

THE
WIT AND WISDOM
OF



Mary Crist Henning

TASIS
The American School in Switzerland

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OF
MARY CRIST FLEMING



Lyle D. Rigg, Editor

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MMXI



To
Mary Crist Fleming
Lynn Fleming Aeschliman
Anita Russell Rigg
Sharon Creech Rigg

For always finding the right words, when needed most.



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Education is service and I believe we are put
on this earth to make some contribution,
to try to leave it a little better place than we found it.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



When I look at your year of graduation, I am all too vividly reminded that in only three months I will be 97!

Looking back on all those years, all I can wish for you is that you have a dream – a big dream, and that you work all your life to make that dream come true! For in so doing you will live every moment of your life to the fullest and your greatest satisfaction will come when you share that dream, and through sharing you give others a better life, too. As sung in (the musical) *South Pacific*, “if you don’t have a dream, how can you make a dream come true?”

So my wish and my prayers for you are that you dream big and bold so that you as an individual make a difference – a difference that makes the world a better place in small and large ways for all the humans who inhabit it.

Yearbook message, 2007 (one of her final yearbook messages)



INTRODUCTION

The idea for this book grew out of a conversation over dinner after the memorial service for Mrs. Fleming in England on February 19, 2009. While reminiscing about and toasting Mrs. Fleming, it was suggested that the wit and wisdom of this remarkable woman should be preserved in a book so that future generations also could be inspired. The thought of undertaking such a project appealed to me greatly. Although there are many others who had longer and closer relationships with Mrs. Fleming, I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve as editor of this special volume. It has been a labor of love. I am also pleased that it has been possible to complete this tribute to Mrs. Fleming in time for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of her birth.

When I met Mrs. Fleming for the first time in the summer of 1979, I had just been hired by TASIS England at the start of its fourth year to serve as assistant headmaster, head of residence, coordinator of the School's first self-study report for accreditation, and teacher of three sections of history. And this normal TASIS load was just part of my job description! Although I don't recall exactly what Mrs. Fleming and I discussed during our first meeting, I do remember being comforted and reassured by her words. Yes, Mrs. Fleming's words of encouragement and support convinced me that I would be able to meet the challenges and demands of my new position and that I would be able to survive at TASIS.

After that first meeting, Mrs. Fleming and I worked together for more than two decades both in England and Switzerland. I had the privilege of serving as a TASIS headmaster for sixteen of those years. When my wife, Sharon, and I returned to the United States in 1998, we still remained close to Mrs. Fleming and TASIS.

Little did we imagine in 1998 that fate would offer us another opportunity to work alongside Mrs. Fleming. Less than one year after retiring as headmaster of The Pennington School in New Jersey, I received a call asking if I would consider serving as interim headmaster in Lugano for the 2007/08 school year. While Sharon and I were considering this opportunity, we received a message from Mrs. Fleming on our answering machine. After expressing her best wishes and her love, Mrs. Fleming ended her message with, "...please, please, please give TASIS one more year." How could we possibly say "no?!" The opportunity to spend more time with Mrs. Fleming was a key factor in my decision to leave retirement.

What a gift this year proved to be! Perhaps the most vivid memory of Mrs. Fleming that I have from this interim year in Lugano occurred at the annual Christmas service held in St. Abbondio. Because concerns were expressed about whether Mrs. Fleming would be strong enough to deliver her traditional reading of St. Paul's "First Letter to the Corinthians," I was asked to give the reading. Unfortunately, no one had discussed or cleared this plan with Mrs. Fleming. Although I wasn't present when Mrs. Fleming was informed of this change, I'm told that her response was something along the lines of "I'm NOT dead yet!"

At the service, Mrs. Fleming had to hesitate on a number of words and may have missed a line or two, but her delivery was beautiful. She was particularly strong when she read the final line: “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” And love filled St. Abbondio. What a wonderful Christmas present to all of us.

Although we didn’t know it at the time, we also had the gift of being part of what would be Mrs. Fleming’s final senior banquet and graduation ceremony in Lugano. The fortunate graduates of the Class of 2008 were the last to receive Mrs. Fleming’s blessing of multiple kisses, as they left the stage with their diplomas.

In order to complete this book, over 150 quotations have been selected from Mrs. Fleming’s public letters, speeches, year-book messages, and other writings. Interviews conducted with Mrs. Fleming by John Amis (for Mrs. Fleming’s 80th birthday celebration in 1990), Gwen Martinez (for her Ed.D. dissertation on Mrs. Fleming in 2003), Todd Fletcher (for his creation of the musical, *MCF: What a Life!*, in 2000), and Bill Eichner and Michele Josue (for use in the production of the DVD *Pushing all the Buttons* in 2005) also were extremely helpful in bringing her words to life.

This book is organized under qualities and virtues that Mrs. Fleming embodied and valued throughout her long life. Each category in this volume is introduced by a paragraph containing quotes from others that were important to Mrs. Fleming. As Mrs.

Fleming stated in a speech in 1992, “In the back of my address book I keep pages of favorite quotations, quotes that are inspiring to me, that lift me above the routine of everyday life, that make me laugh...” It was a pleasure to peruse this treasury of quotations, most of them entered in Mrs. Fleming’s handwriting.

A number of the quotations in this volume have received minor editing to correct grammar, typographical errors, and/or to provide clarification. Since many quotations were taken from Mrs. Fleming’s handwriting, it wasn’t always possible to discern every word. Although Mrs. Fleming was very careful to give credit to others for their words, some quotation marks may have been omitted. (I apologize for any quotes that may have been attributed incorrectly.) Since Mrs. Fleming often used the same message for all of her schools, in most instances TASIS has been used instead of identifying a specific TASIS school or program. Also, because Mrs. Fleming often covered several different themes in her remarks, many of the quotations used in this volume could have been placed into categories different from the one selected.

Although it wasn’t easy to select a limited number of categories for this volume and a limited number of quotations for each category, it is hoped that the topics and quotations included in this book will help to capture the wit, wisdom, and the essence of this remarkable woman. As one of her long-time colleagues wrote shortly after her passing, “It was a privilege to be inspired by and to share Mrs. Fleming’s vision and work. As we take them forward,

wherever we are, we might recall the words of the writer Dostoyevsky: ‘Beauty will save the world.’”

Unfortunately, future TESIS students, teachers, and parents will never have the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Fleming. I hope, however, that this volume will give them and others not only the opportunity to get to know her, but also to be inspired by her.

Lyle D. Rigg, Editor
Bemus Point, New York
April 2011

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I want to thank Lynn Fleming Aeschliman for giving me the opportunity to undertake this project and for supporting me every step of the way. Her suggestions and encouragement were invaluable. I also am grateful to Lynn for allowing me to delay this book while I spent a year at TASIS England and for her outstanding work on *MCF: What a Life!* and *In Pursuit of Excellence* – publications that aided me immensely in my research.

In numerous ways Reni Scheifele, editor of the impressive tome *In Pursuit of Excellence*, also served as co-editor of this book. Her recommendations and ability to locate whatever was needed (and get it to me in the U.S.) were invaluable. It was a pleasure to work on this project with such a capable and conscientious professional.

Kim Nelson, photographer extraordinaire, spent countless hours helping to select and prepare just the “right” images for this volume. I’m also grateful to Michele Kestenholz for his exceptional work on the design and layout of this book. Both Kim and Michele helped ensure that this special tribute would be up to Mrs. Fleming’s standards. Thanks, also, to Bill Eichner, Melissa Eichner, Sharon Creech Rigg, and Michael Ulku-Steiner for reading the manuscript at various stages and for offering valuable insights and recommendations.

I also want to express my gratitude to Michael Aeschliman for providing the excellent biography of Mrs. Fleming that appears at the end of this book. In a few pages he has captured a remarkable life. Michael's countless other contributions to this volume also have been invaluable.

Kevin Smith, husband of Lisa Smith (Chairman of the Board of TASIS England), first suggested this project after the memorial service for Mrs. Fleming in England on February 19, 2009. His recommendation sparked my interest and that of many others.

I am indebted to many other people for their help with and support for this book. Many individuals have provided me with encouragement, quotations to consider for inclusion, useful suggestions, and assistance while preparing this publication.

I want to offer a special word of gratitude to my daughter, Karin Leuthy, TE '88, for spending many hours reviewing this manuscript and for offering valuable recommendations for making this book stronger. Karin's reminiscences and astute observations of Mrs. Fleming through the eyes of a student have added immeasurably to the quality of this book. Her TASIS education has served her well.

Finally, my biggest debt of gratitude must go to Mrs. Fleming for her wise, witty, and inspiring words.

The Editor



Mrs. Fleming's speech to alumni at a reception in New York in 2002 seemed to be an ideal way to introduce this volume of her quotations. These remarks cover not only some of the history of TASIS, but also use many of the quotations that Mrs. Fleming found inspiring throughout her lifetime. In her usual self-deprecating manner, Mrs. Fleming talks about collecting other people's wisdom because she is too busy with mortgages to be wise herself.

Mortgages or not, the pages that follow this New York speech demonstrate that Mrs. Fleming was very wise indeed.



Good evening, how wonderful to see you! You didn't think I'd make it, did you?

They stuffed me with straw at Heathrow, gave me a Bourbon Old Fashioned and put me in a space capsule that carried me straight to Room 607 at the Plaza Hotel, only three blocks from here! So here I am and so happy to be here with you – and to have so many of you here. For I am a collector, a collector of too many birthdays, as you know! A collector of other people's children, all of you!

I also collect headmasters, some very special people – we are fortunate indeed, as several of them are here this evening. I also am a collector of mortgages, lots of mortgages, on school buildings! As a hobby I collect wisdom – other people's wisdom, for I'm so

busy with those mortgages I don't have time to be wise myself, so I collect other people's wisdom, the sayings of the wise – wisdom I can live by.

Next January, in 2003, if I'm alive, I will have spent 70 years in education. Twenty years in my parents' school, until the US Navy commandeered it, and almost 50 years in TASIS. That long a period of time collecting children and memories inevitably blurs together, so I've tried to think of it in decades – not so much what the School accomplished in a certain decade or even who was headmaster in that specific period, but rather which words of wisdom kept ringing in my ears, filling my dreams, and driving me onward. The first decade in Locarno I'd just come from the States and was full of the spirit of America: “Nothing is impossible, the impossible just takes five minutes longer!” – “When the going gets tough, the tough get going!” – “Damn the torpedoes!” etc. Then my 12 students grew into 30, then 85. I was thrown out of the Villa Verbanella and couldn't find another one large enough in Locarno.

Two weeks before the students were due to arrive, I began my second decade, when I found a property in Lugano, Loreto, but half the students had to be housed in hotels which closed November 1st. So pavilions had to be built in six weeks to house those students. Considered crazy by Swiss banks, I couldn't borrow any money, but luckily I met Baron Thyssen who bought my purchase option to the property in exchange for a five-year lease, so at least I kept a roof over my head and the school, and the workmen loaned me the money to build the pavilions! Those days, I kept quoting,

“Two men looked out from prison bars, one saw mud and one saw stars.” Keep your eyes on the stars, Cris! Remember Williams College: “Climb high, Climb far, Your aim the sky, Your goal the star!”

Third decade. Of course within five years TESIS outgrew Loreto, so I went property-hunting again, this time to purchase one, as TESIS could not forever pick up its tents and be a nomad school. I found Villa de Nobili, our present, permanent, and beautiful TESIS base – it was for sale – money from where? Then I kept saying to myself: “There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune, omitted, all the voyage of one’s life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures” – thank you, Mr. Shakespeare.

I asked parents to please send the first semester’s tuition so I could buy a house to put their children in when they started school! They sent in their checks and de Nobili was acquired!! I didn’t tell those wonderful, trusting parents that I was going to move all their children to Andermatt for skiing in January so I could put heat in that new building! It began to dawn on me that I was in on a life commitment. I read somewhere that “Civilization is a race between education and chaos” (H. G. Wells). That line gripped me, became my passion, an obsession. Anytime I felt myself weakening, I repeated it. It became the motto and the destiny of TESIS.

Fourth decade. A wonderful Post Graduate Program had been added to TASIS and became a unique and powerful force – so strong that it needed its own housing. The present elegant Principe Leopoldo Hotel was almost bought, but the owner at the last minute upped the price by adding chandeliers and rugs, which so angered me I drove across town the same afternoon and bought Villa Negroni, which became the splendid seat of the PG and summer programs for a decade.

But enough of decades! Don't worry, I'll not walk you through any more. Even though I could tell you about the beautiful Monticello dormitory, a big new Palestra, about how the famous old "Bubble" was torn down, and finally about how the contiguous Allemann property, after 40 years of patience, was added to our campus. While these practical things were happening, as student numbers and demands grew, so convulsive social changes occurred – student revolts in colleges, drugs, total sexual promiscuity began taking over, political correctness began! The lines of Goldsmith crept into my mind. "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay," and Juvenal's "Affluence is more ruthless than war." And then the great Edmund Burke's assertion: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Our attention had to be concentrated on values! On moral issues, not just on physical improvements.

Then, September 11th happened and the chaos we'd been trying to fight through education opened up before us, a great canyon of chaos too terrifying to comprehend, to absorb, to under-

stand – the world changed forever! Our minds reached out for comfort – mine fell upon Dostoyevsky’s words: “Humaneness is only a habit, a product of civilization. It may completely disappear.” To which Paul Valéry had added, from the trenches of the Second World War, “Civilizations are mortal!” Those lines made me return to my deeply imbedded belief that education is the only way to fight chaos, and that TASIS’s commitment to this struggle must be intensified.

So courage we must have, and strengthened determination to stand straight and tall, to make TASIS one of the strongest “power points” in the world, in its education of the young of many nations in academic excellence and belief in those values of Western Civilization that have been fought for over the centuries in England, America, and Switzerland – civil liberty, equality under law, human dignity (the right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness), peace and freedom, hard work, and prosperity. Not a bad menu for TASIS students from 44 different countries to be exposed to values that we hope they will take back to their own country to add to those of their nation that are noble and worth preserving.

Speech to alumni, 2002



BEAUTY AND THE ARTS

Not only did Mrs. Fleming insist that her schools and programs be in beautiful settings, she also expected that other beautiful touches be part of the education of the young people in her care. Along with beautiful lawns, gardens, vistas, and furnishings, Mrs. Fleming also expected beautiful flowers as centerpieces, linen tablecloths, candles, and proper dress and table manners. Quoting the words of James Rorimer, Director of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mrs. Fleming recorded in her book, "Familiarity with beauty can only breed more beauty."



My dreams, the landscape of my mind, have always been filled with beautiful buildings situated in beautiful settings spread around the world and always inhabited by hundreds of beautiful young creatures.

Speech on the dedication of Villa Monticello, 1988



We are blessed indeed, each and every one of us, to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. TASIS believes that beauty should be the birthright of every human being born into this world. So breathe deeply and daily inhale for we believe you can store it, can reserve it to fight the ugliness in the world; to meditate upon it when you face a tough situation. Think about the millions

deprived of beauty, living in squalor and poverty – be thankful for the beauty we live in and that surrounds us.

Speech to parents and students, 2003



Happily, 90 years have given me time to catch up with my big nose! And about 50 years ago I decided that God gave it to me for real estate! I'm almost as good as the Catholic Church in finding beautiful properties...

Speech to faculty and staff, 2001



For me, a love of literature, the arts, and the performing arts is the heart and soul of education, for it grows throughout our entire lifetime, keeping alive the excitement of learning, creating constant enrichment in our leisure hours and throughout our long golden years.

Speech, 1993



It is rare that one's dreams come true during a lifetime. I am one of those lucky mortals whose dreams have almost all come true.

If we didn't all dream constantly of peace in this world I would say that the completion of this theatre makes all my dreams come true – for it symbolizes the sense of beauty, of timeless humanity, of

magic, that I hope will enter into the souls and remain with every student who comes to TESIS.

Speech at the opening of the Fleming Theatre in England, 1993



A diet plan will tell you to think *thin*. I say think *beautiful* – within yourself, your ideas, your thoughts, your spirit. Think beautiful as to how you look, how you feel, think beautiful in the room, in the home, the town you live in, and help them to become beautiful for there is no stronger enemy of ugliness than beauty, be that beauty physical in a sense of space that you create around you, or spiritual in the universe of your mind, in the sense of what man's spirit, your spirit, can achieve.

Speech to students and parents, 1981



The villa was perched high on a hill with a steep slope of trees and flowering bushes falling down to the lake – all breathtakingly beautiful. I stood there, exhausted but enchanted, and there came to me in that flood of moonlit beauty, that here there must be a school!

It was idyllic for young people – to live, to study, to play, to learn, in the midst of so much beauty, to fill their souls with it, to give them the will and the strength to fight the vast amount of ugliness in the world today.

Speech to students and parents, 2000

Beauty is a very, very important aspect of life on this planet.

Reminiscences from "Pushing all the Buttons", 2005



I cannot stand ugly physical surroundings. They say if I'm in a phone booth more than ten minutes, I'll decorate it and bring in flowers!

Speech to students and parents, 1973



“Two men looked out from prison bars:
One saw mud and one saw stars.”

I still have no idea where that quotation comes from (*source: Rev. Frederick Langbridge, English poet and religious writer*), but it often comes into my own mind, for it embodies such a powerful idea in such a few words. It contains indeed a whole philosophy of life, one we could all live by – the belief in and the search for what is highest and for beauty, the need for beauty and nobility in our lives as the only weapons with which to fight the ugly and degrading. And I speak not only of visual or aesthetic beauty but beauty of the spirit, of the heart of the human person, one's whole attitude toward life.


Speech to students and parents, 1997





EDUCATION AND WISDOM

Not surprisingly, the greatest number of quotations in this volume and in Mrs. Fleming's address book focus on the topic of education. When Mrs. Fleming founded her first school in Europe with twelve students (three of them her own children), it was to offer them a very special education – a quality American education with all of the benefits that Europe had to offer. The quotation that Mrs. Fleming often referred to as the motto of TASIS was: "Civilization is a race between education and catastrophe" (H.G. Wells). Among the other quotations on education special to Mrs. Fleming were: "Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave" (Lord Brougham), "Don't let school interfere with your education" (Mark Twain), "Education is the best provision for old age" (Aristotle), and "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance" (Derek Bok).



The reason I founded the TASIS schools was my belief that our best hope of defeating chaos was through good education. I hope that you have indeed found that TASIS has helped you become the kind of strong, skilled, healthy, open-minded, wise, and committed citizen that our country and the world so desperately need.

Yearbook message, 2003

I am not only the oldest lady you know but the proudest of the tribute you have paid me through your presence this evening, proud of TESIS – what it has become and what potential it has to sustain the power of education as the only power that can change the world.

Speech at 90th birthday celebration, 2000



Our crazy world at this moment in time seems to be dividing itself more and more into not only the “haves” and the “have-nots” but also into those who build and those who tear down, those who create and those who destroy, and the only thing that stands in between those two extremes is education.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1998



I look back on my life, a life that spans the period from the horse-drawn buggy and the great transatlantic ships to the space shuttle and the walk on the moon. My life started with the prosperity of the 1920s to switch harshly into the 30s and the years of the Great Depression.

While history was going on, I was fighting back! I started a school. I committed myself to living in Europe, to a life in education, the only hope the world has.

Article on TESIS, 2006

I believe that's what education is all about! No matter what is destroyed around you, what temples crumble, what values go out of style, what sand castles are washed away on the shore, man rebuilds – you start again – you fight on!

Speech to faculty and staff, 1992



Perhaps we do have something in common with Emily Dickinson (one of the most gifted women the world has known) – a knowledge that the truest values and the deepest understanding we can ever reach exist already within us. In so many ways the TASIS experience can be associated with traveling, with changing surroundings, with a place you come to and leave again; and yet I believe that a school like this one is not merely a campus and some classrooms, or a stop on the way between childhood and college. It is – it must be – a step on that inner journey which does not demand that we ever go anywhere, yet which makes us awaken, slowly or suddenly, to the fullest meaning of our own existence.


If we cannot find paradise amid the daily demands and the practical necessities with which we must cope, we can at least pause and realize that at some moments in our time together here, we have possibly glimpsed something infinite, something eternal, about our own being. This realization is the purpose behind your real education; the journey will continue to be arduous, but the rewards will be with you all along the way.

Yearbook message, 1977



The magnitude of the mess our world is in right now seems almost too overwhelming to be tackled, but the horror of letting it slide into anarchy is not too far from reality and leaves us no option but to roll up our sleeves and get on with the job of true education, not to train the young to live in the world but to change it!

Speech to faculty and staff, 1994



Most important of all, the status of freedom and independence for TESIS allows us to take a stand on both skills and values, and that to me is what education is all about – not only the absorption of pure facts, as important as many of them are, but the teaching of values and the transmission of high levels of skill.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



Just aim for total immersion! So, in a school, you aim for immersion in the subject matter of the classroom, in the chemistry laboratory, on the sports field, in the theatre... You aim for as much exposure as possible in the fervent hope that something will be absorbed. No matter what our individual theory of how it is done or our different approach as to the business of education, we all know that we have one goal in common. That is to give each of our students as broad an introduction as is possible to the world, representing as it does man's cumulative knowledge, his vision and even his "impossible dreams."

Article in educational journal, 1973

Setting standards and keeping them high are, of course, what a good school and education are all about. That is why you've been at TASIS and that is what I hope and pray you will carry away with you – high standards that you will demand of yourself and of those persons who surround you.

Speech to students, 1982



I'm reminded of the lyric from *South Pacific* –

“You've got to be taught to hate and fear
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear
You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives hate
You've got to be carefully taught.”

So why can't we reverse this tragic fact and replace the teaching of hate and fear with the teaching of understanding and respect for the dignity of all human beings? If we have to be taught to fear and hate as millions through the centuries have been taught, how can and why can't we teach caring and love? The only way we can is through education – as appalling as the magnitude of the job is. The hour is late, but the need is urgent. TASIS has already made a small beginning, but we must expand and strengthen our efforts and our dedication.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1996

... hold high before you the flame of knowledge, let it light the darkness around you so that all our fellow beings may one day live in its radiance.

Yearbook message, 1964



Your commitment now is to study and absorb as much wisdom as possible – you’re building your “war chest” against the day after university and maybe even after graduate study, when you go into battle in your own country, in international relations, in an international relief organization, or in education – to me, as you know, the most important of all professions, and the only way to win the race!

Yearbook message, 2002



I was undone when the chorus sang the closing song (from the musical *Working*) – “Everyone should have something to point to, something to be proud of, some way to stand tall in the crowd.”

How true these words are – “Everyone should have something to point to.” These simple words somehow encapsulate what TESIS is trying to do, to give each one of you the desire and ability to create something to point to!

Speech to students and parents, 1998



... even after 34 faculty dinners the only possible topic of interest to all of us is education. Education is the most important concept and activity in the world, the highest calling to which we can dedicate ourselves, and the challenge not to change the substance of true education but to defend and transmit it. Thus the only concern of a good school should be with growing stronger, with becoming more contagious in its commitment to excellence and high standards.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1989



How do you start a school?

For me the recipe is simple! Find a beautiful property, both house and surroundings, for young people need and deserve to be surrounded with beauty. It's like a security blanket that will always remain with them, no matter what the rest of life may bring. Fill this setting with young people from all over the world, because the world has become so very small. Fill all their waking hours with commitment to study, sports, the arts, and responsibility to others. Instruct – stretch them in all areas. They don't know the amazing potential they have! Place in this “house” very special human beings as teachers, friends, counselors, and role models, people who have a sense of the excitement of life and learning – of the huge challenge this world presents, and above all, great faith in their young charges. Sprinkle and cover the whole wonderful

concoction, basting frequently with generous portions of TLC – tender loving care!

Believe me, it's a foolproof recipe!

Interview with John Amis, 1990



I sincerely hope that your education at TASIS will enable you to cope with changes that are forced on you and also to help you initiate change for the better in your own life and in the lives of others.

Yearbook message, 2003



Ideas, not economics or military forces, have ultimately determined the course of history through the ages. Education for this world of ideas is the most priceless and powerful resource of any nation.

Speech to alumnae of Radcliffe College, 1984



Once upon a time, a child asked me if I were rich. I told him that I was the richest person in the entire world because I have made the best possible investment available to mankind. I have invested in people. I have invested in education. I have invested in you.

Comments heard on numerous occasions over the years

Think of the magnitude of this potential you hold in your own head, heart, and hands by being in the process of getting a good education. Think of the power for good you actually possess. Develop it well and use it. Urgent needs exist in so many areas of our world, and so does the brief span of one lifetime to change it! But one by one, and in conscientious collaboration with others, you can do something to improve this world.

Yearbook message, 1998




And that, my dear young people, is what education is all about – stretching the muscles of your mind instead of the muscles of your legs – and in the process stretching also the strings of your soul.

Speech to students, 1979



DREAMS

Over the years, Mrs. Fleming encouraged students in her programs and schools to follow their dreams – and to dream big. She often cited TASIS as the fulfillment of her dreams (and the hard work of many people). Near the back of her address book she wrote, “Some men must dream broadly and guilelessly, if only to balance those who never dream at all” (Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.).



Please keep on dreaming for TASIS long after I'm gone, and long will you remember this weekend as a splendid tribute from a daughter to a mother, a splendid tribute from all the wonderfully faithful and loyal people who have built TASIS, and above all, remember this weekend as a celebration of education!

Speech at 90th birthday celebration, 2000



The message of dedication of this theatre is from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* –

“How far this little candle throws his beams
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.”

These lines symbolize for me my most fervent dream – that every young person who goes forth from TASIS carries with them a sense of beauty, of magic, of wonder, to share with others, and a desire to throw their light like the beam of that little candle far and wide in this naughty world.

Speech at the opening of the Fleming Theatre in England, 1993



I hope I symbolize not only old age, but also the power of dreams for my 90 long years. And TASIS proves that you can make dreams come true – if you dream hard enough and work hard enough and pray hard enough...

Speech, 2000



For me the opening of a new school year is always a crossroads, a time when we can choose the high road instead of the low, with all its challenges, its rocky road bed, its road blocks, its steep ascents. It is a time full of hope, promise, and high dreams – after a summer of relaxation when we all “slept and dreamt that life was beauty, we now awake and realize that life is duty.” It is a time when we can choose to be bold, to swim against the current, to dare!

Speech to faculty and staff, 1989

What a special word – “wonder!” It conjures up small children lifting their heads high, their eyes wide and a sense of excitement, waiting for the unknown, the unexpected to happen. Wonder – magic – dream – can you imagine what a sad world this would be without what these three words portray?

These forty years have truly been my wonder years. May all of you match mine in whatever realm you choose. But never lose your sense of wonder or belief in magic and never stop following your dream!

Yearbook message, 1996



I want to remind you of the importance of having a dream, a noble dream. Henry David Thoreau says, “If you have built castles in the air your work need not be lost: that is where they should be. Now put foundations under them.”

Speech to alumni, 2006



I ask you to slip into high gear. The world is anxiously waiting for you; it needs people who are willing to live dangerously, willing to serve others to make the world a better place. I myself have lived “dangerously” for TASIS, taking risks for years to find students, to hire strong teachers, to house our schools, and to find enough money to fund all that. At the same time, I have kept my sense

of direction. Setting the bar higher or making a dream come true gives greater meaning to your life. It is the only recipe for satisfaction and for happiness.

Yearbook message, 2005



When one looks onto the long road ahead, when one contemplates the work to be done, the dreams to be achieved, one feels an overwhelming frustration that one is given only one lifetime when two or three would hardly suffice.

Article, 1965



You'll say I'm just a dreamy old dame – hoping for “pie in the sky.” But that's what TESIS and education are all about! You're constantly dreaming of and working for the perfection of man – or at least for true betterment of the human race.

Speech to faculty and students, 1973



Make a difference in the world. These are big hopes and dreams, but you have to hope big and dream big to have bigger dreams come true.

Speech to students and parents, 1998

I have always believed if you live long enough and work hard enough you can make dreams come true. This beautiful building with all it contains is surely part of my dreams come true but I want us to keep marching up the hill – striving toward the sky, as we create a better world.

Speech at opening of the Palestra, 1999



I hope you go forth with noble ideas, with crazy wonderful dreams and with the sure sense that no matter how impossible they seem you will make them come true.

Speech to students and parents, 1981



INTERNATIONALISM

One of the key reasons that Mrs. Fleming founded an American school in Europe was her belief in the importance of internationalism. She was convinced that if young people from across the globe had the opportunity to live, work, and play together (to get to know each other), then the world would be a much better and safer place. As she wrote in her address book, “Peace is a journey of a thousand miles that must be taken one step at a time” (Lyndon Johnson).



You ask, “What in the world is TESIS?” A sanctuary? A refuge from the storm? I answer it is not an escape; it is an attempt to create a world model – the way architects build a miniature model before they construct the actual permanent edifice.

Yearbook message, 1994



We must bring together old dreams with new realities into a fusion of international cooperation and communication, ever more essential as the world pinches us closer and closer together.

Yearbook message, 1975

The world has become so small that it compels us to have our thinking become big, if we are ever to make the big dream come true.

Yearbook message, 1991



People ask me why at this point in my life I am still traveling around the world building new schools. My answer is, because it needs doing... What we are doing, or at least attempting to do, is to create not international schools but international human beings, men and women who are capable of moving easily in any society and any civilization on the face of the earth, people who do not have to overcome the barriers of prejudice or even unfamiliarity in communicating with their fellow human beings, no matter what their backgrounds.

Speech, 1983



I'll never start a school in a country where I can't say "ice" in the local language.

Quoted in an article by John Stifler, 1981



Youth is the best time to form the impressions that can advance international understanding. Together... with mutual understanding

gained through language and personal meetings... a new generation can help to keep our unified culture in peace.

Message in TISIS catalogue, 1960s



I have exciting news to report to you. We have been accorded the privilege of offering the International Baccalaureate curriculum... This is an old dream of mine come true, for the original purpose in founding TISIS was to contribute, through the education of young people, to a true and far-reaching internationalism.

Article in a TISIS alumni magazine, 1979




I want to believe as I age that the dynamic of TISIS will go on forever – that it will continue to bring young people of the world together with a shared vision that the world is really one big family, that no matter what our color, race, or creed, we are all part of the human species, we are all human beings. All we need to bring us together is education, education to give us freedom from poverty, disease, and war. It sounds like a tall order but through education it can be achieved, and TISIS must take the lead.

Letter to alumni, 2001

Americans' complacency in learning other languages has always bothered me. Communication between individuals or nations is difficult enough even in a world grown small – the knowledge of another person's tongue becomes vital. How else to overcome cultural differences and attitudes of mind?

It was this pursuit of languages and living in other countries to learn them that gave me a deep conviction of the need to bring the young people of the world together, to educate them together...

Speech to alumnae of Radcliffe, 1984



As my parents were affected deeply by the Depression, they sent me to a language school in Perugia, Italy, hoping to spare me some of the emotional distress. That summer in Perugia, I met a charming young man from Zurich. As my German was awful and his English wasn't much better, we had to find other ways to communicate. Oh, it was a wonderful summer!

Interview with John Amis, 1990



Maybe foolishly, but forty years ago I did dream of a school or schools that by bringing young people closely together in their young and formative tender years we might be able to “bond” the world together in such a way that ties of understanding, compassion, love, and a sense of reality would create a saner, safer, better world.

Speech to parents and students, 1996

It could be the recognition of the reality that “we are all created equal,” that differences of race, color, and creed are truly insignificant when measured against the basic fact that every human being has a mind, a body, and a soul which should be sacred and inviolate, never to be abused by another member of the human race. Is this not what we really mean by international understanding?

Yearbook message, 1991



The most strategic challenges for any country or civilization will always be the education of its young. And human understanding must advance to match and surpass that of our too materialistic technology. This can be achieved only by heightened dedication to internationalism and to learning.

Article in a TESIS alumni magazine, 1976



... I had this dream of starting something that was outside and beyond the narrow frontiers that countries draw around themselves. I was really aiming at an international school. And in Switzerland, a democratic country with international traditions going back 700 years, I found what I was looking for.

Article in “Homes and Gardens” magazine, 1974



CARING

All of those who attended or worked in one of Mrs. Fleming's programs or schools were expected to receive the best care possible. Even when the number of people in her programs made it difficult for Mrs. Fleming to know all of their names, she worked hard to get to know and to show an interest in each student, teacher, parent, and staff member. If you were in a room with fifty other people, Mrs. Fleming had the ability to make you feel like you were the most important person present. Mrs. Fleming often reminded those she cared about that they had a responsibility to care for others. As she recorded at the back of her address book, "Somehow I do not believe the greatest threat to our future is from bombs or guided missiles. I don't think our civilization will die that way. I think it will die when we no longer care – when the spiritual forces that make us wish to be right and noble die in the hearts of men" (Lawrence Gould).



Caring is TASIS's greatest strength – in all its schools and in all its summer programs, and it must always remain so – especially as we try to bind the young of the world together, with our student body representing more than forty different nations.

Speech, 2000



Those of us who love TASIS like to think of it as a caring community with constant regard for others' well-being – a cheery “Good morning” to those we pass as we start the day, a stretched out hand or arm to those who seem sad, depressed, or worried – it is so easy to show a sign of caring.

Speech to parents and students, 2003



So for the benefit of our new faculty and as a reminder to our old, I cannot stress strongly enough the enormous importance of caring – caring as the core of human existence without which we are threatened with chaos.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1993



Caring – about each other as you work together, about your students, about our wonderful staff who serve us so faithfully – the

tradespeople who come to us – the people who live in our village, or town – thus in ever-widening circles – people of other nations – many of our students who come to us as a haven from their troubled lands – stretch out a hand to them!

Speech to faculty and staff, 1982



So many people bemoan the quality and the character of today's young people spoiled as they are by materialism, by too soft a life, by television, by drugs, and by a seeming lack of moral values. But when one stops to ponder, one must recognize and be thankful for the fact that our young have developed in many commendable ways – they care much more for others and for people less fortunate than they; ecologically, they are aware and caring for the kind of world they will live in and will leave for other generations; they know and become friends with people from all over the world.

Yearbook message, 1995



(We must) fulfill the TASIS mission of training the young to care and to care on a global scale, to care for the vast number of fellow human beings far less fortunate than they whom we must not abandon, if we expect to live in a world at peace.

Speech to parents, 1979

... you are here to stretch that splendid capacity inside you called caring – caring for each other, for your immediate friends and associates – caring even for those countless thousands you do not know.

Speech to students, 1979



You ask, what can I, one small person, do against the enormity of it all?

And I answer you, start in a small but daily way – becoming the kind of human being who cares first about immediate things and immediate people – your roommate, your friends, your family, some sick person you know who is suffering, some old person who is lonely, a gesture, a note, a word, a call, the smallest thoughtful action that means so much to those needing it – the reaching out of a hand – in doing so, as you grow, you become that kind of person... You are no longer one small person, you have become a force, a force to be counted, a force that can change current events, can change history!

Speech to students, 1991





HUMOR

Humor was one of the last categories selected for this volume. In retrospect, it probably should have been one of the first. Mrs. Fleming possessed a wonderful sense of humor. She could tell a risqué joke (and she knew many) with a twinkle in her eye and was often self-deprecating. (There were many faculty/staff banquets where she reminded us that she was 120 years old and still a “virgin” – since she was born under the sign of Virgo on September 10th.) Mrs. Fleming recorded the following joke in her address book, “(There was a) man who when hearing a knock, opened his door to discover ‘Death,’ the Grim Reaper, awaiting him there on his doorstep. In his shock, the man asked, ‘Can’t I do community service instead?’” And Mrs. Fleming, a great admirer of ice cream and musicals, also wrote the following lines in her book: “Climb every mountain, Swim every stream, Follow every rainbow, Till you find ice cream.”




If you can say “ice” in any language, my dear, you can survive!

Reminiscence of Peter Stevens, 1990

(While inspecting the tidiness of dormitory rooms) In one room there was a poster of Henry Kissinger – stretched out stark naked with nothing on but his sunglasses. If I had to choose my “playboy” I’m not sure it would be Henry Kissinger.

Speech to students and parents, 1973




During the course of years we’ve had libraries in laundry rooms and chemistry labs in wine cellars, but this is the first time we’ve had an assembly hall in a shed!

Speech to parents at TASIS England, 1979



My mother had hoped and prayed for a beautiful child, but I was anything but beautiful, then or now, with a very large nose that I ran after for thirty years before I could catch up and come to terms with it.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



The article (of clothing) that I hated most was a large black velvet hat with a sky blue satin lining under the brim, streamers down the back and roses in the front. I was eight years old and was supposed to wear that hat to Sunday School. Instead, I managed to hide it in the hedge in front of the church, hoping some dog would eat it while I was inside, but not even a dog could stomach it.

Interview with John Amis, 1990

My father would tell the story of compromise in marriage: the wife wants to sleep on percale sheets, the husband wants cotton, so they compromise and sleep on percale.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



With the Thanksgiving holiday coming up, two months after the opening (of TASIC in 1956), I drove to Paris in my two-seater MG all dressed up in a black velvet hat with a veil, to advise the U.S. Embassy and Art Buchwald, then a reporter for the *Tribune* in Paris, of the historical significance of the opening of TASIC. They were, unfortunately, not impressed with either the event or my hat, so I drove back dismayed, but proud of a 30-pound frozen American turkey that I'd conned out of the Embassy lunchroom. The turkey sat straight up in the seat beside me all the way back, to celebrate our first Thanksgiving with a band of Hungarian refugees living next door.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



I'll never hire a headmaster who can't make a proper Old Fashioned (bourbon cocktail).

Comment to Lyle Rigg on numerous occasions

In order to travel, I had to create my own trips, so in 1936 I chaperoned a trip to Europe with five girls only five minutes younger than I was.

Reminiscences from "Pushing all the Buttons", 2005



One program was called "Fording Europe" with two Ford Phaetons, a top-down open sports model Ford, ten beautiful girls, and a new husband – wasn't I courageous? I thought if I was going to lose him it might as well be when I was young enough to get another!

Speech to students, 1994



Since you've just met my dear friend John Amis, I want to tell you something he said to me the other day – "Cris, the only sport you're good at is jumping to conclusions!"

Speech at the opening of the Fleming Theatre in England, 1993




When her good friend Dana Cotton once said, "Cris, I want your undivided attention," she instantly quipped, "Dana, I never give any man my undivided attention."

Reminiscence of her daughter, 2010

Don't you think you could go a bit faster, dear? (Comment to driver going 140 kilometers per hour on the autostrada while offering him a cracker with cheese AND a gin and tonic)

*Reminiscence of Kate Woodward, Fernando Gonzalez,
and others, 1990*



You'll recognize me as the lady wearing the mink coat and gold bracelets. It's only an old one though, my dear, you understand.

Comments in arranging initial interview with Marcia Page, 1970



I was fairly good and very interested in language and literature but a disaster in science – thrown out of biology because I couldn't bring myself to cut up an earthworm, a "D-" in astronomy, thanks exclusively to the compassion of the professor who knew I'd grow old before passing the science requirement.

Speech at Radcliffe alumnae luncheon, 1984



My daughter says châteaux become me. My Business Manager says it's an affectation, meaning more likely an aberration! I admit I have a weakness for châteaux and have gone through two already and am currently hoping a third will drop into my lap. It's not

that I want to be a châtelaine with lots of keys jangling around my waist. It's because I think, with the exception of the plumbing, that châteaux are wonderful places in which to install schools.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



Well, hello, hello, hello! They tell me you're planning to write a musical about me. I don't know who in the world would be interested in an old woman who starts schools. Well, don't blame me when the show closes before opening night!

Interview with Todd Fletcher, 2000



Everyone from our computer specialists to every faculty member and every secretary asks for another computer, or a newer, more up-to-date model. It's like breeding rabbits – when one says to the other, “This is going to be fun – wasn't it!”

Speech to faculty and staff, 1995



I'm a woman with no patience, and I can't stand to read instructions. So I never do. On one occasion when I was driving on the Italian Autostrada from Florence to Lugano, my car broke down. I walked a few meters to the nearest S.O.S. telephone box. There were three buttons – blue, green, and red – with, of course,


instructions. But not liking to read instructions and thinking “what pretty colors,” I pushed all three buttons! Lo and behold, within not many minutes the repair truck arrived, and then, closely following it, an ambulance! Not far behind, not much later, came the sirens of a fire truck! What splendid service, I thought. When they asked me, “What’s wrong, signora?” I said, “I don’t know, that’s why I called you!”

Speech to students, 1996



SETBACKS

As those who are familiar with the history of the TASIS schools and programs know, not all of the TASIS ventures have been successful financially. Mrs. Fleming was never afraid to admit that “you win some, you lose some.” And she was never afraid to take risks. Although she experienced some setbacks throughout her long career in education, Mrs. Fleming still embraced the motto of Williams College, “Climb high, climb far, your goal the sky, your aim the star.”



I have had a few setbacks, of course, but I never lose any sleep over them. I just go on to the next project because you can't expect to win them all. One does make mistakes.

Interview with Gwen Martinez, 2001



As I was growing up, my father would often counsel me by saying, “Learn to make decisions quickly. Be decisive. You won't make any more mistakes on the average than if you vacillate or can't make up your mind.”

Interview with John Amis, 1990

As each year brings its gifts of greater knowledge, remember that these gifts are also burdens. They have been passed on to you from all mankind. In many ways you are already rich with mankind's treasure already heavy upon you. In a very direct way, it has been through your successes and your failures that we as a school have succeeded and failed in this past year. And in the years to come, in ways perhaps less direct, but in ways more profound, it will be through your successes that all mankind shall succeed, and through your failures that all mankind shall fail. These are not things to be measured merely in grades and graduations. They are measured in men and women – often in life and death.

Yearbook message, 1963



I have a weakness for châteaux! I bought one in an afternoon, against my lawyer's advice. Everyone had told me not to go into France, but being pigheaded and strong-willed, wanting to get what I wanted, I did it anyway... It's just one more Fleming folly because it didn't work out!

Interview with Gwen Martinez, 2001



Even when I've had things that have really failed, like France – the château in France – I've never regretted them because I always feel you learn from them. You learn maybe what not to do and the value of proper timing and positioning. You do learn from the experience, as long as you win more than you lose.

Interview with John Amis, 1990

I will bare my soul and admit that TASIS has opened and closed more programs than probably any other institution. You may say this is because I don't read instructions! Especially if they're in Greek! Or because I don't believe them if I do read them, especially market research documents when they tell me I shouldn't do something that I want and intend to do anyway!

Interview with John Amis, 1990



I think even failures are important, so I have never felt badly when people say I should never have gone to Cyprus or Greece or France, or I should never have done so and so; perhaps I shouldn't have, but I think it had some validity and it may show the way for other expansions or other enterprises. I think in general the things that you have not done are the things that you regret. It is never the things I have done, it is always what I have not done that I have regretted. And there haven't been many of those!

Interview with John Amis, 1990



I don't suppose many people cry over spilt milk. It's a waste of time and energy and certainly you've acquired some sort of wisdom from doing it. I can't think of any particular thing I've done to regret.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



I have never been afraid to take risks.

Reminiscences from "Pushing all the Buttons", 2005



CHALLENGES

Mrs. Fleming realized that not only the world, but also individuals faced increasingly difficult and critical challenges. She also believed that the world's best chance for survival was for individuals to face their challenges. Mrs. Fleming encouraged her students not to be disheartened by the challenges facing them and the world, but to meet them head on. Recognizing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ability to inspire and motivate millions to face their struggles and to make a difference, Mrs. Fleming recorded the following words in her book:

Darkness cannot drive out darkness;
Only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate;
Only love can do that.
Hate multiplies hate,
Violence multiplies violence,
And toughness multiplies toughness
In a descending spiral of destruction...
The chain reaction of evil –
Hate begetting hate,
Wars producing more wars –
Must be broken, or we shall be plunged
Into the darkness of annihilation.

We are all reaching and stretching to attain some dreamed-of goal. The true excitement is that the challenge is infinite. We never arrive. It is the reaching that counts.

Yearbook message, 1982



We hope we have stretched you, we hope we have taught you to welcome struggle! To stand up to challenge! It will make your life worthwhile and rewarding, and your constant fight against all kinds of ugliness will make the world a better place for all the human beings who live in it.

Speech to parents and students, 2000



TASIS has many strengths, but its deepest, most abiding strength is something hard to see at first. It eludes any label, any name; but I should like to call it a strength of heart, for certainly the TASIS dream would not have its counterpart in reality without the emotional attachment which so many teachers and students have formed, in one way and another, for this school. Some of those who have been the most critical of TASIS while here – and TASIS needs its critics – have missed TASIS the most after they have departed. As you leave TASIS, I expect you to be looking forward to those challenges ahead about which you have heard so much.

Yearbook message, 1976


You have come here to school, your parents have entrusted you to us in the hope that we would challenge you to stretch yourself – to make the most of your abilities that you're not aware that you have.

Speech to students, 1979




Our battle in this century is against crime, poverty, homelessness, massacre, and starvation in other parts of the world, devastating diseases such as cancer and AIDS. Half of the world's human beings live under horrifying conditions, while we, the fortunate ones, live in safety and comfort, both of which are threatened by allowing these other evils to exist.

Speech to parents and students, 2000



Traditionally, the TASIS formula for an annual check on the headmaster, on the strength of his character, and especially the strength of his nerves, is to each year build a new building or convert an old one, whichever requires more work, more money, more stress, than any other project we can dream up.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1998



“When we build let us think we build forever” – so says the theme of the (TASIS) yearbook. Those words are symbolic to me, not so much of our school campuses and buildings in Lugano and in England but of the human beings we are trying to build inside

those buildings. Building for each student a rich, rewarding, service-to-others life and hoping our students will help build for society a sane world with “liberty and justice for all” – a mammoth task considering the decadence of our present world.

Yearbook message, 1999



... you and others like you may help the world shed its scars. It's a big world. Too big, you may feel. Never! ... choose your place and do not hide from its problems. They are big, but so are you.

Yearbook message, 1962



... to our new students – you will have a lot of freedom, but as always freedom means the acceptance of responsibility. Several of our faculty tell me that one of the main reasons so many students have come back this year is because TESIS respects and grants freedom. But remember that freedom has always been the most cherished state of being. People have fought and died for freedom, more than any other quality of life, more than for wealth or possessions. We want to give you freedom – don't abuse it. Prove yourselves worthy of it, mature and wise in its use.

Speech to students, 1975



Such a visit (to a developing country) underlined for me suddenly and vividly the basic problems in today's world – the terrifying

extremities of wealth and poverty, of the “haves” and the “have-nots,” of the overfed and the starving – and of our attitude of acceptance or ignorance of these appalling contrasts.

Yearbook message, 1993



How much are we personally prepared to sacrifice? How much of our own affluence and materialism are we prepared to shed? Tough questions? And I must direct them especially to you as you leave TASIS. This burden will go with you just as it will remain with us until we change our present world. May we all have the strength, the wisdom, the vision, the compassion, and the commitment to pick up our share of individual responsibility to solve this challenge to man's survival.

Yearbook message, 1989



There is no such word as *can't* in my vocabulary and if you use it, you won't work for me.

Reminiscences from "Pushing all the Buttons", 2005



You must exercise your curiosity. Maintain a sense of adventure, step up to challenges. There is no excuse for being bored in a world with so many wonderful places, populated by such fabulous people.

Speech to students (date unknown)

... slip into high gear. Far too many people lead their lives in “neutral.”

Yearbook message, 2005



It (the opening of Villa Negroni) was all a challenge and I’m afraid I always need a challenge. Making something beautiful is very important to me. The challenge of Villa Negroni was to restore something basically beautiful, which had been allowed to run down, into a living building and place again.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



The constant need of a challenge – sounds like a disease, doesn’t it? ... I enjoy the challenge of anything you must do to make something successful.

Interview with John Amis, 1990



At sixty-six (years of age) I got itchy for another challenge and I took a look at England (for a school).

Reminiscences from “Pushing all the Buttons”, 2005



When things get tough, put lipstick on a stiff upper lip.

Advice to daughters on numerous occasions





LEADERSHIP

Mrs. Fleming expected her students to be leaders, not followers. One of her fondest dreams was for students in her schools to become positive leaders in various fields in their own countries. Although Mrs. Fleming admired many leaders (from Mother Teresa to Nelson Mandela to Ronald Reagan), the leader mentioned most often in her speeches and writings was Winston Churchill. Among the inspiring words of Winston Churchill she wrote in her address book were, "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never." Mrs. Fleming also recognized that good, strong leaders often were tested. As she noted in her book, "Good timber does not grow with ease, the stronger wind, the stronger trees!" (Douglas Malloch).



You are here to learn leadership, not to be a follower, for followers are often led down the wrong path. Be strong in your beliefs, fight for your own high values.

Speech to parents and students, 2003

Some thirty or more years ago there was a show on Broadway called, *Stop the World – I Want to Get Off!* How many people amidst the horrors of the 20th Century must have wanted to cry out: “Stop! Stop! Stop! It’s too awful!” Yet some leaders were the very creators of those horrors while others had the courage, the strength, and the faith to fight them, to stand up against the ugliness and the nightmares enacted by truly evil men. Fortunately for us, those individuals who fought triumphed, as good over evil must.

Yearbook message, 2000



A very notable man and good friend of mine, Sir Peter Smithers, once said to me, it was an accepted fact in his day that you were sent to an independent boarding school to be educated for leadership. That is to be educated to assume responsibility for yourself, your community, and your country.

Leadership – that is what education is all about, that is the mission of education. That is why TASIS and other good schools exist.

I don’t mean “leadership” in a political sense. I mean the kind of leader who in one way or another subtly or visibly affects the lives of all around them and in small or larger ways makes a better person of those whose lives they touch. A role model, if you will, yet so much more, because of that certain something they give off – that sense of life as an exciting and wonderful thing! Let’s try to turn all our students into that kind of person, that kind of leader.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1997

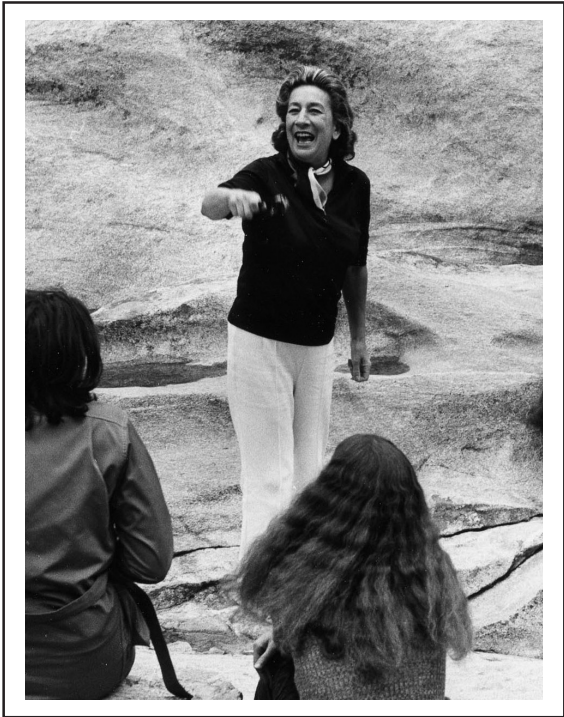
If I stand on my mountaintop and look down at the last ninety years – or if I look up – outward and up at the next ninety years, what do I see? This is what I hope to see: TASIS bursting at the seams with very special young people, from all over the world, preparing themselves for leadership roles in their own countries, where they will strive to eliminate poverty, hunger, disease, exploitation, injustice, and war!

Yearbook message, 2000



I hope and pray that as we begin this new academic year we feel a new urgency to train our young people for leadership, for responsibility through knowledge and understanding to help stem the tide towards chaos.

Speech to faculty and staff, 2003



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Just as it was a tradition at graduation for students to receive several kisses from Mrs. Fleming, it also was a tradition for them to receive a reminder that they were expected to make a difference in the lives of others and in the world. Students in TASIS programs were expected to participate in service projects and to find other ways to make their communities better places. The importance of making a difference was underscored as Mrs. Fleming wrote the following in her address book, “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give” (Winston Churchill). Mrs. Fleming also included this quotation in her book, “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing” (Edmund Burke).



TASIS is a microcosm of what the world should and could be, though it also seems microscopic when its small size is considered against the enormity of the mess the world is in. But in the same way that an individual can make a difference, so a small enclave of determined and dedicated human beings can make a difference.

Yearbook message, 1995

So, I expect each and every one of you, my dear students, to make a difference, in fact to make the world a better place for every human being to live in peace and prosperity.

Yearbook message, 2008




A year ago Mark Aeschliman (a TASIS art teacher) was exhibiting in an art show in Italy. Since it was near my home in Italy and because it was Mark, I naturally attended the show. And since I am now a wobbly old lady, I had to sit down immediately as I entered the gallery.

I suddenly realized that I was encircled by a large ring – hanging over my head – and as I looked up, I realized the ring was loaded with hundreds of little miniature soldiers circling the ring.

“What is the meaning of this?” I asked the gallery director who told me the artist created this work of art to portray the 5th circle of Hell in Dante’s *Inferno* in the *Divine Comedy*. Dante believed that mankind was eternally doomed to warfare, that it would never cease. Without thinking who am I to challenge Dante, I thought this is nonsense – of course we can, in fact we must stop warfare. Stop the causes of warfare especially now when warfare is going on all around the world!

So the next day I bought this work of art and brought it to TESIS saying TESIS will show the world that something can be done – that TESIS will make a difference! With every good deed we would replace a soldier with a miniature *santon* (Provençal statue).

Speech at school assembly, 2004



Even small steps, but taken daily, start producing results – a kind word, a helping hand, an effort to speak another language, an offer of help to someone small, weak, hurt, or sad.

Yearbook message, 2006



We have heaved a sigh of global relief that 1984 has come and half gone without Orwell's horrifying and fateful predictions coming true. Let us not, however, sit back complacently thinking all danger is past. Let us constantly remind ourselves that the freedom we so fortunately possess is denied to millions and millions of human beings. Let us live each day in such a way that we deserve it. Too often we take it for granted, too often we squander our energies and our time neglecting the great potential we have to help others gain freedom. The affluence, the ease of our lives, makes us forget that we are a very small percentage of the people on this planet who are blessed with liberty.

Yearbook message, 1984

Even though the magnitude of our problems seems overwhelming, through personal dedication every one of us can make a critical difference.

Yearbook message, 1987



I was looking out of the window at my small London garden when I heard a deafening noise and suddenly this enormous golden bird was flying high above my little patch of precious green – it was the Concorde on its last flight into Heathrow! It was breathtakingly beautiful – and I was filled with wonder. I knew it was made of metal but with the setting sun shining on it, it looked truly golden.

I suddenly realized I was witnessing the end of an era. I felt a strange affinity. As an old lady of 93 I am also the end of an era and also flying into the sunset. I could not help thinking of how many people, how many human beings, had crossed that vast expanse of water, the Atlantic Ocean, in that golden bird. Who were they? Where were they? Were they now alive or dead? Had they been important? Had they given their lives to some important achievement?

Inevitably, comparing the Concorde's end of an era, I fell to recall the hundreds, even thousands of young people who have passed through the portals of TASIS, who have loved it or hated it, were inspired by it or thought "the seats were too narrow!"

I couldn't help but feel a deep pride in the knowledge that so many students felt the TASIS experience had changed their lives, had led

them to a constant dedication to others, to somehow making the world a better place.

Yearbook message, 2004



In retrospect I'm ashamed that I've done so little to change history. Just living through it is not enough – we must all strive to change it; to somehow make the world a better place for all humans.

Speech to students, 1994



Fortunately for all of us there are men and women who selflessly strive and stretch and reach for amazing heights, who cannot live with themselves unless they are reaching out toward seemingly impossible achievements, reaching out to high goals, obsessed by their convictions of the urgency and magnitude of the tasks that need to be done.

Speech to students and parents, 1990



Conversations with my father convinced me that working with young people was my calling; that through education I could indeed make a difference in the world – one child at a time.

Interview with Todd Fletcher, 2000



AGE AND AGING

When Mrs. Fleming opened TASIS England in 1976, she was 66 years old. At an age when most people are retired or at least are thinking about retirement, Mrs. Fleming was just getting started. Among the quotes on aging in the back of her address book were the following: “To me old age is always fifteen years older than I am” (Bernard Baruch), and “Never regret growing old. Think of those to whom the pleasure is denied” (Albert Einstein).



I'm afraid, as I grow older – whether it's age or whether I'm getting arthritic – my spine gets stiffer!

Speech to faculty and staff, 1982



People introduce me as the founder and director of TASIS and I'm always shocked, for I'm simply the symbol – symbol of endurance. How can anything live to be that old, you ask, unless it's pickled or petrified? So I have become the inevitable and seemingly interminable symbol of TASIS. But as a symbol I'm really only a

representative of a splendid group of human beings who, over a period of 34 years, have given selflessly, unstintingly of themselves to make an idea come alive, to create the spirit that is TASIS.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1989



... once (while) talking with my lawyer I made a terrible slip and said, “*If and when I die...*”

Speech to faculty and staff, 1991



When I look back on the long years of my life I realize they’ve been remarkably pleasant, though I’m sometimes nostalgic for things or people that exist no longer.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1994



... one doctor referred me to another by saying I’m sending you a “youthful octogenarian” – octogenarian is not a word I use often. I thought it was a big fish – or am I thinking of an octopus – the kind of big fish you cut up and put in fish soup! I guess I do qualify as an octogenarian since I’m going to be 84 next week.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1994

One strange thing about growing old is that you start to compartmentalize your life. You have so many decades to look back upon and you're rather surprised and grateful that the dear Lord has granted you the health and the great privilege of living so long when so many of your friends are not so fortunate, and especially when you have a mission to accomplish and dreams that you hope to make come true.

Speech to parents and students, 1995



I feel blessed that the Lord has allowed me to have sixty-four years in education! I think I'd like to make it to the year 2000 just to see how much more can be accomplished and maybe I am just a little curious to see if the year 2000 feels differently from any other year! "Two thousand" sounds so elegant!

Speech to faculty and staff, 1997



I don't much care for Florida. It's full of old people. I won't even fly over the state.

A comment made frequently throughout her 70s, 80s, and 90s

As you know, I just turned 90 a couple of months ago. Some of the adorable children in our kindergarten can't even count to 90! When I was their age there was no such thing as a telephone – or an automobile – not to mention an airplane or a computer. Can you imagine it? My 90 years of life spanned the 20th Century, the century that invented all those things you now take for granted. But it was also the century that contained more horrors than all the rest of history combined!

Speech to parents, 2000



My legs are still good looking, but they don't function anymore!

Comments to a lawyer friend related by Lotti Turner, 2000



The sound of two thousand and two seems to say: “too old to” – to what? Too old to be still alive and kicking? – only Johnnie Walker is supposed to be “still going strong!”

Any address where to find a good wooden leg? I know wine and whiskey improve with age, but this idea of wanting to rival the Queen Mother is strictly for the birds.

In spite of my children's, especially my younger daughter Lynn's wonderful care of me and her patience with a doddering old dame, there are only a few things that make it worth growing old; one is hearing from a cherished alum telling me how much TASH had

meant to him/her, how it had changed their life, or was the most important experience in their life. When I get a letter like that I could do the tango or the Charleston or the flamenco – except my cane doesn't cooperate.

Letter to alumni, 2007



They are trying to keep me together with Scotch tape and eighteen kinds of medication, but none of those pills are as effective as seeing and being with you! So a big welcome to TASIS!

Speech to parents and students, 2003



I've been over 60 years in education! Ten or so years ago when I was given some sort of award for work in the international field, I received from a close friend a jeroboam of Champagne with congratulations for the first 50 years in education and saying the next 50 should be a cinch! So here I am heading down the road to the year 2000.

Speech to parents and students, 1995

It must have been hard for you to believe that I'm alive at ninety-five! It's hard for me to believe! To be sure I'm alive, I recite to myself each week the following lines:

Just a line to say I'm living
I'm not among the dead
Though I'm getting more forgetful
And mixed up in my head.
I've got used to my arthritis
To my upper dentures I'm resigned
I can manage my bi-focals
But gosh I miss my mind!

Speech to alumni, 2006



A week ago on holiday at my farmhouse in Italy I was cleaning out my desk and ran across a birthday telegram sent to me on September 10, 1982 – 20 years ago! It read as follows:

There was a young lady named Cris.
A spry and a sprightly young miss (get that!)
Who when she was told
She might someday grow old
Said, "I simply won't tolerate this!"

And now you see before you an old lady of 120 who simply has no choice but to "tolerate this!"

Speech to faculty and staff, 2001

I really shouldn't be here you know – but no one ever taught me how to spell retire – after 73 years in education I still haven't learned, maybe I confuse it with retread. Anyway, what I've had to learn is that I'm now in the departure lounge waiting for my flight to be called and what with strikes, blackouts, computer breakdowns, lots of flights have been delayed. I'm so happy my flight has been delayed long enough to have dinner with you tonight.

Speech to faculty and staff, 2003



Even awaiting the millennium, when you're as old as I am (120 years) you view the world with a kind of detachment, in spite of the high passion with which you've lived your life – you look for hopeful signs. You want to be sure there are no dirty dishes left, that the laundry is washed, folded, and put away, that there's enough food in the fridge to carry the family through the next few days in case you're gone away. You want to be sure that the world is going to be all right.

Speech to parents and students, 1999



VALUES

Although the category “values” comes last, it probably would come first in importance to Mrs. Fleming. To Mrs. Fleming, beauty, education, and leadership would not mean much, if one’s values were misplaced. A phrase that was heard repeatedly by those who worked in or attended one of the TASIS schools or programs was, “Times may change, but values don’t.” As Mrs. Fleming wrote in her address book, “Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey, where wealth accumulates and men decay” (Oliver Goldsmith).



As a traditionalist, I am more than ever convinced that there are absolute values just as there is order in the universe, that night will fall, that the sun will rise, that the tides will come and go, even as the seasons.

Speech at graduation, 1996

We owe every young person who graduates from TASIS an inner strength based on those timeless values – honesty, courage, self-discipline, knowledge of history, the great heritage of humane literature, and an appreciation for and eager desire to pursue the true, the good, and the beautiful in all things and to spread it to other humans so much less fortunate than we are.

This is our real “survival kit” – the values that can save the spirit in all weathers, under all conditions. This is the education for true leadership.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1997



You may remember one line of what I said to you when school opened this fall. The quotation was “Times change, values don’t.” I repeat it to you, the class of 1979, as words to hold on to, when, in college, in your job, or in any experience of your future life, you are tempted to desert or allow to weaken, even for a short period, those standards which you know to be true and lasting and which I hope have been strengthened in you during your years at TASIS.

Yearbook message, 1976



I beseech you to start now as you leave the beauty, the protection, the sense of security of TASIS to hold onto the timeless values that your parents and we have tried to instill in you – a love of beauty, a search for knowledge and for the excitement of learning, truth,

honesty, a belief in work, a serious concern for our planet and what we are doing to it, and mostly a compassion for all human beings, especially those so much less fortunate than we. A dedication to these values will make life meaningful for you, for there is no greater happiness than being of service to others.

Speech to parents and students, 1995



Go forth from TASIS carrying with you energy and a sense of involvement. It is the only formula to bring you personal happiness. Far more important, the world needs energy and commitment more than any other qualities in its search for leadership and its fight for civilization. Do not desert the sure values of the past, but seek creatively to improve them, adapt them to today's demands, use them as the only weapons we have against anarchy and chaos.

Yearbook message, 1974



Among the major strengths of TASIS comes freedom – freedom from federal and state control, freedom to set our own high standards, to insist on quality, on excellence, on discipline, on character, on compassion for our fellow man. It gives us freedom to state the values we believe in and to live up to them.

Speech at 90th birthday party, 2000

These are times when events and changes are running on each other so fast that men are close to breaking down with sheer bewilderment of it all – times when standards and values are eroding under the onslaught of despair and disbelief. If we have to give anything to you, our young men and women, it is a high place to stand; it is the opportunity to examine for a short moment in your lives the past, present, and future, and to receive, to build, and to test values – an inner high place when the demands and conflicts of life begin to overwhelm you. This will be necessary as perhaps never before, as desperate situations demand better than desperate and panicky answers.

Yearbook message, 1975



I've come to believe even more strongly the values I've held over the long years of my life. I've seen fads in standards come and go, goals relinquished, countries ceded – and I'm more firmly convinced than ever that without freedom, order in our daily lives as well as in our universe, manners and courtesy as natural habits, a striving for beauty in our lives and in the lives of others, and a deep caring for our fellow man, I believe that our world as we know it can only come to chaos and to self-destruction.

Speech to faculty and staff, 1982

You will often be faced with a choice, a dilemma of right and wrong, good or evil. Standing up for and defending your principles will rarely be easy. The stakes may be high and the price to be paid one that requires tremendous courage. Are you prepared, do you have the strength to stand up and be counted even against a majority that opts for the easy road of compromise?

Yearbook message, 1982



Always remember, even when I'm not here to scold you, times change, values don't. Always hold on to yours!

Speech to students, 1999



APPENDIX

The final section of this volume contains a few of the words and readings that were important to Mrs. Fleming throughout her long life. Although they are not her words, they are words that will always be associated with Mrs. Fleming by those who knew her. The Joseph Addison quote on education appears annually on the TASIS graduation program. The reading from Corinthians is one that Mrs. Fleming read at Christmas services and the prayer is one that Mrs. Fleming read at commencement exercises every year. Finally the words written in the front of Mrs. Fleming's mother's Bible reflect not only her mother's philosophy, but also her own.



*Education is a companion which
no misfortune can depress, no crime
can destroy, no enemy can alienate,
no despotism can enslave.
At home a friend, abroad an introduction;
in solitude a solace and in society
an ornament. It chastens vice,
it guides virtue, it gives at once
grace and government to genius.
Without it what is man?
A splendid slave, a reasoning savage.*

Joseph Addison 1711

The first epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Chapter 13, Verses 1-13

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not: love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part.
But when that which is perfect is come,
then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child,
I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away
childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly,
but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know
even as I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.



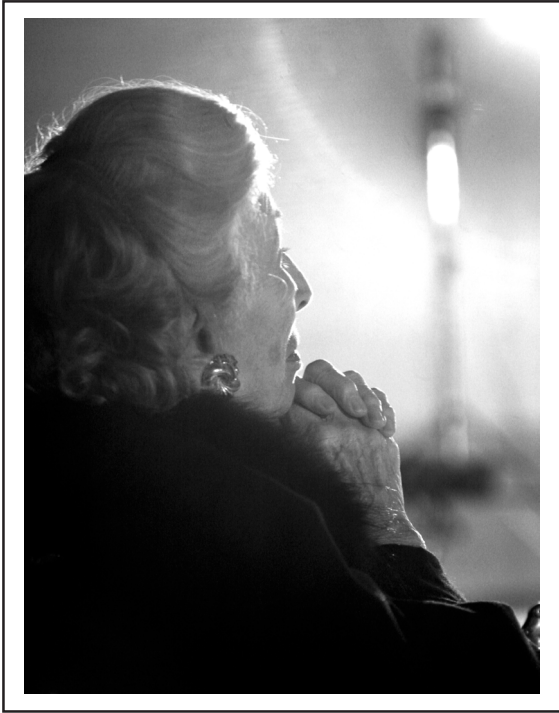
Our Father, as we come to the parting, we humbly give Thee thanks for the days of our gathering. We thank Thee for the real work accomplished, for the friendships made, for inspiration for future work and we beseech Thee to set Thy seal upon what we have done and make it strong and beautiful.

We thank Thee for the quickening of old friendships, for new and fruitful contacts, and for the broadened understanding of our common work. We pray Thee for fresh devotion to the great aims and possibilities of our lives, for unfeigned love for our fellow-workers, and for a deep longing to save and ennoble those whose lives we touch. Make us worthy to bear Thy message.

And now, as we turn our faces forward toward the toil and care, the trials and temptations of our work, we feel our need of Thee, Thou great companion of our souls. Be Thou the strength of our weakness, the wisdom of our foolishness, the triumph of our failures, the changeless unity in our changing days. Knowing the brevity of our years, help us to work resolutely while it is day. Shine upon us, Thou sun of our life, even in the valley of the shadow, and may the song of faith never die in our hearts.

We make our petition to the Almighty and Most Merciful God, creator and sustainer of the physical and moral universe, whose love and justice know no bounds and extend to all nations and races. Amen.

Prayer said for over seventy years at each June's Graduation Exercises, first by Mrs. Fleming's mother at the Mary Lyon School, and then by Mrs. Fleming at TASIS and TASIS England.



Mary Crist Fleming

September 10, 1910 – January 27, 2009

*I am only one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
What I can do I ought to do
and what I ought to do,
by the Grace of God I will do.*

Words written at the front of Mrs. Fleming's mother's Bible in 1897



Mary Crist Fleming **International Educational Pioneer (1910-2009)**

Mrs. Mary Crist Fleming was the founder and director of American international schools and educational summer programs in Europe and a pioneer in the field of international education. She made her principal home in Montagnola, in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, in the middle of the campus of The American School in Switzerland (TASIS), which she founded in 1956. Mrs. Fleming was also the founder of TASIS, The American School in England, in 1976, and of several other schools and programs, most still in operation, in Europe. She remained active in the direction of the schools until the mid-1990s, when she donated the schools, programs, and campuses to the nonprofit Swiss TASIS Foundation, which she set up to continue her legacy. She was succeeded as Director by her daughter Mrs. Lynn Fleming Aeschliman. The schools are widely considered among the finest American international schools abroad. Mrs. Fleming has been recognized for her contributions to American and international education by commendations from the U.S. Department of Education (1983), President George H.W. Bush (1990), and Harvard University (1984), which is her alma mater. She was given an honorary degree by the American College of Greece.

Mary Crist Fleming was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on September 10, 1910, the only child of two school founders and

directors, Haldy Miller Crist and Frances Leavitt Crist, who founded, owned, and operated the Mary Lyon School for girls in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. She was educated at her parents' school; in Lausanne, Switzerland; in Perugia, Italy; at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston; and then at Radcliffe College, Harvard University, from which she graduated with a degree in French in 1933. From early on a Europhile, she spoke fluent French, good Italian, and German, capacities that were to serve her very well in a lifetime of educational initiative and endeavor in relating Americans to Europe and Europeans to America, as Secretary of Education T.H. Bell pointed out in his commendation of her at the U.S. Department of Education in 1983. From the mid 1930s on Mary Crist was leading educational trips of young Americans to Europe, driving herself and covering the continent from France to Turkey, with many adventures in between. Italians, Slavs, Greeks, and Turks were especially astonished to see an elegant, self-assured woman driving and leading a small fleet of cars filled with young American women on frequently unpaved roads in southern or southeastern Europe. She spent a night in an Istanbul jail because she did not have visas for her girls. In 1935 her educator parents financed her visit to the Soviet Union, about which she was required to write a book, privately published with illustrations in 1936 as *No Soap in the Soviet*. In later years she was to meet and admire the English journalist and broadcaster Malcolm Muggeridge, whose satirical-documentary novel *Winter in Moscow* was also published in 1936.

In 1940 Mrs. Fleming married William Thomas Fleming of Philadelphia and between 1933 and 1943 she was Assistant Director of her parents' Mary Lyon School, nursing her mother in her final struggle with cancer. The School was commandeered in 1943 by the U.S. Navy for the war effort and she briefly moved it to the Barbizon Plaza Hotel in New York City to finish the academic year. A Francophile as well as a Francophone, she was meanwhile helping to raise money for the Free French opposition to the Vichy collaborationist regime. From 1943 to 1954 Mrs. Fleming founded and ran the Frog Hollow Country Day School in Lansdale, Pennsylvania.

In 1955 she took children from Frog Hollow to French Switzerland, thus sowing the seeds for opening The American School in Switzerland a year later. Her children Gai, Thomas, and Lynn were born between 1941 and 1946. She moved her family to Europe permanently in 1956, opening Swiss Holiday, a summer program, then The American School (which was to become known by the acronym TASIS) in a rented villa in Locarno, Switzerland, with her own three children and nine others. In August she decided to open her school in September, creating the school she wanted for her children. She soon moved the School to Lugano, where it occupied two different sites before being consolidated on one campus in the hill village of Montagnola, surrounded by the Alps and overlooking the Lake of Lugano. In the early years the school was mainly comprised of Americans, but today its Pre-K-13 enrollment of 600 students includes over fifty nationalities. For many years Mrs.

Fleming was unique in being a female school and summer program founder and Director in static, hierarchical, bureaucratic, male-dominated societies in France and Switzerland, whose authorities deeply mistrusted her dynamic American self-reliance and risk-taking, but were often charmed and won over in spite of themselves. Mrs. Fleming always wore flashy bracelets with old gold coins, but she also liked to say that she had “more mortgages than coins.”

Mrs. Fleming’s “*joie de vivre*,” charm, inspirational speaking capacities, organizational abilities, and risk-taking educational initiatives attracted not only students and parents but dedicated faculty and administrators of several nationalities to her schools and programs, including, briefly, colleges in Lugano, Switzerland, and Florence, Italy, that grew out of her very successful Post Graduate, 13th-year program in Lugano, which had been praised in an article in *Time* magazine in 1965. In 1976 she and her daughter Lynn and a cadre of her finest administrators and teachers founded TISIS The American School in England, in Thorpe, Surrey, now a thriving boarding and day school of over 700 students. She also founded and operated schools in Greece, Cyprus, and France, where uncertain economic and political developments made their continuation impossible. She was also a founder of the European Council of International Schools (ECIS), now known as the Council of International Schools (CIS).

Mrs. Fleming’s enormous charm, personal charisma, and educational vision earned her the gratitude, love, and loyalty of

generations of friends, teachers, students, parents, and staff over a 65-year career in education. She was famed for her courtesy and generosity to her kitchen staffs, maids, gardeners, and handymen, whom she or her daughter Lynn usually took on an annual holiday trip. She was the subject of newspaper and magazine articles, a popular novel for young people, *Bloomability* (1998) by Sharon Creech, a Newbery Award-winning author, former TESIS faculty member, and wife of one of the TESIS Headmasters, and a commemorative volume, *MCF: What a Life!* (1990), edited by her daughter Lynn Fleming Aeschliman and with an introductory greeting by President George H.W. Bush. Her life story was also made into a musical comedy of the same title, with words and music by the American composer Todd Fletcher, a former TESIS faculty member, which was staged for audiences in Switzerland, England, and New York City. She was the main subject of a Boston University doctoral dissertation on educational leadership by Gwen Martinez.

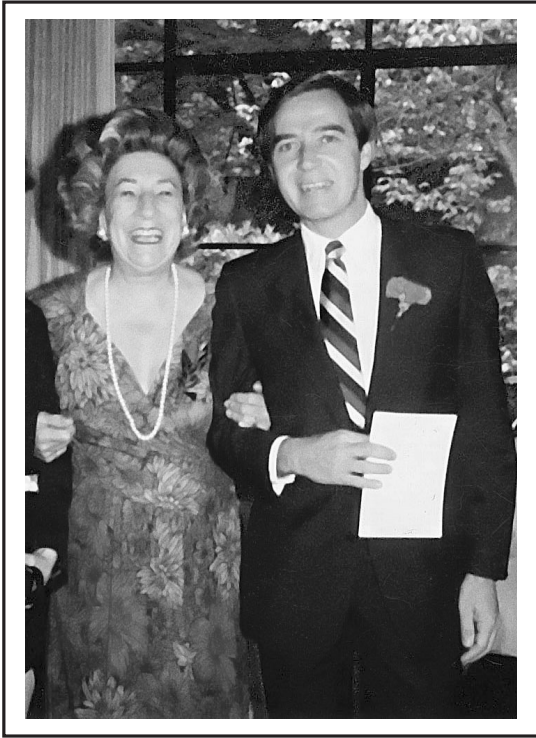
The educational vision of Mary Crist Fleming was rooted in the proprietary, classical-Christian, Anglo-American independent-school tradition of her school-founder parents, with four particular additions: an insistence on the importance of learning European languages so as to communicate directly with people (for whose personal names she had a phenomenal memory); an emphasis on highly-organized course-correlated travel throughout Europe, with faculty guides as chaperones; a high priority given to drama, art, and music; and the insistence on beautiful surroundings as a setting for her educational enterprises. Her schools and programs

were and are almost always located in beautiful settings in historic buildings, in Switzerland, England, France, or Italy, which were then tastefully renovated by her or her daughter to adapt them to educational use and were then augmented by new, classic buildings in the same style. Always elegantly attired herself and with beautiful manners, she loved beauty and believed that it nourished young people's spirits. American architect David Mayernik's lovely neo-classical M. Crist Fleming Library, built on the TESIS campus in Switzerland in her honor with alumni, parents', and friends' contributions in 2004, won a 2005 Palladio Award sponsored by *Traditional Building* magazine (New York).

Mrs. Fleming married twice, with both marriages ending in divorce. She is survived by her three children by her first marriage, Mrs. Gai Fleming Case of Brevard, N.C., Mr. W. Thomas Fleming III, of Charleston, S.C., and Mrs. Lynn Fleming Aeschliman of Montagnola, Switzerland, all three of whom have served on the TESIS Foundation, and by four grandchildren. But her larger family numbers in the thousands of people who were touched and inspired by her vision, inexhaustible energy, grace, courtesy, and generosity.

*M.D. Aeschliman, Ph.D. TESIS Foundation
Professor of Education, Boston University*





Mrs. Fleming with Lyle Rigg

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Before joining TASIS in 1979, Lyle Rigg worked at schools in Ohio, El Salvador, and Brazil. From 1979-82 Lyle served as Assistant Headmaster, Head of the Upper School, and teacher of history at TASIS England. He was appointed Headmaster of TASIS Lugano in 1982 and served in Switzerland until returning to TASIS England as Headmaster from 1984-1998. After fourteen years as Headmaster of TASIS England, Lyle returned to the U.S. to become Headmaster of The Pennington School near Princeton, N.J., retiring in 2006 as Headmaster Emeritus. After his retirement, Lyle served as Interim Headmaster of TASIS Lugano 2007-08 and Interim Headmaster of TASIS England 2009-10.

Lyle has degrees from Miami University of Ohio (B.A.), West Texas State University (M.A.), and Harvard University (Ed. M.) He is married to the award-winning author of children's books, Sharon Creech, and their children, Rob and Karin, are graduates of TASIS England. Lyle and Sharon live most of the year in Bemus Point, N.Y., but move to Southport, N.C., for the bitter winter months.

On behalf of TASIS I would like to extend most heartfelt thanks to Lyle for the labor of love and loyalty represented by this volume, which he suggested, conceived, and created.

Lynn Fleming Aeschliman

