduating from LAS, I actually decided to test my ability to use music as a survival tool. I began in Victoria, Canada and spent a year traveling and relying on street performing for my living. While the experience contrasted sharply with the luxury of LAS, it was fraught with an unparalleled sense of adventure and provided me fresh insight on what it means to live on dollars a day. Now, I still enjoy music as a muse. I have less time to write music due to other life obligations, but it still remains an important exercise in self-expression.

>>> **PANORAMA:** After LAS - why did you decide to go to Colorado College?

>>> **SHANE:** A representative from CC came out to LAS to meet with students during my senior year. He told me about the unique education one could receive at Colorado College on what they call "the block plan". Instead of taking multiple classes a semester, a student takes one class at a time, usually lasting for three and a half weeks. Followed by a four day weekend at the end of the course, the next block begins. This schedule allows for intense but very focused learning, allowing students to fully immerse themselves in a class while they are taking it. This, and the school's proximity to the mountains were the major draws for me.

>>> **PANORAMA:** At Colorado College, you founded the Colorado Springs Food Rescue. What inspired you to do this?

>>> **SHANE:** I spent a summer in Boulder, Colorado volunteering for a similar organization called Boulder Food Rescue. It was founded by a group of passionate young people that saw an injustice and decided to act. After getting to know the founders, I actually ended up living on a couch in their house, surrounded by the most inspired and driven individuals I have ever had the pleasure of befriending. After getting a little more insight into the behind the scenes work of the non-profit world, I decided to try my hand at starting a Food Rescue organization myself in a city that direly needed it, Colorado Springs. With the help of some friends and colleagues, and the enduring support of a community, in just a year and a half it has blossomed into an institution that plans to stick around for the long haul.

>>> **PANORAMA:** It is inspiring to you see a young person so engaged in a cause. What could someone do to become involved, locally and globally?

>>> **SHANE:** Honestly, it begins with deciding to live intentionally. Too many of us get stuck in the rut of tirelessly pursuing our individual futures that we are blinded to the injustices that are happening in the present. In order to make changes in the world, it requires a commitment to living life for something other than yourself. To start, find a cause that you believe in and get involved in the smallest of ways. Volunteer once a week, and not because it will look good on your resumé, but because your involvement will directly impact the state of the world. Pay attention to the news, be of value to your community, and don't for one second think you are not capable of creating positive change. We didn't need experience or professional certification to start a successful non-profit organization. All we needed was the passion, drive, and perseverance to turn a good idea into a reality.  
<http://www.coloradospringsfoodrescue.org>

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# The HeART of the Curriculum

Dr. L. Ira Bigelow '12P, '13P,  
Department Chair - Arts Education



It's been said many times before – the arts are an essential part of the curriculum and belong in schools.

The reasoning is persuasive and compelling. Gains in math, reading, critical thinking, and verbal skills are well documented and research consistently shows that student participation in the arts increases motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork.

An education in the arts is essential on many levels, but what it really does is feed the soul. Students exposed to drama, dance, visual art, and music see through enhanced aesthetic lenses and experience a greater appreciation of life. The essential and vital part of an arts education, then, is that it finds its way to the heART of the curriculum.

So what makes the arts at LAS so rewarding and special? Is it the impressive Alpine environment and the crisp mountain air that inspires our aesthetic cravings? Is it the supportive administration, talented students, and caring parents who preserve arts education at our school? Is it because LAS stakeholders intuitively yearn for beauty and artistic fulfillment in their daily lives?

The answer to ALL of these questions is a resounding YES!

In addition to these compelling reasons why the arts thrive in our mountain center of learning is the dedicated arts staff that teach our students. Please take a moment to meet the LAS teachers who make the heART of the curriculum come to life this academic year.

**RIGHT:** ERIC C. '18, ZACHARY A. '16 AND ANDRIY L. '15 PLAY A TRIO OF BROTHERS IN THE FALL LAS PLAY *THE DINING ROOM* BY AR GURNEY.

**BELOW:** INK CARTOON PORTRAIT BY MAYA M. '15

**OPPOSITE:** JANE BURT AND ANTONIO C. WORK ON A 3D CLAY PROJECT TOGETHER



## R. ALLEN BABCOCK

Mr. R. Allen Babcock comes to Leysin from the Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, CT, where he taught second year foundational acting, directing and design in the interdisciplinary humanities program. For Hotchkiss he directed *Ragtime*, the musical, *Dog Sees God*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Into the Woods*, *Top Girls*, *The Laramie Project*, and *Runaways*, the musical and many other shows. As Resident Designer and

Technical Director for Hotchkiss he designed one or more aspects of every show over seven years. When not grading design projects or teaching classes, he managed to find time to design in, and around, New York City and helped to manage the Chain Theatre (which he also designed and built see: [chain-theatre.org](http://chain-theatre.org)) for Variations Theatre Group. His professional design credits include: NYC: *Reasons to be Pretty*, *What's in a Name*, *Venus & Mona*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Prisoner of Love*, *Fool for Love*, *The Shape of Things* (Variations Theatre Group) *Antigone*, *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus* & *Romeo and Juliet* (The Queen's Players) *We All Fall Down* (Pop Mega Hot Theatre Factory) *Tartuffe*, *Damnée* *Manon*, *Sacrée Sandra*, *Largo Desolato* (Beyond the Wall Productions) Regional: *Hedwig & the Angry Inch* (Syracuse Stage & North Star Productions, Rochester, NY) *M. Butterfly* [assistant to Dawn Chiang], (Syracuse Stage & Charlotte Repertory Theatre). R. Allen earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre from Syracuse University. In his spare time, Allen loves to travel, water and snow ski, see "amazing" theatre, sing and sail.



## MARYANNE BERTAZZO '14P

Born in a small town on the southern tip Africa, Ms. Maryanne Bertazzo arrived in Leysin almost 20 years ago via the US. She read for her Bachelor's and Honour's Degrees at Rhodes University with majors in Fine Art, English and Classics, and a minor in Mathematics. She then left South Africa for the United States where she pursued a master's and one year towards her doctoral degree at Ohio University, in Athens Ohio. She has taught Mathematics, Art, and English Literature in South Africa, the USA and Switzerland. She now lives in the Beau Site dorm with her husband Danilo and twin daughters, Antonella and Francesca. Still teaching mathematics, she manages to satisfy her artistic yearning through teaching the yearbook class.



**DR. L. IRA BIGELOW '12P, '13P**

Dr. Bigelow lives in the Savoy dormitory with his wife Phoebe and son Brendan '15 and is the Arts Department Chair at LAS. His daughters, Baily '12 and Brenna '13, are now university students in the United States. Dr. Bigelow holds music degrees from Metropolitan State College of Denver and University of Colorado; he also holds a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from University of Colorado at Denver. For the past 30 years, Dr. Bigelow has taught and managed educational programs for numerous learning institutions including Denver Public Schools, Wellshire Presbyterian Church, Denver Junior Police Choir, Red Rocks Community College of Denver, and University of Colorado.

**JANE BURT**

Ms. Jane Burt lives in Leysin with her husband, Nic. They arrived in Leysin five years ago and started teaching paddleboard and rowing with LAS after retiring from her profession as a podiatrist. Ms. Burt had previously attended a fine arts degree course at Plymouth College of Art and Design and continued her love of art as a trained artist in Switzerland. She exhibits her art nationally and internationally and has taught life drawing classes in both the U.K. and Switzerland. Her art is published with an international graphics company and can be purchased globally. Ms. Burt has an 'atelier' in the village and currently has a solo exhibition running in Lausanne.

**ABOVE:** EKATERINA N. '16 CHARCOAL DRAWING  
**RIGHT:** DONG YU W. '16 SEPIA TONE IMAGE  
**OPPOSITE:** DARIA M. '19 BEGINS WORK ON HER 3D CLAY PROJECT

**KELLY DEKLINSKI**

Ms. Kelly Deklinski is a graduate of the Cook Honors College at Indiana University of PA where she received a B.S. in Music Education. In 2008, she graduated from Florida State University where she studied music performance on full scholarship. Previous to her arrival at LAS in 2013, she served as the Associate Director of the Choctawhatchee Style Marchers, a highly recognized and awarded scholastic band program in the Southeastern US. In the summer of 2014, Ms. Deklinski served as a guest musician on a concert band tour in Spain and recently judged the youth competition at the International Trumpet Guild (ITG) conference. In her spare time, Ms. Deklinski enjoys running, painting, reading, and cooking.

**NEAL HANOWITZ '12P**

Mr. Neal Hanowitz has taught various two and three-dimensional visual arts media in a multitude of media ranging from video, performance, animation and studio art through grades 8 and above for the past 25 years. His professional educational background and certifications (B.S Visual Arts Education and M.A Visual and Integrated Arts) were obtained through the University of New Hampshire, while his studio practice was honed at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and Pratt Institute. Prior to teaching, Neal collaborated with Lee Bruer and Philip Glass while performing with the Mabou Mines Theater Company in the production of *The Saint* and the *Football Player*, and was a studio assistant to Frank Stella among other artists working in New York City at that time. Neal's work has been exhibited in both the U.S.A and Switzerland, while also a commissioned portrait artist prior to coming to LAS. Most recently, while teaching art during the SIS program, he helped coordinate the first Artist in Residency Program, inviting artists from the Paris College of Art to share their work. Neal is married and has 5 children all living, working, and studying in the US and Canada. His youngest daughter, Maya '12, is in her second year at McGill University. This is Neal's 7th year at LAS and he has spent 5 summers working at SIS.

**KEEGAN LUTTRELL**



Ms. Keegan Luttrell is an artist and educator originally from Knoxville, Tennessee. She comes from a pretty artistic background, her father being a professional photographer and her mother being former LAS art teacher and artist, Marge Luttrell. Keegan moved to Switzerland via Oakland, California and has lived in various locales such as Aix en Provence, France, Melbourne, Australia, and Santorini, Greece. She received her Masters in Fine Arts from Mills College in 2013 after completing her Bachelor's in Fine Arts in Art History and Photography at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland. Keegan has taught as a graduate teaching assistant at Mills College, a community art teacher in Baltimore inner-city elementary schools, and as a workshop teacher at the Knoxville Museum of Art, California Academy of Sciences and the Corcoran Museum of Art. She was a workshop teacher for the past three years at Apple. Inc, teaching one-on-one classes and group workshops that explored creativity through technology. This past summer, Keegan taught a documentary film course at SIS. She has shown her artwork nationally and internationally and in 2012 received the Murphy Cadogan Fellowship Award for her work.

**BRIAN RUSHER**

Mr. Brian Rusher has been teaching Art and Design internationally for 14 years. His experience includes working in international, private and state schools at IB Diploma, A-Level, O-Level, Middle Years and Primary levels. Brian is also an accomplished artist who has exhibited his work privately as well as at galleries in England, France, Canada and India. Brian originally trained at Art School followed by a career in Graphics, Advertising and Marketing Communications, where he won national Design awards in the UK. His artwork comprises mixed media creations inspired by personal experiences, his environment and extensive travel, resulting in a close affinity with landscapes and ancient and tribal cultures, their customs, beliefs and art forms. In his youth Brian played football professionally, was selected for the England Youth squad and is a qualified football Coach. He is married and has a teenage daughter based in the UK.



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## Bernard Garo IB Workshop

For the past two years, the Belle Époque Art Center has hosted workshops run by renowned Swiss artist Bernard Garo.

IB students in Mr. Hanowitz's classes were introduced to Bernard's unique and unconventional methods of painting and printmaking. His work, large in both scale and scope matched perfectly with the International Baccalaureate curriculum, emphasizing that students research contextual relationships in their studio work. Bernard draws inspiration

from many sources, most notably architectural structures found at various distances from his home base in Nyon. His enthusiasm for the art making process left a lasting impression. Many students continued the newly learned techniques well into the year and they chose the resulting studio work for their final evaluations. Bernard has become an invaluable resource as well as regular part of team of artists visiting and living in Switzerland, ever eager to share their work with our students.





# Sports Roundup

Mr. Mike Brinkmeyer  
Athletics Director



At LAS being a student athlete means not only competing for your school, but also setting an example of character and dedication for others in our community.

Our coaches strive to instill in our athletes not only good skills in sport, but also make the effort to show our kids how the lessons on the field translate into valuable lessons for life. Working tirelessly on one's weaknesses, learning how to be gracious after a loss, learning how to improve after a victory. These are just some of the attributes that LAS coaches cultivate in our student athletes.

Helping our students to improve both in sport and in life is our number one priority, but when we come to the end of a season of play, we also want to look at the wins and losses of our teams. This year, there were ups and downs for each team, but overall we did very well in both the ADISR and SGIS leagues. Being a member school of these two organizations means we compete against other international schools from Geneva, Lausanne, Villars, and Montreux during the week and then travel to larger tournaments to face off against schools from all over Switzerland on the weekends. Although we do travel quite a bit, I like to think it brings our athletes closer together and helps to create a true team spirit.

On to the details of this fall season!

Some of the biggest successes of the year came from our Boys and Girls Basketball teams. The **Boys Basketball** team, led by Coach James McKenna, finished 4th in the SGIS and 3rd in the ADISR, which amounts to our best result in a number of years. It was great to see so many supporters out to cheer them all the way to the semifinals of the 12-team SGIS tournament, held here in Leysin. On the court, the Boys team was led by Stanley H. '15 (Taiwan), who consistently topped the statistics in scoring, with a one-game high of 34 points. Newcomers Vlad C. '16 (Ukraine), Rares S. '16 (Romania), and Kene N. '16 (Nigeria) also brought great athleticism and skill to the team.



Our **Girls Basketball** team started the year with some tough losses, but then rallied to come together as a team and finish 3rd in the ADISR.



At the SGIS tournament, the girls made it to the final game and narrowly missed repeating as Champions, but finished 2nd after a heartbreaking loss in overtime. Under the leadership of coach Liam Printer, the girls really grew into a team and learned how to work together to win. This year, the girls were led by Tia M '16 (USA) and Sunny K. '15 (South Korea), who both put

points on the board and brought spirit and a sense of family to the team.

The **Boys Football** team, led by coach Jason Murphy, had an up and down season but came away with victories against Bern, Le Rosey, and Champittet. They travelled to Lugano for the SGIS tournament where they played a grueling schedule of games over two days and came out in 6th place overall. In addition, Timur R. '15 (Russia) was voted on to the all-tournament team.

The **Girls Football** team was in rebuilding year, with many younger and less-experienced players. Coaches Rachel Galvin and Ben Hall helped the girls to develop their skills and really become a team. They also traveled to the SGIS tournament in Lugano where they finished in 7th place. On the field, the Lady Goats were led offensively by Madison R. '15 (USA) and Kate N. '16 (Russia).



Our **Girls Volleyball** team was very competitive this year. Led by two new coaches, Hannah Martin and Gadiel Rachelson, the girls showed continual improvement throughout the season. The pinnacle of the fall season was the girls' ninth-place finish of 13 teams at the very competitive SGIS tournament, hosted by LAS. The two-day tournament is a great event for our community as many teachers and students come out to help with the running of

tournament and to cheer on our girls. On the court this year, our girls team was led by Ana Clara M. '16 (Brazil), who was named the MVP for this year.

The **Boys Volleyball** team had only a few matches before competing in the SGIS and ADISR tournaments, both hosted here in Leysin. The team was small this year, with only 9 boys on the roster, but coach James McKenna took a quality over quantity approach and led the boys to a 4th place finish in the ADISR tournament. Yuma Y. '17 (Japan), who received the MVP award, and Zachary A. '16 (USA), who received Coaches award, led the team this year.



After a year as a club sports, the **Boys Rugby** team, led by coach Ben Hall, was rejuvenated. They traveled seven hours to compete in a tournament hosted by Lyceum Alpinum Zuoz where they learned a lot as a team and held their own against bigger, more experienced teams. The team continually progressed throughout the season and had a solid result at another invitational tournament hosted by the International School of Geneva. Coach Hall is enthused about re-introducing rugby here at LAS and the promising future of his players. This year, the team was led by MVP Denys P. '17 (Ukraine).

The **Boys and Girls Tennis** teams have the majority of their matches in the Spring, but they competed in the LAS Singles tournament in September. Jenna S. '16 (USA) won the Girls event, and Nat T. '17 (Thailand) finished third in the Boys event.

Finally, the **Boys and Girls Swim** teams, which compete mainly in the Winter, took three months of training into the SGIS meet in Neuchatel and finished 5th of 10 teams. The team was led by top point-scorers Max B. '16 (USA) and Mateusz H. '18 (Poland).

Sport is alive and well here atop the mountain in Leysin! As we look forward to the excitement of getting out in the snow during the upcoming ski season, we also celebrate our Fall sports teams' successes. We did so formally with our annual Sports Awards Banquet held on December 4th in the Goat House gym.

If you would like to keep up with what's happening in the world of LAS sports, please visit our new website: [athletics.las.ch](http://athletics.las.ch). On the site you can find photos of competitions, news about progress on our new gym, and opportunities for you to help support our students athletes.

# The Goat House

FOREVER A PART OF LAS HISTORY

Mr. Benjamin Smith  
Director of Development



## In the beginning, there was dirt.

Then there was blacktop and fencing. Today, with its days numbered, stands the weathered Goat House gymnasium. Now, looking twice its age in the shadow of the iconic Savoy with its recent facelift, the exterior does not reflect the past glory hidden within.

Built between 1971 and 1972, for the students of LAS and American College of Switzerland, the Goat House was for many years the newest and most modern building on campus. It hosted athletic competitions, banquets, exams, “lock-ins”, Rock School, theatrical performances, and weekly gatherings of our tight knit community. It was the home of International Day and a place where triumphs and tragedies were honored. Simply put, it has played one of the most important roles in the history of LAS.

In Spring 2014, when LAS undertook its latest long-term strategic planning a new gymnasium rose to the top of the list of capital projects. The LAS Board recognized that the Belle Époque was achieving its goal of allowing our students to pursue the highest levels of academic excellence and that a “physical self” counterpart was needed.

Meetings with architects, designers, and key stakeholders quickly followed. There was a swell of enthusiasm and support for a new facility. However, Switzerland being Switzerland, LAS was informed that the site of the existing gymnasium was the only option

for a “new” facility. Not to be dissuaded, renderings and plans were created using the existing footprint of the Goat House and incorporating all the modern and state of the art improvements from the “Blue Sky” plans – minus the swimming pool.

The next step was to make sure there was support for the facility among those key stakeholders. Personal meetings were held across the globe. The stakeholders agreed that the financial resources of the school shouldn’t be overburdened and that private support should be sought. Those same stakeholders made early commitments and the project became a reality.

This past fall and early winter, a construction road was built to aid in the dismantling of the Goat House, architectural plans were reviewed for the last time, and a construction calendar finalized. Highlights of the “new” Goat House Sports & Fitness Center include a rooftop athletic pitch, an interior running track, permanent bleachers, a climbing wall, and a café. The parquet floor will be replaced with a modern multi-purpose surface. The facility will also have the latest in sustainable green technology.

The Goat House’s last hoorah will be the Winter Dorm Olympics on February 4th. As fitting a final event as could be imagined. On this afternoon, the entire school will gather together in competition under the flags of the nations of all LAS students past and present.

**ABOVE:**  
EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE NEW SPORTS & FITNESS CENTER  
**OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT:**  
THE BASKETBALL COURT AND CLIMBING WALL  
**OPPOSITE MIDDLE RIGHT:**  
THE CAFE AND LOUNGE AREA  
**OPPOSITE BOTTOM RIGHT:**  
ROOFTOP MULTIPURPOSE SURFACE



# A Culture of Philanthropy Takes Hold

Mr. Benjamin Smith  
Director of Development



**ABOVE:** THE 'EVENING WITH THE STARS' FUNDRAISER SUPPORTED THE TED GROOM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP.

It was another great year for the development efforts of LAS;

A "culture of philanthropy" continues to take hold among our alumni, parents, and on campus community. This has allowed LAS to confidently move forward with several new projects and capital investments. Highlights include the creation of LASER, the introduction of the International Award and GLOBE, several dormitory upgrades, and the renovation of the Goat House gymnasium. It has also allowed us to provide financial aid & scholarship support to over 40 deserving students.

This year's focus has been two fold. First, for annual support, we are focusing on participation. Second, for capital support, we continue to focus on raising funds for our gymnasium renovation. Our participation campaign and Excellence through Action: Campaign for the Sports & Fitness Center have both been well received.

At the end of the Fall Semester, we had doubled our participation from the previous year and raised approximately \$1,000,000 in gifts, pledges, and Capital Improvement Fees for the gymnasium renovation. We will continue our effort in these areas throughout the remainder of this year (and the next few years).

Our students, faculty, and staff continue to live the "compassion" component of our mission on a daily basis. Throughout the year, they organize and support on campus and external charitable causes with their time and money. Last year, as in previous years, our community volunteered

thousands of hours of their free time and, again, raised over 60,000 CHF for different approved causes.

One of these causes is our own Ted Groom Memorial Scholarship. In the two short years since Ted passed, over \$50,000 has been generously donated to his Scholarship. Donations have come from alumni, colleagues, family, friends and students from all over the globe. Their support is true testament to Ted's legacy in education and LAS.

At last year's awards banquet, the inaugural Groom Scholarship was awarded to the newly elected student body president, George M. '15 (Ukraine). Every application received by the Groom Scholarship Committee presented a qualified candidate but George's best mirrored Ted's commitment to service, love of the outdoors, spirit of adventure, and enthusiastic pursuit of knowledge. George plans to study medicine after graduating LAS in June.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who has participated in our participation appeals, on campus fundraising, and the early supporters of the Excellence in Action campaign that made the project a reality. With regard to this campaign, there are still several naming opportunities available and gifts at all levels will be recognized in the new facility. If you would like to make a contribution to LAS – participatory, capital, or other, please contact Director of Development, Benjamin Smith by email at [development@las.ch](mailto:development@las.ch), participate in one of our appeals, or give online at [www.las.ch/alumni/give](http://www.las.ch/alumni/give).

# a legacy of firsts

INTRODUCING LASER: LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL  
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Dr. Christoph M. Ott  
Managing Director, Head of Operations

In his iconic book *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman suggests that in the current global and digital economy, “whatever can be done, will be done”. Furthermore, he warns all organizations to “ensure that you do it before it is done to you”. In this vein, the Leysin American School has always prided itself on being at the forefront of its craft and cultivating a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. Under the leadership of Dr. K. Steven and Mrs. Doris Ott, in 1987, LAS’s legacy of firsts, began in earnest, with being the first international boarding school in Switzerland to get an official accreditation, followed thereafter by the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in 1991. LAS has subscribed early on to the path of holding high academic standards and a rigorous course of studies with the aim of offering students a better learning experience.

LAS continued this tradition as the first school worldwide to receive the ISO 9001 certification (International Standards Organization) in 1998, followed by the OHSAS 18001 health and safety accreditation. The ISO certification complemented the academic accreditations by introducing the relentless pursuit of continuous improvement with annual internal and external audits throughout the school. More recently, the LAS academic team, under the stewardship of Dr. Marc-Frédéric Ott, Head

of School, successfully unified the rigorous ISO norms with the academic accreditation standards. These efforts were approved by our ISO certification agency and our lead auditor, Michel Rochat, Director of the prestigious *École Hôtelière* of Lausanne, which itself has begun using this approach.

One of the key factors shaping Thomas Friedman’s flat world is technology. Education is no exception to this disruptive force and many paradigms of 20th century education are being questioned. Five years ago, when the first tablets came to the market, many schools and universities embarked on extensive one-to-one technology programs. More recently, online courses and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are heralded as the new “game changers” that will revolutionize education.

LAS was among the first schools in Switzerland to launch a one-to-one laptop program. However, we welcomed the rapid adoption of tablets in education with some skepticism. To gain a better understanding of the potential impact of this new technology, we decided to research and assess its use in the classroom. Since 2012, under Dr. Paul J. Magnuson, Director of Curriculum & Research, we set out to systematically experiment and research various technologies in the classroom. Our studies have focused on tablets and applications from Apple and Samsung, interactive

“...the Leysin American School has always prided itself on being at the forefront of its craft...”

whiteboards, and our own classroom observation tool amongst others (for more information please visit [research.las.ch](http://research.las.ch)). Our hope was to identify, share and publish best technologies and practices that would allow faculty to be more student-centered in their teaching. In other words, to allow faculty to adjust to the individual learning styles of their pupils. Our research showed that student-centered learning has less to do with technology and more with the attitude of the teacher becoming a coach.

These findings confirmed our belief that education is and remains a deeply human endeavor as outlined in LAS’s core values: students first and teachers are the key. This is especially true in the secondary level and even more so in a boarding school context. Teachers touch the souls of our students, not a computer screen, and help them to develop into “innovative, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world”.

To systematically pursue these initial findings and remain on the path of continuous improvement, we created the Leysin American School Educational Research (LASER) center. Its aim is to “grow, test and share best practices

and tools to further student-centered learning”. Located in our Beau Réveil building, the Center consists of a unique “ecosystem” of classrooms, open work spaces and a student “hotspot”.

The three pillars upon which we have built LASER are:

- *Research & Outreach*: research, present and publish our findings with a network of likeminded people, organizations and academic journals.
- *Student Hack School*: a set of student activities and classes with a focus on student guided learning;
- *Teaching Community*: enhance and support the professional development of our faculty with an aim of making it into a learning community for our students

I wish to thank the LAS Board, administration and faculty, as well as the parent community for their support and warm welcome of this initiative. LASER is another “LAS first” designed to provide our students with the best educational opportunity in preparation for a life that meets the high expectations of the LAS mission statement. ♦



# hack school:

## OBSERVATIONS AND CONTEMPLATIONS

Dr. Paul Magnuson  
Director of Curriculum & Research

It was just about one year ago that we sat down with a student who had written to us about the “Hour of Code”. He politely walked us through the reasons for which LAS should be teaching computer programming, or coding, and how “Hour of Code” was a small hook to get people started. He was very convincing. We coded for an hour, and then an hour more. A month later, his case for coding still very much in our minds, we outlined the physical site for our research center. One large “Google-like” room was to have the necessary robotics and access to learn-to-code sites to inspire the future programmers among our students. Other classrooms would be available for teachers interested in developing new curricula, researching methodologies, and experimenting with new technologies. A common staff room would encourage communication and innovation between faculty members.

From my desk in that collaborative office, strategically placed to see into that newly remodeled, comfortably furnished, decidedly non-traditional classroom, I can observe the students in our afternoon coding activity. We call it hack school, because the students are encouraged to “hack” their

coding education. In other words, they should independently do what is necessary to assemble an effective and interesting learning path. I look at them now, over the top of my monitor, and both smile and wince.

I smile because a lot has happened in a year. In this office there are five work stations shared by more than five faculty members. Just the other day, a small group spent most of a Sunday afternoon talking about curriculum alignment and the LAS mission statement. On a regular basis we swap ideas, discuss successes (and frustrations) with student-centered programming and our efforts to create self-determined learners. At this moment, the fifth desk is being used by our most prolific coder - a student who leads all of us in the number of points and badges earned in a variety of programming areas.

But I wince, too. While I can see through the door that the student in the far back corner is working on coding, two boys at a table in the middle of the room are obviously



“We believe a culture of action research will create an environment of learning and experimentation that will ultimately lead to superior student results.”

playing a networked computer game. Clicking repeatedly on the mouse, wide-eyed and transfixed with the images on their screens. This is not the intent of all our work delivering this beautiful space. But at the same time, it is our intent to see if we can change the motivation structure that is so prevalent in high school: teacher says do this, students comply. We want the students to notice how much opportunity is available to them, and to use it. To even come to us asking for more. Are these game players going to notice the missed opportunity? We are trying to figure out how to help them discover this opportunity themselves. In the meantime, the rapid game-clicking goes on.

We use the same room for another hack school activity. It is an experimental class in project-based learning and blended learning. The project is an electronic book, all of us in class, students and teacher, are the editors. We design short activities in linguistics, improve them, test them in other classes, and eventually we will bring them all together and publish them. As an added twist, we manage our project based learning with Scrum, a workflow process familiar to software developers. It was adapted for education - first in the Netherlands, as far as we can tell - as eduScrum.

We also experiment with blended learning, asking students to learn one or more world languages online, individually, but together in the room. We review with each other what sites are helpful and which ones are not. We discuss how learning works best (short bits of learning, occurring often) and we use multiple resources to “hack” language education.

We are researching the effectiveness of our hack school approach at the same time that we are learning to use eduScrum and blended learning in class. This is called action research. We believe a culture of action research will create



an environment of learning and experimentation that will ultimately lead to superior student results.

We are our own teachers, yet there is a balance here. The students are in the habit of waiting for direction from the teacher regarding: what to learn, how much to learn, and when to learn. We find, as teachers, that it is nearly impossible to avoid questions like:

“How many points must I get to pass?” and “How much do I have to write?”

I have taken to answering (quite cryptically, according to my students), “How much do you want to learn?” or even more slyly: “How long is a piece of string?” They look at me a bit cross-eyed, highly suspicious, wondering what trick I’m up to. I try to look back as if I have no idea why they are perplexed. They come to school to learn, right? Don’t they know how much they want to learn? Would they want to learn any less than the maximum possible in the time they have?

I smile at this, and smile a little more as I see that the boys have ended their computer game. I can’t tell what they’ve switched their attention to, but I’m hoping they get a bit of coding in before the afternoon is over. ♦

“We call it hack school, because the students are encouraged to “hack” their coding education. In other words, they should independently do what is necessary to assemble an effective and interesting learning path.”

New technology like this Parrot AR Drone (above) and Makerbot Printer (left page) are both incorporated in the Hack School classroom.

# FULL CIRCLE

*John Harlin III makes his return to  
Leysin after a 50 year journey*

Mr. John Harlin III, '14P

When the large moving van pulled up next to our chalet in Leysin, the driver refused to unload our belongings.

The problem was simple: Mom was female. This was 1963, and women could neither vote nor sign legal documents in this canton of Switzerland. The driver required a man to sign the form that would allow him to unload our furniture. But my father was at the Eiger, a mountain in central Switzerland, scouting a new climbing route—as it turns out, the route he would die on three years later. Dad had planned his arrival in Leysin for after the family had taken care of the odious household chores, including moving our belongings into the chalet. Eventually, Mom tracked down LAS's director, who was of the gender with power. He signed the papers and the van was unloaded.

Frankly, I don't remember any of that—it's really my mother's story. I was 7 years old at the time and all I knew was that I'd arrived in heaven. We'd been here once before, the previous winter when Mom came to interview at the Leysin American School, in its second year of operation. She parked our VW Bug at the sharp corner by what's now the Savoy Campus and

left me (age 6) and my sister (age 5) in the car while she went into the building. What we witnessed through the car window is forever burned into my memory: LAS

students zooming down the snowy street and then skidding to a stop at the entrance to Savoy. In those days I lived to ski, and my young soul would have been crushed if Mom didn't get this job.

Fortunately, they invited her to become the Science Director for both LAS and the American College of Switzerland, which at the time were sister institutions. But there was one condition: they insisted that Dad become the Athletics Director. My father was in the process of leaving the Air Force in Germany, where he had been a fighter pilot for the US Air Force (he flew F-100s). His personal plan did not involve working in someone else's school. Instead, he wanted to devote himself to climbing and to launching his own school. But as Mom waxed poetic about Leysin's spectacular location, the big cliffs above the village, and how Dad would have carte blanche to do whatever he wanted with the athletics departments (high school and college), he agreed to the job offer.



The mountain, the men, and their gear for an intended 10-day ascent in February 1966. Photo: Weekend Telegraph



Above: Marilyn and John Harlin II below LAS (now the Savoy Campus) in 1964. Left: Johnny Harlin (age 8) with LAS students in 1965. Photos: Sid Eder

And so began three outsized years that took control of my destiny through the next half a century—and have now come full circle.

During those early years, my sister and I typically ate breakfast in the LAS cafeteria before walking down to the village school while my parents taught their biology and physical education classes. I couldn't wait to be old enough to start school at LAS, though that would still be years away. In the meantime, I skied with the LAS ski team, competing in most of their races (though my small size kept me from going as fast as the big kids). Once I sprained my knee training in bamboo gates up under the Tour d'Al. One of the high schoolers skied three kilometers back to Leysin with

“Leysin was a magical place for the Harlin family—until Dad fell off the Eiger.”

I'd sometimes join my mother on her biology field trips with students. Dad took most of his PE classes outdoors as well, running, climbing, and skiing in the neighboring mountains and

me on his shoulders. During fall and spring

even touring the famous Haute Route with students. I'd join his outings, too, whenever my school schedule allowed.

Leysin was a magical place for the Harlin family—until Dad fell off the Eiger. In the 1960s Dad's name had become synonymous with the Eiger. He'd been the first American to climb its north face, back in 1962. In the following years he made numerous attempts to climb a new route on the 1,800-meter wall, attempts that were

often publicized in the newspapers—along with accounts of his other big new routes in the Western Alps. Once he even received a postcard addressed simply “Eiger John, Switzerland.” But this attempt, in February 1966, was going to be definitive. He even quit his job at LAS in order to concentrate on organizing this climb and on launching his new endeavor, the International School of Mountaineering. For the Eiger, Dad recruited the legendary climbers Layton Kor from the US and Dougal Haston from Scotland. Sponsorship came from the Weekend Telegraph in the UK, which sent Dad's friend Chris Bonington as photographer. They intended to climb the face in 10 days of continuous ascent. But they hadn't planned on the winter of 1966 being the stormiest on record. As storm after storm blasted through Switzerland, the climbers spent a month on the mountain, sleeping in snow caves most of the time. Just a few days from the top, Dad's climbing rope broke and he fell 1,300 meters to the base of the wall. It was 22 March and Dad was 30 years old.

The accident devastated our



Measuring dissolved oxygen content of the river below Leysin in Mr. Chris Leonard's class in 2014. Photo: John Harlin III

## The GLOBE Program at LAS

GLOBE stands for Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment; its mission is to build a world community of students, teachers, and scientists who work together in order to better understand our dynamic Earth. Founded in 1996 by NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and the National Science Foundation, the program now operates in 120 countries at more than 20,000 schools. Students gather data following standardized protocols that are consistent wherever they're used. This quality makes the data useful to scientists and students are motivated to learn because they feel that their work has real value.

At LAS, we're taking this “citizen scientist” approach to a new level, initiating our own long-term study of the local environment. We're calling it LETS Study Leysin, where LETS stands for Local Elevation Transect Study. The idea is to monitor “plots” at different altitudes from the valley to the mountaintops, studying their plants and animals to observe changes over time. It's well known that as the world's temperature rises, species move into new geographical regions—in this case generally uphill, where the environment used to be too cold but now it's more habitable. What does this look like in Leysin? As the expression goes, only time will tell. We expect our study to last for decades. We tell the students, “If your grandchildren come to LAS, they'll be studying these same plots that you're measuring now.”

The teachers most involved with launching GLOBE at LAS are Chris Leonard and Dan Patton, with support from John Harlin.

To learn more, visit [www.globe-las.org](http://www.globe-las.org).



Dr. Marilyn Harlin collecting samples for her laboratory at the University of Rhode Island in 1973. Photo: John Harlin III

family, of course, but also the community. Letters from LAS students Carol (Florell) Fallon '67 and Bruce Bordett '66 capture the mood of the school and the village during those days.

For Mom, it was time to start over. She enrolled in graduate school at the University of Washington and we returned to the States. Though I'd been born in California, we moved to Germany when I was three years old and now, at age 10, America was a foreign country to me. Five years later, with a fresh PhD in marine biology in hand, Mom joined the faculty of the University of Rhode Island, where she became the first woman biology professor at the school.

Science was my interest, too, and there wasn't a doubt in my mind that I'd follow my mother's footsteps into academia. My field would be arctic and alpine biology. But a funny thing happened at the University of California, Santa Barbara, when I attended a meeting of their Alpine Club. New students wrote their names on a list, which was scrutinized by the

club's leaders. Halfway through the meeting, I heard someone laughingly yell out "Who's this John Harlin?" He thought it was a practical joke. When I responded, "That's me," people were stunned.

After a moment, he continued, "Didn't John Harlin die on the Eiger?"

"Yes," I said, "that was my father."

This exchange became the first of hundreds among climbers in the 1970s and '80s. The most popular comment when I introduced myself was, "Are

you any relation to the REAL John Harlin?" Sometimes I'd get, "Ah, back from the dead, I see." It was meant as an innocent joke, of course, and the protagonist would squirm with embarrassment when he learned the truth. Some years later a profile of me in a German climbing magazine was titled, "Yes, That Was My Father."

That meeting of the UCSB Alpine Club proved fateful. I joined the club and the next year became its president. Climbing took control over me, and when I graduated from college with a degree in Environmental Biology I hoped that a two-year academic break would get climbing out of my system so that I could concentrate on graduate school. But one thing led to another, as it usually does.

First I was hired as a climbing guide in Colorado. Then I started writing books about climbing. Soon I was hired as an editor for Backpacker magazine until I left to found my own magazine, Summit: The Mountain Journal. Eventually I became the editor of The American Alpine Journal, the publication that had published all of

Dad's articles about climbing in the Alps.

In 2005, at the age of 49, I finally climbed the north face of the Eiger myself. The Eiger terrified me—but it was also the only mountain I felt I had to climb. The ascent was filmed for an IMAX movie called *The Alps: Climb of Your Life*, which also featured my wife Adele Hammond, whom I'd met at UCSB, and our 9-year-old daughter, Siena. After that climb I wrote a memoir, *The Eiger Obsession: Facing the Mountain That Killed My Father*.

With no intention to do so, it seemed that I'd stepped into my father's mountaineering boots instead of following my mother's path into science. The two-year break from school had stretched into 30. But it's never too late, is it? Not yet, anyway. So in 2012 I left the American Alpine Journal to work for The Mountain Institute on a USAID grant studying dangerous glacial lakes and the effects of climate change in the mountains of Peru and Nepal. It felt like fulfilling a lifelong dream.

But there was one other dream



Siena '14 (age 7) and John Harlin III on the summit of the Zugspitze in Germany. Photo: Adele Hammond

"That ragged mountain skyline, those lake-like clouds in the valley below (the "sea of fog"), the skiing out your door.... If only I could live here again. But how?"



Above: John Harlin III making his journey towards the Eiger, the same mountain that claimed the life of his father. Photo: Holcim Below: Siena '14 as a student at LAS in 2014. Photo: John Harlin III

that wouldn't let go, either. Every time I returned to Leysin—it was almost yearly—I wanted to stay. That ragged mountain skyline, those lake-like clouds in the valley below (the "sea of fog"), the skiing out your door.... If only I could live here again. But how?

In 2012 Stephen Dexter, then principle of LAS, was in charge of hosting the Swiss Group of International Schools' annual meeting. That summer he stumbled across a copy of my book, *The Eiger Obsession*, in a bookstore on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. He was looking for a keynote speaker for SGIS, so he called me. Would I be interested? Bien sure!

While in Leysin for SGIS, I skied with Ethan Harris, who for 10 years had held Dad's job as Athletics Director for LAS. Ethan was keen to introduce a new program to the school called the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, a youth development program

that included a healthy dose of outdoor experience. The Award was offered in thousands of schools worldwide, but not at LAS. Might I be interested in running the Award if LAS decided to take it on, he asked? Yes, I was. But my real goal was to develop something in science. I wanted to start a new program that would allow students

"Could an aging mountain boy ask for anything more?"

to become citizen scientists studying mountain ecosystems and connecting with other mountain schools worldwide. That's how I met Chris Leonhard, Head of the LAS Science Department. He read my concept proposal and remarked, "This sounds a lot like GLOBE." Sure enough, NASA's GLOBE Program was doing much of what I had in mind, but somehow I hadn't learned of it. There was no point in reinventing that wheel: Why not introduce GLOBE to LAS, too?

By now I was talking with Marc-Frederic Ott, Head of School and grandson of the Otts who had hired my parents in 1963. Starting new programs at LAS takes time, as the school needs to ensure they'll be sustainable for the long haul. Meanwhile, Marc-Frederic asked, might my

daughter Siena be interested in doing her senior year of high school at LAS?

Fast-forward a year to one of the proudest days of my life: 9 June 2014. Siena's co-valedictorian speech at the LAS graduation ceremony brought tears to my eyes. I'm happy to report that it easily upstaged my own commencement speech that day—she

made the speechmaking I've struggled with over decades seem effortless. Mom flew over for the graduation, the first time she'd returned to Leysin since leaving in

1966. And on the same day I signed a contract to manage two new programs at LAS: the Duke of Edinburgh International Award and the GLOBE Program. Could an aging mountain boy ask for anything more?

Both programs have launched with a bang. During our first semester we signed up 40 students for the International Award. With GLOBE, we've initiated a long-term study of the Leysin environment to observe how climate change is affecting the local ecosystem. And after 44 years, we're re-starting the LAS Alpine Club, which will encourage students to get the most out of our unmatched mountain environment.

A few days ago I visited Dad's grave in the Leysin cemetery, put my hands on the stone eagle that is his tombstone, and told him how happy I was to be together again. ♦



## The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award at LAS

The International Award is the world's pre-eminent youth achievement award: it's now offered in 140 countries, where more than 8 million students have participated since the Award was founded in 1956. The Award encourages young people to develop long-term goals and to learn the perseverance needed to fulfill such goals. These goals fall into four categories: developing skills, engaging in physical recreation, providing service to the community, and leading an adventurous journey that involves overnight camping. Depending on their age, students can earn a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award. As might be expected, the higher levels require longer commitments. It gets a bit complicated describing just how much time is required, but the range is approximately three months for Bronze to 12 months for Gold, with an hour devoted to each activity every week (a total of three hours per week).

If you do the math, that seems to be a huge investment of time. Fortunately, most of these activities are part of the LAS environment anyway. The main difference for most students is that to earn an Award, they need to set goals and make progress toward achieving them—they can't simply go along for the ride; they must take some control over their own destinies. There's an Online Record Book in which each student records his or her progress. The other difference for most kids is the Adventurous Journey, in which students hike (or bike or paddle) for two or more days, camping out in tents or staying in mountain huts. On these journeys they learn about self-sufficiency in addition to experiencing the outdoors on a whole new level.

Trained Award Leaders at LAS include Mike Brinkmeyer, Andie Flett, John Harlin, Thom Padick, Alice Patton, and Dan Patton.

To learn more, visit [www.internationalaward-las.org](http://www.internationalaward-las.org)



Learning to climb ice during an LAS outing to the Moiry Glacier in 2014.  
Photo: John Harlin III

## Letter from Bruce Bordett '65 to John Harlin III '14P

FOUNDER, CEO BORDETT MEDIA WORKS

I remember well the shock and sadness that descended on Leysin at the time of your dad's death. For many of us kids it was the first passing of a person close to us. Probably also, it was amplified by the fact that John was such a legend. He was the uberman. The guy that one could aspire to be, but never quite reach. He was a guy with pretty high standards.

I remember well my first PE class at LAS. John and the "Scottish Mafia" - P.E. teachers John had hired—all were hardcore climbers - took us all up to the top of the Berneuse for what we naive lowlanders thought was to be a nice scenic hike. After some high altitude warm-ups, which consisted of about an hour of the Air Force PT regimen, we were sent on a downhill x-country run back to the school. It was a real wake-up call for the kind of physical fitness program that your dad had in mind for us. Guess he figured to make us all real men. Some of the kids really took to it, became great climbers, ski teamers, and princes among men. Some of us were just happy to survive.

John really was an inspiration. The stories of his widely divergent exploits and talents were the stuff of many a late night dorm room discussion. "I heard that when he was a fighter pilot, he would only wear his climbing boots in the plane. The officers tried to get him into regulation flying boots, but he actually managed to convince them that he could only be an effective pilot if he was comfortable, i.e. in his climbing boots." "Yeah, and I heard he was always getting in trouble for flying his jet, like 50 feet off the deck... even got in trouble for hitting power wires..." "Did you know he was a dress designer? And an artist... and an Olympic athlete..." and on and on. Most of us held him in awe. Some of us were even a little afraid of his intensity.

Your mom probably had a bigger effect on me and who I would become. It was in her bio classes that I became aware of the world around me. From the study of mini-microcosms in the forests and alpine meadows to the writings of Rachel Carson, she made me aware of the vast complexities in the world around me. In my world, she was the first champion of maintaining biodiversity and protecting the environment. She opened my eyes to so much around me that I had walked past, stepped on, or otherwise ignored.

I recall several great trips to southern France to chart and study the marine environments around Cannes and Nice. We even visited the fabled Oceanographic Institute in Monaco, but missed Cousteau by a whisker. Your mom was very brave to ride herd on a busload of hyperactive teenage scientists.

When it came to advice for life, her words are still with me: "There will be enormous pressures on you to conform, to change your path to the more acceptable, to follow the path more comfortable... Don't do it. Stick with your dreams. Be who you are." If not for her, I'd probably have wound up in the shoe business with my father instead of becoming a film/video maker. A path and profession I'm grateful for every day. It was a wonderful thing to have someone who believed in me and my ability to succeed. My own parents were not terribly good at this.

It was interesting to read another student's message. What John taught him was that competition was very important in life. He still carries that DNA around. Your mom taught me to believe in myself, and that being happy is often better than being first. Two good lessons from two good teachers.

Leysin is/was an amazing place, as you know. To stand on my balcony and look out at the Rhone valley with the Dents de Midi in the distance was awe inspiring. To wake up each day to the sound of cowbells. What an amazing experience. Sometimes I wish I could do it all over again. I miss the innocence of those times and the bonds that were forged.

Leysin left a tremendous impression on everyone who spent time there. When we get together at our sporadic mini-reunions, there's a kind of bond there that I think is pretty amazing and very atypical of most high school experiences. We were all put together in a magic little petri dish, where we lived and worked and laughed and cried together. Many of the relationships that were forged there are strong and enduring, despite the miles, years and lives that have intervened. It was a very heady time.



Bruce Bordett on the PBS set with celebrity chef Julia Child.

# Letter from Carol (Florell) Fallon '67 to John Harlin III '14P

ATTORNEY, PRIVATE PRACTICE

We were very young back then; I had just turned 14 when my mom dropped me off with my sister in Leysin. After that, we only saw our parents during summer vacations and Christmas breaks until our graduation from high school (when, come to think of it, we still continued to only see them at Christmas and summer breaks through college). That was probably fairly typical for most of the kids at LAS. Back then, most of us were used to traveling in the world by ourselves. We were responsible for ourselves, and often our friends, whenever we left home (Africa, for my sister and me) to go to school in Switzerland, and to get back home too. Our parents expected us to arrive on a certain flight to Monrovia, and we had darn well better be on it! No cell phones and no excuses.

Your mother was such a great teacher. Looking back, I can say that I've only had one or two teachers since then who came close to being so inspiring. Her enthusiasm was encompassing and infectious, and she definitely taught us a new way of looking at the world. Your mom took us on Saturday-afternoon hiking trips to check out the plant life round about Leysin. In the Fall, we would find little organisms getting ready for the big winter sleep, and in the short Spring we would find a rebirth that was just amazing. Lac d'Ai was a great destination, where your mom introduced us to small crustaceans, algae, lichen, and other tiny denizens of the world that we would never have otherwise noticed. She explained to us why certain organisms were the color/shape/size they needed to be in order to survive, and why they flourished or alternatively didn't exist, in certain environments or exposures. She showed us how to actually turn a rock over and look under it. (Good skill for life.) She was always so excited about introducing us to the world of Biology, and no one could resist her enthusiasm. We would 'discover' a small living thing, and show it to your mom, whereupon she would tell us all about its life and habits, and she also made a point to compliment us on how observant we were (that made us feel so smart). Imagine getting a bunch of adolescent high-schoolers to actually enjoy taking a long hike on an otherwise free Saturday. And yet, when reminiscing with other LASers since then, those hikes in the Alps with your mom are some of our best memories.

I didn't know your dad very well, but of course we all knew him as a Viking warrior reincarnate. He made a big impression upon us all. He was a fairly intimidating figure for most of us. He was a god-like personage to us. I remember going up the gondola with him on a bitterly cold Saturday morning shortly before the Eiger climb. It was FREEZING cold, as it often was in

Leysin, but we were tough kids, and we were always out there skiing whenever we had a bit of free time. There were four of us in the gondola, three LAS students huddled into ourselves with our parkas zipped, our hats pulled down around our heads, and our mittened hands tucked into our sleeves. Your dad had on a sweater (no parka) and no gloves or mittens. I finally asked him, weren't his hands cold? He told me that he was acclimatizing himself so that he wouldn't need gloves or ski jacket to stay warm.

The whole school, and even the whole village, was so enthralled when your dad started his climb on the Eiger. We checked all the time to find out how they were doing. I think that everyone associated with LAS felt very invested in that climb, even though we were just bystanders. Then we heard that something or someone had fallen. No one wanted to believe that it could be one of the climbers. Eventually, we got news that it was your dad who had died. Really, for a couple of days, no one could believe that at all. It just didn't seem possible.

I remember that after his death your mom found herself in a position of being a young widowed mother of two who had never had much of a chance to explore her personal identity or a social life away from your dad. I think all of that must have been very frightening for her, but she carried on with so much poise that we only rarely saw the dismay that she was battling in those months after your dad's death, as she looked to the future for herself and you kids. I have so much admiration for the strength she showed during that time.

Each school year in the Spring your mom conducted a Biology trip to the Med, to a little undiscovered cove near Cannes. We also visited the Cousteau museum in Monaco, and we spent one night of the trip in Menton. What a wonderful experience it was for us. I was so fortunate to have had two years of Biology classes with your mom, and I will never forget those trips, by far the best trip of each year at LAS. In the Spring after your dad's death, your mom took us on the Biology trip as usual. I remember that your mom was so depressed and unhappy. We girls who, of course, had no real idea at that time of what your mom was facing, somehow found solace with her by doing 'girl things.' I remember that we cut, curled and styled your mom's hair, gave her a manicure, and did a 'makeover' for her, although frankly I'm not sure any of us were very experienced at that type of thing back then. But that really didn't matter. The idea was to let her know as best we could that we cared about her. It was a bonding experience more than anything.



Carol in 1967

# ...they've gotta wear shades

Mr. Finn Hovem '10  
Development Associate

*These LAS students are sacrificing  
their flipflops to ensure their  
future is just as bright as  
their Summer.*

**L**AS offers its students a wide variety of opportunities; to travel to new places, make friends from all over the world, and achieve academically. Despite all of these wonderful opportunities, Summer is arguably the best facet of being a student: enjoying the three months spent recovering, relaxing, and getting ready to begin the next school year fresh. An opportunity that diminishes once you've entered the working world.

With approximately 330 students, representing more than 60 nationalities, many of them third

culture kids, it is difficult to qualify the profile of an average LAS student. In the same way, it is impossible to make a blanket statement in regards to how our diverse student body spends their summer. Regardless of their background, however, not all of our students choose to spend their summer on the beach. Several of our students choose to take advantage of this time and spend their Summers preparing for the future, through college prep courses, language immersion programs, or internships.

After considering summer school programs offered by NYU, Brown, and Boston University, **Alina P. '15**, a senior from Belarus, decided to participate in a summer program at Harvard. The Harvard Summer School is a 7 week study program, offering 8 college credits, open to students as young as high school juniors who apply from all over the world. Courses are offered in a wide array of subject, but Alina chose to study Chemistry. The Chemistry course consisted of three hour lectures Tuesday through Friday, a weekly problem set, several labs and a weekly test. "It made me break out of my comfort zone and realize that the work at high school is very different in contrast with that of university."

For seven weeks, she lived in a

freshman dormitory with four other girls from Canada, China, Japan, and Spain. "We were amazed by how much we had in common and by each others academic strength and patience - the room never slept, somebody was always studying." Alina's initial intention for university was to study Pre-med, but through this course she has developed a passion for chemistry.

• • •

**Joaquin D. '15**, a senior from Mexico, spent his summer deepening his passion for filmmaking at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. Like Alina's summer program at Harvard, Joaquin also received college credit for his work, but his program emphasis was on

directing and cinematography.

The cinematography course wasn't focused only on the technical aspects of lighting and production, there was some theory, but it was mostly practical. "This class was not about the story, but more about the technical work," says Joaquin describing the hours spent "making the scene look beautiful." The directing course however was more focused on theory, covering character development, casting, psychology, and working with actors along with the production element: acquiring permits, safety seminars, and learning how to use AVID Software. When asked, "what the most important thing he learned over the summer was?" Joaquin said, that "I can learn much more by filming rather than by watching films", and that, "I can learn more by just trying new things and changing camera equipment. I just need to shoot as much as I can."

• • •

*"Several of our students choose to take advantage of this time and spend their summers preparing for the future."*



Joaquin, a senior at LAS, spent last summer taking cinematography courses at the University of Southern California.



Sergii, another senior at LAS, used his summer time wisely by working at the Orly Park hotel in Kiev.

Spanish she responds that, "I am deeply interested in study of Hispanic cultures and it is possible that my university minor will be Hispanic Studies. I love traveling and the ability to speak different languages is a great advantage."

• • •

*"In a brief survey of current LAS students, 28% stated that they spent the majority of their summer either working or studying."*

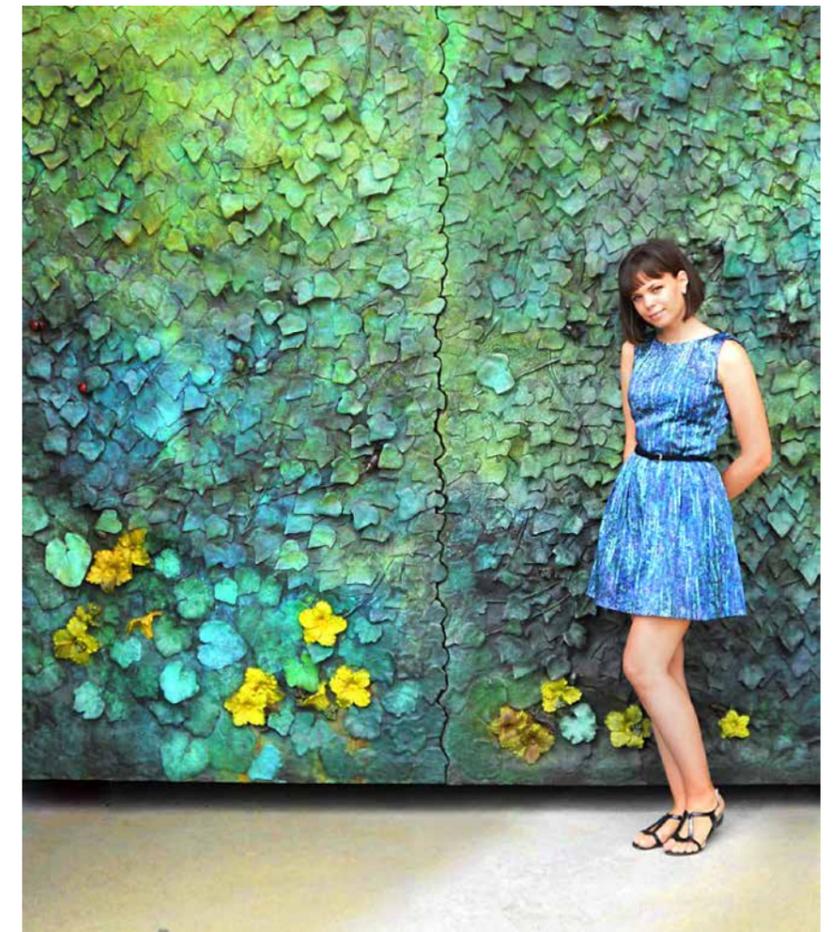
**Sergii S. '15**, a senior from Ukraine, did not do a university summer school program, instead he opted for an internship. Sergii's plan is to stay in Switzerland to study hospitality after his graduation. So, he decided it would be prudent to get some experience in this field to help get into a good university. Sergii describes the beginning of his summer as, "Frustrating. Waking up early, putting on a suit, rushing to drink a coffee before going to work six days a week." Eventually, Sergii got used to working while all of his friends were resting. "This is hospitality," he said, "you work while others are having fun." Sergii gained a lot from the experience. "Work showed me how to be responsible and it made me more mature."

• • •

**Veronika R. '15**, a senior from Ukraine, participated in the Columbia University Summer Program for High School Students in Barcelona. Already able to speak three languages, Ukrainian, Russian, and English, she was looking for a program focused on Spanish when she chose to participate in the Columbia University program. The program allowed her to become immersed in the rich culture of Barcelona in addition to being immersed in the Spanish language outside of the class. On top of the Spanish language workshops, courses were offered in various subjects including historical Barcelona, 20th century architecture, urban development, art, and design. According to Veronika, her summer was, "fun and cognitive — exactly what [she] was looking for". When asked about the importance of learning

In a brief survey of current LAS students, 28% stated that they spent the majority of their summer either working or studying. Only four of these were interviewed for this article, but they all share a common thread; LAS students are using their time now to prepare for the future, explore their interests, and expand their passions. Their passions are as varied as their backgrounds: from cultural immersion to being immersed in chemistry, from managing hotels to directing films, but hopefully they share a common future.

LAS strives to produce innovative, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world. While these seniors have not yet walked across a stage to receive their diplomas, how they choose to spend their summers is indicative of how they will choose to spend their lives: pursuing their passions.



The Summer Program at Columbia University in Barcelona, Spain provided an excellent backdrop for Veronika, an LAS senior, to become immersed in Spanish and learn the language



saving a species,  
one bird at a time

Mrs. Sarah (White) Lauerman '94

Each night I have been in the field during the past seven years, my routine has been the same; I stand quietly in a pine forest of fading light and listen for a special sound. Through the buzzing of mosquitoes and call of red-bellied woodpeckers, I hear what I am waiting for and my heart races. I grip my spotting scope and keep alert for movement. It is my favorite moment of each evening; the birds I am waiting for have come home to roost and they announce their arrival with a chorus of contact calls.

The birds, although somewhat unremarkable in appearance, are a federally endangered species. The small black and white woodpecker is not much bigger than my hand but what it lacks in size, it makes up for in importance. It is the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, and despite its name, red feathers are rarely seen. They get their name from the few, discreet, red feathers edging the black cap on the male's head like the decorative ribbons, or cockade, on an eighteenth century tricorne hat. However, this is not the eighteenth century and much of the southern pine forests of the southeastern United States have been logged, thus putting this endemic species on the endangered species list. These birds are particularly fond of longleaf pines of which only about 3% of the original 60,000,000 acres remain. An estimated 14,000 birds are left where once there were likely 900,000 to 1.5 million. They are important to pine communities, especially longleaf, because they are a keystone species, and like the architectural keystone which becomes the critical piece allowing an arch to function, Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers play a critical role in their world. They are the only North American woodpecker that excavates cavities in live pine trees, which they use for nesting and roosting. Their cavities persist for years, even decades, and 27 other vertebrate species have been documented using them, including many other cavity-nesting birds.

Although most evenings are routine in every way, tonight is the final night of the field season and it is going to end differently. Normally, I watch the birds come in and fly to the entrances of their cavities, 20 to 40 feet high in old pine trees. The trees are well-marked by the woodpeckers and easy to spot with the layers of old and new sap running down the trunks, making them look like melted candle sticks. A bird will sometimes stop at the entrance of its cavity prior to roosting for the night and peck away at the bark to encourage resin flow. This behavior proves to be a great defense against tree-climbing snakes. While they peck away, I use the spotting scope to view the bands on their legs. Each bird has a numbered metal band along with color bands making a unique combination and allowing me to identify the individual. Sometimes I am not so lucky and the birds fly straight into the cavities without first maintaining any resin wells. However, tonight I am revisiting a site I have been to multiple times. I know which birds to expect and which tree they will disappear into so the adrenaline I am feeling with their arrival is not yet needed. So, I wait. Once the birds have settled down for the night, I silently make my way to the tree of my target bird. I lift a long pole with a net shaped like a closed windsock on the end and advance towards the cavity. I hope the bird won't fly out of the tree before I have the net in position. Tonight I am in luck and the bird stays quietly in the cavity. Once the net is over the hole, I

breathe a sigh of relief and the tension in my muscles eases slightly. Now I just need to get the bird to come out into my net. I am not alone in the woods and I give a shout to the volunteers who have been watching this capture process. Just a few moments ago, the forest was filled with only the natural sounds of dusk as everything quieted down for the night but now we break the calm with our loud voices. One volunteer takes a stick and gives the tree a series of taps to encourage the bird to flush out of the cavity. The taps turn into scrapes as the volunteer starts to rub the stick against the bark and this sound does the trick. The bird flies out and into the net. It flutters down to the bottom of the sock and we quickly lower the net. I gently extract it and see we have caught a young male who has just recently molted the red crown patch on his head and now sports his red cockades.



Above: Sarah holds a week-old nestling red-cockaded woodpecker which has recently been banded.

He will be paired with a female his same age and several other pairs will join them on their journey to a new home. Every year, for the past seven years, my husband and I have monitored between 115-130 breeding red-cockaded woodpecker groups in the Osceola National Forest in northeast Florida as part of a translocation program to speed up the recovery of the species. We spend our summers climbing sappy pine trees to band week-old nestling red-cockaded woodpeckers and we follow their progress as they fledge from the nest. Each fall, when the banded fledglings are 5 to 6 months old, a crew of wildlife biologists and I capture and translocate approximately 20 birds (10 unrelated pairs) from the Osceola National Forest to other properties in the southeast region where they will augment and stabilize numerous small recipient populations. From 2008 to 2013, we have translocated 118 birds to 12 state and federal properties in Florida and Alabama. To learn more about the red-cockaded woodpecker, visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Red-cockaded Woodpecker Recovery website at: <http://www.fws.gov/rcwrecovery/>; To learn more about this project and its success, visit: <http://serppas.org/projects/otherisssueams/rcwtranslocation.aspx>.



# LAS in Season



# From the Alumni Desk

Mr. Fred Sharp  
Alumni Coordinator

Throughout 2014, LAS alumni have been a very active group. Alumni reunions are becoming more and more frequent and are attracting more and more individuals. Moreover, they are being organized by the alumni themselves. Sergei Dneprov '00 organized a well-attended reunion in Moscow in March this year, and we are all learning that advance notice is essential if we wish to maximize attendance.

## REUNIONS

There are already three reunions being organized by alumni for June 2015. **Janice Talbert '87** and **Beatriz Montserrat '87** have called together a large group, mainly graduates from the late '80's. They are planning to gather in Leysin in mid-June 2015, most of them re-visiting the Magic Mountain for the first time since their graduation. Beatriz and I have recently tracked down **Ziad Nahra '87**, **Shahwar Aslam '87** and **Samia Rahim '88**. **J.J. Altounian '05** is urging alumni from his era to gather, also in Leysin, for a 10-year reunion around the second weekend of June, 2015. For the third reunion, **Christian Piatt '95** is planning a 20-year gathering in Huddleston, Virginia, also in late June. "Chapeau" to the individuals who are taking on these initiatives.

## VISITORS

Alumni have also continued to visit their alma mater in impressive numbers. In February 2014, we had visits from **Marc Cousins '04** (picture 1); **Kristen Kesonen '08** (picture 4) and **Ioana Nedelcu '08**. March visitors included **Sarah Wilson '09** (picture 3); **Woosuk Lee '13**; **Mariia Yelizarova '11**; **Shannon Harrison '79**; and **Paula Ledford Hoffman '73** with **Jolyn West Schierman '73**. April, May and June saw **Tietje White '98** and her daughter, **Matt Rollins '04** and his wife (picture 5); and ACS graduate **Antigoni Diakou '83** visit outside graduation. Ioana visited again as the Alumni Induction Speaker the day before graduation (picture 2). July saw an increase of visitors as **Karen Sellers Ness '67**; **Monica Villeges Reed '73S** and family; and **Merzad Jamshidi '89** came to campus. The Fall visitors included **Kota Aihara '91** (picture 7); **Raymond Guerrero '92** (picture 6) with his wife; and **Beca Najmias '03** with her husband. The last visitor before going to press was **Priscilla (Chau) Davey '06** at the beginning of the New Year with her husband. The spent a few days in Leysin during their honeymoon. As a reminder, the LAS guesthouse, *Mont Riant*, is often available.

## TRAVEL

There have also been quite remarkable accounts of coincidental meetings. World traveller **Nick Ang '08S**, while travelling with his dog, Jack, across huge tracts of Norway, decided to spend the night at a Bed & Breakfast. This hostelry was owned by none other than **Christine Reksten '93**. Now, what are the odds against such a meeting of two LAS alumni in such a remote location?

Another coincidence from the summer still astonishes me. During my vacation, I was waiting for the skytrain in Bangkok when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned round and I was asked, "Are you Mr. Sharp, from LAS in Leysin, Switzerland?" "Indeed, I am," I said, somewhat bemused. "Do you remember me?" I did indeed remember her hairstyle and that she had a sister called **Zaineb '91**. I was talking to a former student of mine, **Hind Haider '91**. We had not met in 23 years! She had moved to Bangkok recently with her husband, and works with an organization for Social Development in the Middle East. I lost no time in introducing her to three of the four Thai alumni, that I know, live in Bangkok – namely **Khumpanart "Mee" '96** and **Oraphan Chaivorarat '00** and **John Buranasombati '96**. We were invited to dinner at Mee's new restaurant (picture 8).

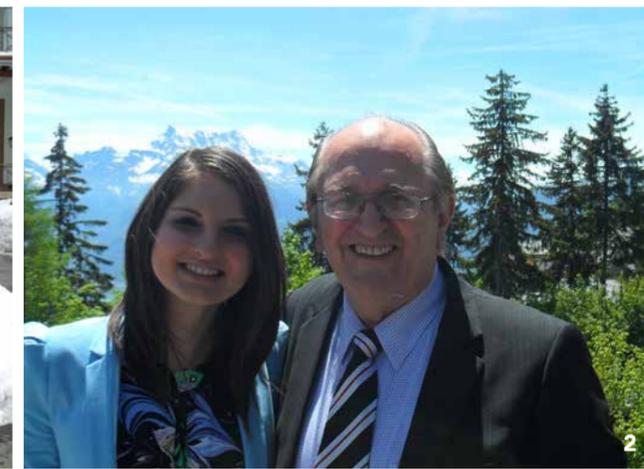
I also enjoy spending my own vacation touring Asia and visiting alumni. This summer, I began my tour in Singapore, where I stayed with **Judith (Hompe) Walls '91**, her husband and son. Judith is teaching Environmental Issues at one of Singapore's Universities.

Also in Singapore at the time were **Helena (Paoli) Livingstone '92** and **Boyko Draganov '04**. Sadly, Helena was unable to join Judith, Boyko and me for dinner (picture 9).

After Singapore, I went to Seoul where I met **Wonny Lee '00**, recently returned from London and now working for Seoul's largest law firm. After dinner, we met **Chan-Jae Park '02** (who is quite an inventor with several patents) and **Marvin Choi '00** at Marvin's new wine bar, MOMENTO. This bar keeps over 70 very exclusive wines from around the world. A wonderful evening, needless to say! (picture 10).



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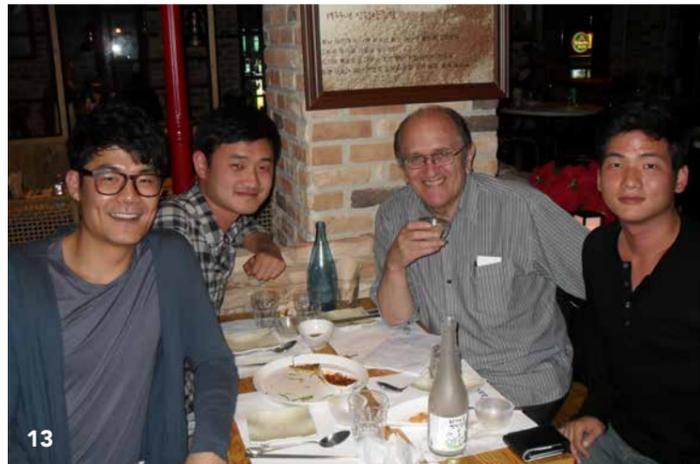
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The following day it was dinner with **Suk-Keun Song '05**, **Kyoung-Bae Jeon '07** and **Hee-Ju Kang '09**. (picture 12). The next evening, I was privileged to be invited to a truly spectacular performance of traditional Korean drummers and dancers. The troupe is led and trained by the father of **Dong-Hoon Kim '06**. Later that evening, I met with **Ming-Kyu Kim '06** and **Namjoon Kim '03S** for Korean drinks. Namjoon was at LAS for his Freshman year only, leaving in 2003, but such is the bond between Korean alumni of all 'eras' that they all know each other and keep in touch with each other. Quite remarkable (picture 13).

From Seoul to Tokyo, where I had a memorable dinners with **Taro Itoh '91** (picture 14), and later with **Ippei Tanaka '92** and **Jason Tanner '93**. I had recently tracked down Jason and learned that he had moved to Japan with his Japanese wife. Ippei and Jason had not seen each other for over 22 years, so I was delighted to be able to put them back in touch (picture 16). Finally, I met up with the magnificently dependable **Chika Kanno '01**, **Tomoko Minami '00** and **Yoichiro Taki '99** (picture 15). **Maki Kato '98** was to join us, but the awful weather persuaded her not to leave the house with a 5-month-old child. Quite right too.

In October, I decided to fly to attend the wedding of two former students, **Anu Neuvonen '00** and **Paul Nix '01**. We were all driven out to a forested area, an hour or so's drive from Turku. True to the bonds of long-lasting friendship for which LAS alumni are celebrated, **Leslie Paisley '00** came from the US. Throughout the ceremony Anu's sister, **Mona '92**, was forever busy marshalling guests. There is a

wonderfully romantic story behind these two people getting together again after 13 years apart. They first met in 1999, and as a dating couple at LAS they held a mock wedding – a la "Rocky Horror Show". Liz Kennedy was the High Priestess and suited Mr. Terjesen, Anu's History teacher, was also in attendance. After graduation Anu and Paul went their separate ways but kept in touch occasionally via Facebook. In 2011, Paul learned that Anu was in New York and flew from California for the day. He later moved to Finland to further his studies and after a year proposed marriage via a message in a bottle that Anu had to fish out of a river. It had been 15 years since they first saw each other 'across a crowded room' - actually, it was cross the Red Frog. I have much abbreviated their long story, but have their permission to pass on the full account to anybody who is interested. Contact me by email at [sharpfg@yahoo.com](mailto:sharpfg@yahoo.com) for the full version (picture 11).



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# Marriages

Mr. Fred Sharp  
Alumni Coordinator



It was the Neuvonen - Nix wedding that inspired me to research other married alumni. In recent years, I had been invited to two LAS/LAS weddings and I had often wondered how many such marriages there had in fact been.

Since October, I have found over a dozen marriages among my contacts. Some couples are no longer together, but many are and I believe this should be celebrated. I have not been able to contact all of them, and some could not get back to me in time for publication, but here are a few of the LAS alumni who married other LAS alumni. If you also married another LAS alumni, please let us know by email at [alumni@las.ch](mailto:alumni@las.ch).

*\*As I was researching these couples, I realized that a large number of faculty had met their future spouses while at LAS too. Consequently, I have included them too.*

## ALUMNI

- Paul Nix '01 and Anu Neuvonen '00
- Steve Sadighi '06 and Lauren Brown '06 (photo to right)
- Matthew Gertig '90 and Tiffany Fitchett '90
- Alex Nowizki '05 and Jenny Slavova '04
- Brandy Gill '92 and Cathrine Mediaas Johnson '92 (No longer together but they remain good friends.)



- Chris Saucier '96 and Liz Bernier '06, met at LAS, where they discovered that they were from the same town in Maine. And that their parents had, in fact, grown up together! After leaving Switzerland in 1996, they spent four years apart at different colleges. They contacted each other again via Facebook but did not meet again until, as a newly commissioned lieutenant in the US Air Force Chris was posted to Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Liz was then living in LA and their relationship blossomed again. Then, in 2001, Chris was posted to FE Warren AFB in Wyoming. He writes: 'I knew it was love if she was prepared to leave the California sun for the Wyoming plains!' They married in 2002. They now have a son, Austin, born in 2005, and a daughter, Taylor, born in 2008. (photo below)



- Peter Kloc '97 and Karolina Zacharska '97, were introduced by Rafal Pluchrat '97. Karolina actually dated Rafal while at LAS and at college! Peter returned to Poland after his studies in the US and became god-father to Rafal's daughter. Karolina moved back to Poland in 2008. She and Peter contacted each other via Facebook. I met them both at Sue Basu '97's wedding in Vevey in 2008. They married in 2009 and their daughter was born in 2013. So, Peter and Karolina have LAS and Rafal to thank for their being together after 11 years of separation. (photo below)



- Blaise Hefti '99 and Vanessa Sidwell '02, actually missed each other as LAS students, but they did meet as staff. Blaise was a student from 1996 -1999 and Vanessa from 1999 – 2002. They met in Leysin when they were both employed by the school – Blaise for SIS '05 and Vanessa as Assistant College Counsellor (2005-2009). It was Vanessa's younger brother, MacKenzie '05, who actually introduced them. Vanessa had secretly confided in him that she thought Blaise was the "cutest guy on the mountain", So, Mack insisted that Blaise show his sister around town. However, it was not until 2007 that the stars aligned and they started to date. They dated for 7 years, when Vanessa went to work in Lausanne and Blaise stayed in Leysin to work in the family business. They got married in June of 2014, in the Chateau d'Aigle, the venue for the LAS prom. Vanessa has since left her Lausanne job and joined the Hefti family business. They are expecting their first child at the end of May 2015! So, it seems that LAS works its magic even among alumni who were not contemporaries! (photo at top on opposite page)

- Johan Groneman '88 and Stephanie Martin '90 First met in 1987. They both played the French Horn in Mr. Clay's band class. Johan was a junior and Stephanie was a sophomore. They were close friends while at LAS, and met occasionally afterwards in Arizona and New York when Johan flew to the USA. Inevitably, they moved on with their lives and lost touch completely for about 5 years. In 2001,

Stephanie found Johan again via classmates.com and their relationship picked up from where it left off. They married in 2003 and have a daughter, Isabelle and a son, Jack. They moved from Delft in the Netherlands to Saline, Michigan. A few years ago Johan finally succumbed, after a long and brave fight, to kidney cancer. In Stephanie's words: 'Our love was like none I have ever known before.' (photo below)



- Anthony Mignano '04 and Sarah French '04, were married in Amherst, Mass. on March 24th, 2012. Sarah writes that she and Anthony first began 'dating' at LAS during Study Hall! From 7pm to 9pm students had to stay in their dormitories and in their rooms for Study Hall, and were not allowed to communicate with each other. Along comes MSN Messenger! Sarah admits to having added half of her class on her 'friends' list, and to having spent many an hour 'chatting' to everybody who would listen! After graduation in 2004, Sarah went to study at an all women's college in Amherst, Emily Dickinson Country. She loved it there, but missed chatting with her old LAS male friends. Anthony was one of the guys on her list, so she chatted often with him, just idle chatter about 'everything under the sun'. For four years they corresponded in this manner – what Sarah calls 'the modern day equivalent of a courtship by letter'. After graduating from college they began dating 'in person'. Three years later they decided to get married. Their wedding pictures were taken in the very campus where they 'first fell in love – thanks to MSN Messenger and a great cell-phone plan!' (photo below)



## FACULTY



- **Jamie Skove '16P and Kim Oppenheim '16P**  
(photo above)
- **Eric Terjesen and Karen McDowell**
- **Tim Taylor and Morgan Topman**
- **Andy Lushman and Katy McGuire**
- **Andrew Crofton and Shanna Mitchell**
- **Matt Sipple and Gail O'Connell**
- **Russ Quinlan and Kate Perry**
- **Ethan Harris and Erin Dobson**

• **Aaron Schmidtberger and Victoria Collins**  
First met at LAS in August 2005, when they both started work in the Admissions Office. Victoria had been in Leysin since 1996, skiing both hemisphere seasons (Leysin and Queenstown, NZ). Colleen Lauriol and Sarah Goodman played matchmaker and Emma Dixon gets the credit for bringing Victoria out to the Top Pub one October evening. Marriage and son, Tasker came along in 2007, and second son Orrin in 2009. Special thanks are given by the Schmidtbergers to Maurice Felli and Carol Seymour who were witnesses at the wedding ceremony in Vevey! In 2011, Aaron moved on to a school administration job in Berne and then Chateau d'Oex. (photo below)



• **Christoph Ott and Gosia Skorupka,**  
met at LAS in 2006 when Christoph was Development Co-ordinator and Gosia was Summer School Admissions Associate. Gosia was hired by her future brother-in-law Marc-Frederic. I am reliably informed that it was Christoph's sister-in-law who had the prescience to first observe that Christoph and Gosia would make a nice couple. They married in 2009 and have two boys, Jonas and Alek. (photo above)

• **Marc-Frederic Ott and Stephanie Schmalz**  
Stephanie started working at LAS in 1997 as a teaching intern of Integrated Science and Beginner French. She also coached the girls' basketball team. After a year, she returned to the USA to attend medical school. In the fall of 1997, Marc-Frederic was writing his masters thesis in Leysin when he and Stephanie met during a Faculty Orientation meeting. They began dating and married in 2002. They have one daughter, Anna Claire. Stephanie is now one of the Leysin medical doctors and Marc-Frederic continues as Head of School. (photo below)



• **Chris Wieland and Jennifer Stanley**  
Chris arrived at LAS in 1992 and Jennifer arrived the following year. They got along well as colleagues and friends, but then they started skiing together and began dating seriously. Then - as the old joke goes - "everything went downhill from there" (Chris's quotation, not mine)! They married in 1995. Their daughter, Annabelle was born in 1997 and son, Christopher in 2001. They left Leysin for London in 2001. They miss Leysin and hope to come back here one day in the future (photo to left)

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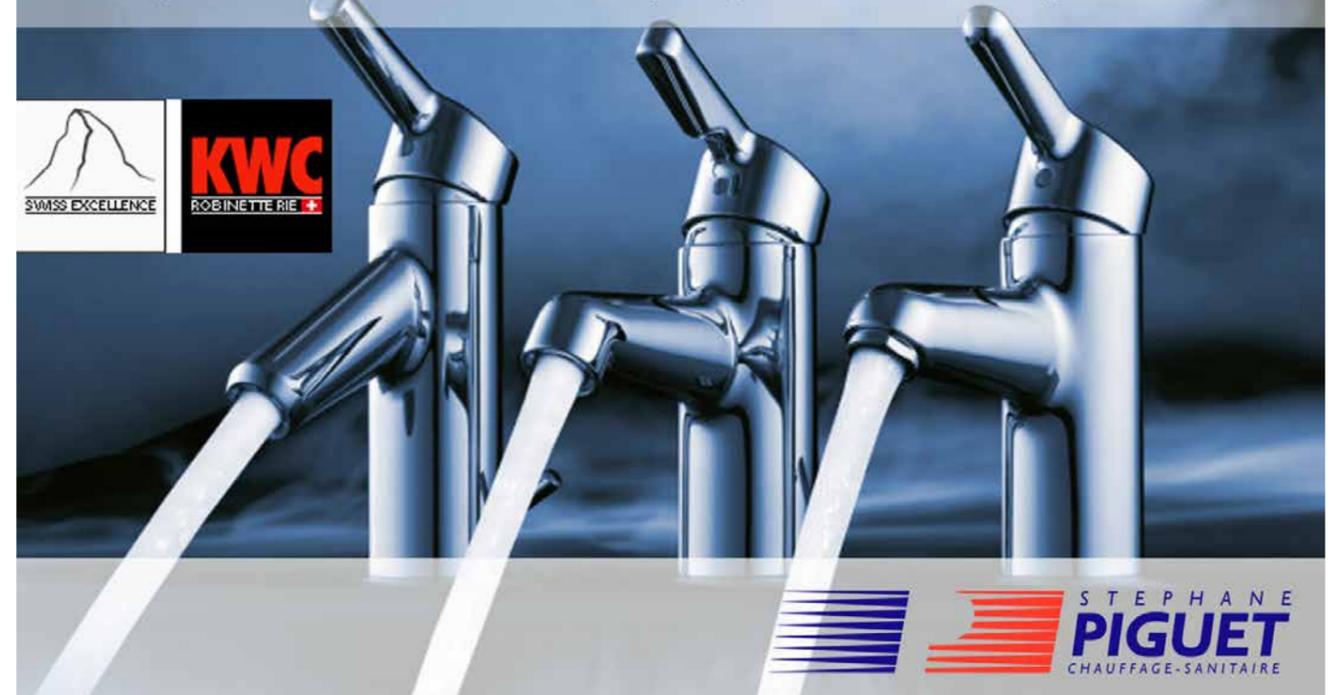


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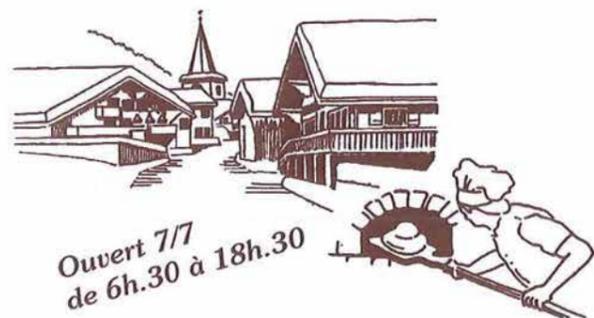
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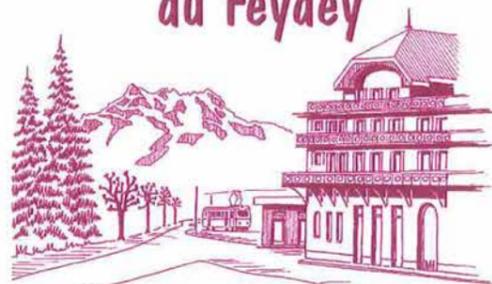


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## Leaving Politics at the Door

Dr. K. Steven Ott  
Chairman

My mother Sigrid was only 31 years old when she travelled from the Great Plains of North Dakota, where my grandfather had homesteaded at the turn of the century, to Europe during the Summer of 1947. My father had been transferred to Germany in the last days of the war and was working in military government in Bavaria when - always nostalgic for Switzerland - he decided to show his country of birth to his family before returning to the US.

For my sister, Aldis, and me, 7 and 4 years old respectively, it was a great adventure. After a long train trip from Minot, North Dakota via Minneapolis and Chicago to New York, we boarded one of the first Liberty ships to cross the Atlantic. The vessel had served for the shipping of troops and war materiel to Europe and had been allocated by the government to transport families of military personnel.

My mother, at sea for the first time and true to her Icelandic heritage, loved the ocean crossing despite the heavy seas. Upon arriving in Europe, her mood changed. She was dismayed by the destruction she saw when travelling by train from Le Havre via Paris to Bern. Town after town was marked by war. Destroyed tanks and other war vehicles littered the landscape, and beggars crowded near the international railway lines hoping to receive a few pennies to buy something to eat. The world of Europe appeared dark and hopeless to her. Luckily, a different world awaited my family when we arrived in Switzerland. Untouched by the ravages of war, Switzerland was a neat, clean little country with well-dressed and hard-working people.

It was just two years later, in 1949, that my parents decided to offer the children of the US military stationed in Europe the opportunity of a summer camp experience in Switzerland. That first year, they welcomed sixty children to the Belle Epoque-style Victoria Jungfraublick Hotel in Interlaken. The Hotel hadn't received a guest since before the war!

For many counselors, who came from all over Europe, this was the first time that they met other young people who had fought on the other side during the war. Germans met French and Austrians encountered Dutch and Danes. To



AN EARLY PORTRAIT OF THE OTT FAMILY.

curtail any resurgence of old feelings of enmity and hurt, my parents simply told them, "You leave all politics at the door. We are here to provide our campers with a wonderful experience of fun and learning. Creating a harmonious community is part of setting a good example."

The Summer went perfectly well: the children were happy and the counselors discovered the human side of former enemies and became friends. Thus, for the counselors of the International Ranger Camp, my parents began the healing process and relieved the terrible suffering that had affected them during the conflict that was World War II.

Today, we know how much the vision of international understanding is necessary to build harmony amongst the peoples of the world. LAS continues to educate students to identify with the 'Citizen of the World' philosophy. Just last Spring, when the events in the Crimea were unfolding, I walked past the west side of the Belle Epoque building. At the gymnasts' bar there were about a dozen boys exercising, conversing and having fun. On the wall behind them there were three flags, all at equal height: the Polish, Russian and Ukrainian flags. Sixty-five years later, these young men had discovered that one can still leave politics at the door!

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