



*What a Life!*

*Mary Crist Fleming*

# Letter from President George Bush

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 30, 1990

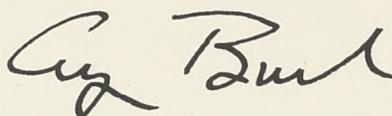
Dear Mrs. Fleming:

Barbara and I are delighted to send best wishes as you celebrate your 80th birthday.

What a remarkable life you've led -- great in experiences and great in accomplishments! Your strong commitment to quality education has inspired your students to strive for excellence so that, by working hard and by displaying individual initiative, they too can make a difference in the world. Yours has been a noble endeavor spanning nearly six decades, and I congratulate you on a job well done.

We join your family, colleagues and friends in wishing you a wonderful celebration, surrounded by the warmth of happy memories and secure in the knowledge that you have made this a better world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George Bush".

Mrs. Mary Crist Fleming  
Lugano  
SWITZERLAND

Mary Crist Fleming  
MCF—WHAT A LIFE!

*Eightieth-Birthday Tribute  
With Addendum for Her Ninetieth Birthday*

EDITED BY  
LYNN FLEMING AESCHLIMAN  
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA  
1990

LUGANO, SWITZERLAND  
2000

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“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.”

*Caroline Frances Leavitt*  
*September 5, 1897*  
*Mt. Desert, Maine*

*(As quoted on the front page of her Bible)*

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## With Gratitude

My mother doesn't like to think back on the past since she is always looking and going forward. "You can't stand still. You either go forward or backwards," and backwards is a direction my mother rarely looks.

Over the years many people have suggested to my mother that she write her memoirs, but that is a task that hasn't interested her, just as retiring and contemplating her past doesn't interest her. To get her to write something about her life for her 80th birthday, I asked our good friend John Amis to interview her while he was visiting our family at Capitignano over New Year's. Thanks to John's interviewing expertise we finally got a tape of my mother reminiscing. Then brave Sarah di Lenardo, my mother's secretary for over 20 years, tackled the seemingly-endless challenge of transcribing it (and later the retyping *and* the retyping of the revisions). With this as the basis and my threats and pleas, mother finally reworked the interview for her final voice that we now have here in red italics and regular typeface.

I was trying to keep this entire book a surprise, but finally had to tell my mother that there was a deadline for her text. I hope the rest of the wonderful material submitted by friends and associates from so many years has remained a surprise until the presentation of this book in August. It is hard to keep any secret from my mother.

As stories, memories, vignettes, tributes came in, I would read them with great eagerness and delight. I was amazed how often I would find myself smiling broadly, or bursting out in laughter, or welling up in tears. I found it very moving to read such poignant tributes to my mother. And I am sure she will be even more deeply moved. As I said, she doesn't like to look back, since she throws herself with a passion into the present and future. Hearing the voices of so many friends from her past will surely be a heart-rending and moving experience. Her doctors, Dr. Uehlinger in Locarno in the 50s and Dr. Pattani in Lugano in the 60s, both of whom have since died, warned her to take it easy since they thought she had a weak heart. She could not even get life insurance at the time, if I recall correctly. How wrong they were, thank God. As so often doctors misjudge or underestimate the power of the spirit, they underestimated her will, her "burning heart," her stamina and drive. So I hope all contained

herein will not crack her heart, but instead nourish and sustain it for the decades ahead.

I quote one of my mother's favorite quotations, "To live in the hearts of those we leave behind is not to die." From reading all the contributions that have come in for this book, I would say my mother will gratefully realize she is well on her way to this goal. I am very grateful to all her friends who responded so eloquently and enthusiastically to my requests for material for this book. Most everybody is extremely busy these days, so I doubly appreciate the time and effort expended by all who contributed to this volume. I know how grateful and touched my mother will be. I thank you "di cuore" on my own and my mother's behalf.

Whenever I would ask or double check with my mother, long-distance via Ma Bell, about specific dates in her life to try to date and place everything as chronologically accurate as possible, she would reply, "I'm so bad on dates, darling," and then try to remember. So I apologize if one or two of the dates herein are not absolutely accurate. From the material I gathered I assumed "Fording Europe" took place between 1935 and 1939, but my mother thinks that it was only two years and she is not sure which. I know my mother has a hard time remembering dates, since I'm still not absolutely sure if I was born in 1945 or 1946. My passport says '45, yet she "thinks" '46. As the years pass, I'll opt for '46. For years we all assumed she started The American School in Switzerland in 1955, but from the faded dates on backs of old photographs and clues in letters, I would now say autumn of 1956 is the founding date of TESIS. The first summer program in Switzerland took place in the Vaud in 1955. But what's in a date? Give or take a year. The passion and dedication with which my mother has lived the present in her eighty years and plans on living her next several decades are what is remarkable.

Almost everything here contained has been written specifically for this volume of tributes. However, I have taken the liberty of including things written at an earlier date, by close friends who live on in our hearts, by associates, and by TESIS alumni. Over the past thirty years my mother has collected a large file of letters of gratitude from former students. I chose just a few to include as representative of the results of

her efforts and of those of the countless number of dedicated people who have worked with her. For a little extra flavoring and in my attempt to get at the essence of MCF, I have also interspersed a selection of some of her favorite quotations, taken from her traveling black address book. Unfortunately, I could not always find the source.

Besides my gratitude to all who contributed material to make this volume what it is, I would like to express my gratitude to all who assisted in this endeavor in large and small ways—my mother, without whom of course this book wouldn't exist; John Amis, the catalyst; indefatigable, ever-cheery, ever-helpful Sarah di Lenardo, who kept an endless flow of my mother's text and old photos from the dusty bowels of De Nobili coming my way; Giorgio Guglielmetti, for his wonderful cartoons done for my mother's seventieth birthday; Jane Miness, Jan Neumeister,

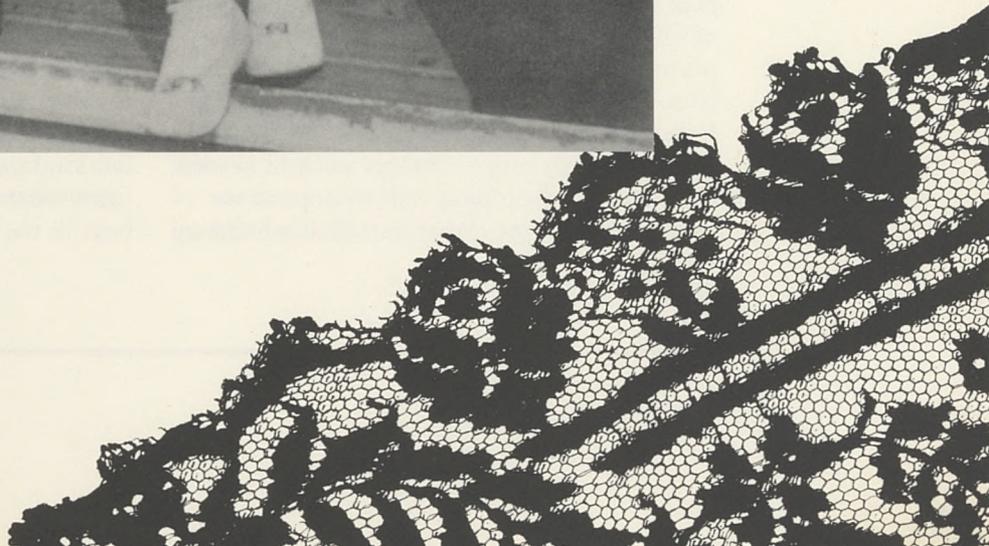
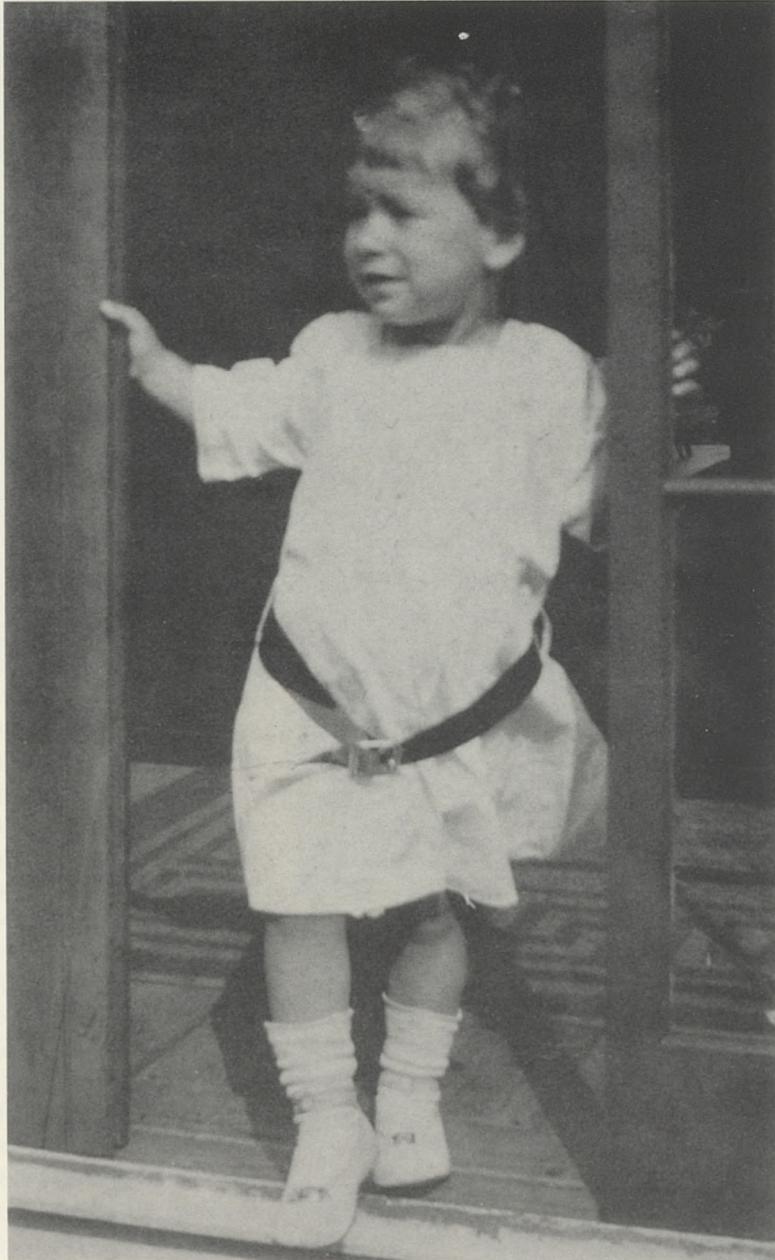
and Sandra Johnson, who helped with the typing here in the States; Carrie Cox in the TASIS New York office, who kept "faxed" messages flowing with humour, no matter what the time of day or night; Sheila Gadd in the TASIS Development Office in England, who kept photos coming my way; my wonderful editorial assistant and devoted husband Michael; and my patient children, Anna and Adrien, who put up with yet another of their mother's projects.

I here dedicate this book with deep love, gratitude, and esteem to my mother, Mary Crist Fleming, on her eightieth birthday, and to all women with "burning hearts."

*Lynn Fleming Aeschliman*  
*Free Union, Virginia*  
*Editor*

C H I L D H O O D

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## Born a Virgin

I was born a virgin in 1910 and still am a virgin, since I was born on the 10th of September and my birthday still occurs every year on that same date.

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. My mother tried to compensate for my plainness by dressing me up in very frilly, fancy clothes rather than something simple and suitable. And I hated all of those outfits.

The article 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

for the big performance. As you may remember, in the final climax of the story Hiawatha sails away to the land of the hereafter, for which we were using a canoe on a small creek near the school. My father, who was attending the performance, got nervous as the final act approached, stepped down to the shore, grabbed hold of the canoe as I was about to leap into it, and said sternly, "Now, Mary, be careful when you get into the boat." My world crashed around me! I had been practicing for weeks the grand gesture of a hero leaving the world behind and sailing for the land of the hereafter—a gesture that I wanted to be remembered, as I was convinced I was destined to become a great actress! (Also, I hated the name Mary and I was eager to drop it as soon as I could.)

How I survived these two tragic episodes in my early youth, I do not know, anymore than I could understand, before my own children arrived, why my father spanked me vigorously when I returned home one day dripping wet from falling in a nearby pond. I was sure I would be embraced with a welcoming kiss for being alive and not drowned. Instead, I was immediately turned bottoms up and given a sound trouncing. Well deserved I now know, for being where I shouldn't have been, but at the time it was incomprehensible to me!

My father was actually a wonderful man, a very wonderful man. My children all loved him very much. He was an extremely strong man physically and handsome in his own way, and yet in spite of his strength he was a tender, thoughtful man who always fought for the under-dog. He defended people who were put upon and often endorsed loans from the bank to poor people, many of which were not repaid. He also took very good care of my mother, always served her breakfast in bed and when we were on holiday he did all the cooking, even cleaned the house, and yet he was the most masculine of men. My mother was more of a visionary, a great reader, and much more spiritual—a real New Englander and quite puritanical. (The Leavitts were one of the early English settlers to land in Massachusetts. They founded Hingham, Mass.) My father always protected her, so I remember him as a tough, but kind man. There was a boys' school in town where we had our girls' school and the boys in the town were terrified of "Pop Crist".



Mary Crist, at 10 months, already trying to move mountains



Already the business woman, "Any Mainer want to buy a clam?"



To grandmother's house we go—but we are not allowed to drive, so horses and buggy pull us to grandma's on Mt. Desert

front of the church, hoping some dog would eat it while I was inside, but not even a dog could stomach it.

The second thing that could have warped my character was not a thing, but an event. I suppose I was about ten and was playing the part of Hiawatha in the school play. In Longfellow's poem, Hiawatha is an Indian hero, and we had been spending several weeks studying American-Indian history, making costumes out of leather, practicing with turkey feathers stuck in beaded headbands, and shrilling war-whoops as we pranced around the classroom, all as a build-up

When they tried to raid the girls' dormitories he would be on the warpath, usually caught them and tossed them back over the wall. I think a couple of them were sent to hospital as a result.

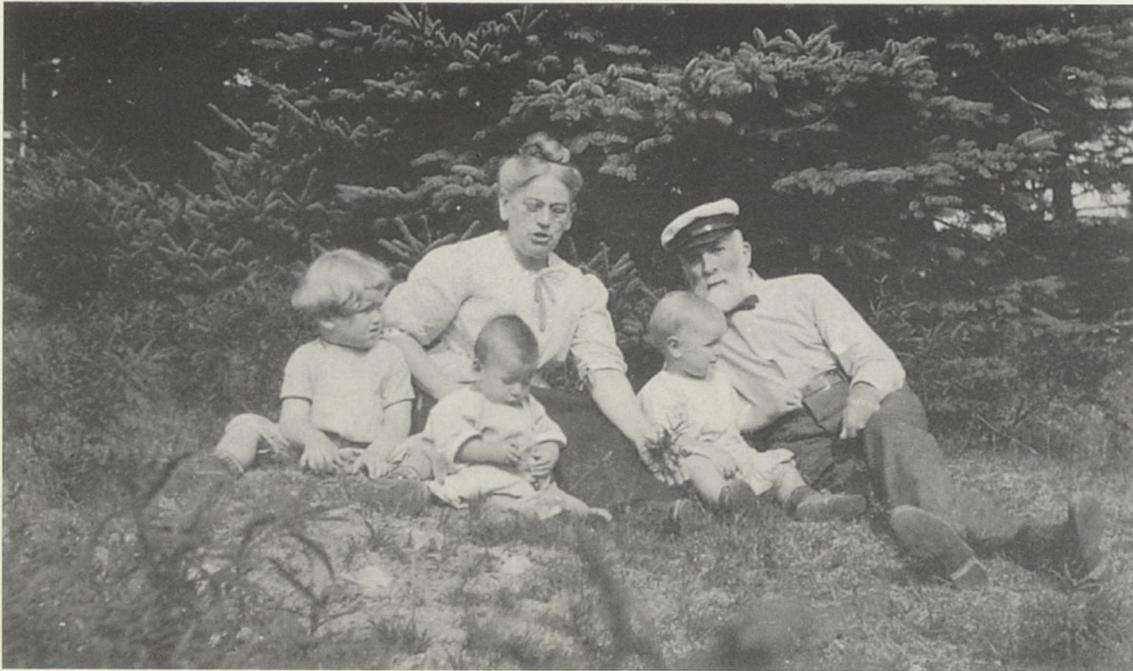
My father was an Elder in the Presbyterian Church and very supportive and active in the church. I remember every Sunday his putting on his morning coat, tails and so forth, and being chief usher of the church. I remember his even running the light switches for my wedding

My mother wouldn't marry my father until he dropped the "H" out of his last name. Being of German descent from the Rhineland, his name was spelt Christ, which my mother did not fancy, being a very devout woman. So my father dropped the "H". (And why they named me Mary I never really knew and was never pleased about, so I was very happy when young school friends started calling me "Cris".) My father would tell the story of compromise in marriage: the wife wants to sleep on percale



"Grandma, are you sure?"

Baby Mary, center stage, relaxing with cousins and Leavitt grandparents.



My mother, Frances Leavitt Crist and ...



My father, Haldy Miller Crist

because he had been doing it for a long time. The trouble was that when the bride was about to go up the aisle he pulled the wrong switch and it became totally dark, and the bride called back to him, "Better put the lights on, Dad". He was a wonderful man; a very exceptional person.

As I said, my mother was more spiritual. She used to do all the daily chapel talks at their school, although my father sometimes did the morning exercises, too. They were short religious services, which in those days were very much a tradition. We had hymns and a prayer to start off the day; usually we saluted the American flag, all of which things have now fallen into disrepute. I find this a shame, because it gave a kind of ritualistic beginning to the day, which I think students need. In the early years of TASIS we always had morning chapel. I hope it may return.

sheets, the husband wants cotton, so they compromise and sleep on percale.

My parents were both teachers. My father taught school for four years to earn enough money to attend Bucknell University. Then he got a job teaching math at South Jersey Institute. My mother attended Mount Holyoke and taught English at the same school, which is where they met. I remember hearing that my mother had her initials C.F.L. (Caroline Frances Leavitt) on her china. My father proposed to her by reversing the initials and painting F.L.C. (Frances Leavitt Crist) on her china. After they were married they taught at Swarthmore Preparatory School but soon wanted their independence and decided to start their own school, The Mary Lyon School. They started by renting the Strath Haven Inn and later bought land across the street with three private

1911—Grandpa Horace Hall Leavitt and Grandma Mary Kelly Leavitt surrounded by their four daughters, two sons, and spouses. Little Mary Crist is held in her father's arms, while cousin Ros sits at their grandparents' feet. Mary Kelly was of Irish extraction, while Horace Leavitt was of English descent. Grandpa's manner tended to be forbidding; grandma had a twinkle—both were strong minded.



My mother and father in their courting days



THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS, A LIGHT THAT THE DARKNESS HAS NEVER PUT OUT.  
*Gospel of St. John*

houses—Wildcliff, Hillcrest, and Seven Gables. My father built a large dormitory and the huge stone Miller Crist Building for classrooms, library, study hall, offices, gymnasium and pool. Swarthmore College acquired the whole property from the Navy after the war.

My father built our summer home in Maine on Mt. Desert and to please my mother designed and constructed a very large stone fireplace. He bought huge stone blocks from a nearby quarry and towed them in a barge up a tide-water creek that ran alongside the house. There was a small wooden bridge that the tide would rush through twice a day as the big tides came and went. As he was unloading the barge the tide turned and started to rise rapidly, wedging the barge under the bridge and threatening to shatter it by the force of the water lifting the barge. He began heaving the huge stone blocks ever faster and faster to save the bridge as a crowd gathered to watch the outcome and to see who would win, my father or the tide. Fortunately, my father did and to this day when people see the beautiful fireplace they're told the legend of a strong man against time and nature.



Strath Haven Inn in Swarthmore, Pa., where mother and dad started Mary Lyon School

When I was quite small and didn't walk fast enough to suit him, he would pick me up by the seat of my pants and go striding along propelling me forward with my two legs going through the motion of walking but doing so in mid-air.

He was a man who needed physical exercise. Among other things he built a golf course on the school grounds, and used to play occasionally on it, but he would also be the one who would mow the greens and after school go out and run the tractor to cut the main fairways. He was a great wood chopper and a big fisherman. He didn't like to eat fish, but loved to catch them and once caught a salmon so large he had to grill it on a bed spring for a picnic. He absolutely needed physical exertion as an outlet, a relaxation. He was powerful at tennis and played until he was well over sixty.

For my father, a contract was a contract. During the Second World War when many schools were confiscated to be used by the military, many such schools just closed their doors even in the middle of a school year. Not my father! Students were entrusted to him for the academic year and that year was going to

be academically completed. So when the U.S. Navy took over his school in January 1943, he moved all the students to the Barbizon Plaza in New York City. This incurred great financial loss. Tuition for the second half year had run out by the end of February since a New York hotel was a much more expensive base for a school than our own campus.

As my father's assistant, I well remember the night when I returned to the Barbizon Plaza with my little two-year-old daughter, having spent the weekend with my husband, to find chaos reigning. The hotel was about to evict the entire student body, faculty included, because the week's hotel bill had not been paid. Indeed not, for the Navy had not paid for our school campus! And they did not pay for well over a year, but through the good offices of my favorite cousin Roswell Gilpatric, a prominent New York lawyer, the hotel had to recognize that the U.S. Navy would eventually be a responsible entity, and so extended credit to my father for the balance of the school year. Later, I also had help from another successful lawyer, in Washington. I had read about his winning a case for Mt. Vernon against the U.S. Navy.



Since my father had no money left and debts still to pay, I contacted Arthur Phelan and asked him to take on our case to collect long-overdue payment for our school property from the Navy. Needless to say, he succeeded and our life-long friendship started then.

books, china, oriental carpets, and the grand piano.) As luck would have it a heavy blizzard started falling. The men at first refused to drive in such a storm but my pleas worked, and sitting in the cab, beside the driver of the first lorry, we set off, reaching the new house at midnight.

With students and my good friends Arthur Phelan (l.) and Jerry Wells (r.)



Mother Crist...



and Pop Crist, "the proudest father ever was of such a Daughter!"



All hugs and kisses for my first born, Gay

While all this was going on in New York, I was about to produce my second child, but I wanted to stand by my father as long as possible since we had just lost my mother and the confiscation of the school had understandably been a blow to him. Also I had to find a new home for my own family and for my father since our school campus was gone and the school year in the hotel would end the last of May. My excellent doctor Newlin Paxson, Head of Obstetrics at Hahneman Hospital in Philadelphia, would allow me all activity before the birth but nothing strenuous for several weeks afterwards. The same weekend of the turmoil and threat of eviction from the New York hotel I had located a house to move into but had to make the move before the first of March. There were three trailer-truck loads of possessions from the school. (We had had only a couple of days to move out of the school buildings before the Navy occupied them, so I had hurriedly gathered my favorite library

It was, of course, freezing cold, yet all the doors had to be wide open for the men to come and go unloading all the furniture, including the grand piano. I kept beating up batches of scrambled eggs, filling large tumblers with Bourbon Whiskey, and stoking high flames in all the fireplaces. By three a.m. the job was done, the men left exhausted but not unhappy, and I drove back to the Philadelphia hotel where my husband and 2-year-old daughter were staying. Then off to New York to encounter the situation at the Barbizon Plaza! My son was born the following week.

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." Also, "Be independent, be your own boss. Whatever you go into as your life's work, be your own master." I guess I took these wise words seriously, for my life has certainly followed that pattern.

## Salute to a Favorite Cousin

Cris and I are the oldest, most independent and the least inhibited of the Leavitt grandchildren. The latter traits were probably inherited from our respective mothers and our spirited grandmother, Mary Kelly Leavitt. Early on Cris and I developed an affection for each other and a "mutual aid pact" which continues to this day.

While we were teenagers, Cris's part was to help me acquire "dates" when I visited Swarthmore for Mary Lyon School dances. I should have followed her advice more often. One Mary Lyon girl I invited to a Hotchkiss school prom bore out Cris's prediction when, during a dance intermission, I found my date holding hands with one of my classmates. That was about as far as one could go in those pristine days.

Later on I sought to be helpful to Cris when the School's final term was moved to the Barbizon Plaza in New York after the Navy took over the school buildings in Swarthmore. The two of us had quite a time persuading the Hotel management not to evict the senior class on the eve of commencement when there occurred a "cash flow" problem, not an uncommon event in Cris's career. I was also involved as a trustee of Fleming College in trying to uphold Cris's position when others on the Board, including some parents and faculty members, ganged up



With favorite cousin Ros

SOME PEOPLE  
MUST DREAM  
BROADLY AND  
GUILTESSLY, IF  
ONLY TO BALANCE  
THOSE WHO NEVER  
DREAM AT ALL.

*Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.*

against Cris's standards of undergraduate conduct.

Mostly, we've gone our separate ways in our chosen professions, while enjoying each other's company when our paths have crossed, be it in London or New York, as well as on visits to Frog Hollow Farm, Lugano, and Tuscany. Throughout the intervening decades, there has never been a dull moment when we were together. All I ask for is more of her company, even if its only nude swimming in Tuscany!

*Roswell Gilpatric  
New York City*

## College Girl's Escapades

Lest the reader think that Mary Crist was young "Miss Innocence," I include two tales from her college days. Her classmate Marie Silsby Essig has a memory of her selling her clothes to pay for a car wreck she didn't want her parents to know about. I also remember hearing about her secluding herself for a week's study with all the relevant library books that she needed to prepare for exams, then appearing for exams all dressed up with hat and white gloves, full of composure.

Another tale I couldn't resist including from the early days is Mary Crist's determination to visit a young man whom her parents disapproved of and forbade her to see. She went to visit him anyway. Shortly after leaving home while speeding up the highway to New York, smoke started billowing out from under the hood of

the car. A guilty sense of immediate retribution struck! Upon inspection, however, and discovering an oily cloth on the engine, yours truly closed the hood and continued on her journey. After her return home Sunday evening nary a word about this affair was ever mentioned again by her parents.

*Editor*

P.S. My mother's obvious zest for life and all its facets inspired her words of advice to her daughters: "A woman should be a cook in the kitchen, a lady in the parlour, and a \_\_\_\_\_ in the bedroom." Now, I'm sure she would add, "and a director in the Board Room." Further advice: "When things get tough, put some more lipstick on a stiff upper lip."





N I N E T E E N - T H I R T I E S



## MCF's Anecdote

*One thing that pleases me very much is when my daughter Lynn tells me what a wonderful childhood she had and that she wants to be able to give a similar upbringing to her children. We travelled a great deal together in Europe. I wanted my children to become "world citizens", for I was already aware of a shrinking planet; I also thought that for them to learn languages was important.*

*I was born and brought up in a school where my mother and father lived right in the center of the school. We had only a small apartment and I remember rather longing for a home of our own. I remember I used to re-decorate the apartment, even though it was very small. I used to organize my parents' closets and the way they lived because they were so involved in the school that they didn't have time to create a real home. I think this is one reason why now I enjoy so much having three homes, even though they are often used for the business of my present schools. Houses came to mean a great deal to me after living in the middle of a public situation, namely a big girls' boarding school. They say even now that if I'm in a telephone booth more than five minutes I will decorate it!*

*Surroundings were very, very important to me, which is why I think they are so important for young people. I try to transmit a love of beauty even though most young people don't seem to appreciate it. I think it is important for them. Later on many of the students do, and when they come back to visit the school, or me, or at school reunions, they always say how much the experience meant to them, even though at the time they didn't appreciate it. In retrospect their surroundings and experiences at TASIS came to mean a great deal to them as adults.*

*My childhood was in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Even then I wasn't fond of the town, young as I was, because it was a Quaker town, which meant it was very narrow and austere. I wanted to break out of that cage. I felt limited by it even as a young person, though that feeling was relieved by the fact that my parents took me travelling a great deal to Europe and put me in a school in Switzerland for a year.*

*I was an only child and rather enjoyed that. I never felt the lack of a brother or a sister; I had some cousins, but wasn't particularly close to them when I was growing up.*



Young lady Mary supervises her cousins' choosing up sides



"My mother always wanted to make sure I was being productive."

*I don't think I was spoiled because every time I was given something I had to accomplish something to balance it. I begged to go to a school in Switzerland, for instance. Actually it turned out to be exactly what my parents had wanted to do, to send me to Switzerland to learn French, but they allowed me to think it was my idea. My mother thought it would be a good challenge for me while I was there to take the College Board Examination in second-year German, after having only three months of tutoring to prepare for it. I passed. She always wanted to make sure I was being productive. When they sent me to Russia on a special trip I had to write a book about Russia, which I did. I now find it an amateurish, foolish book, but I had to fulfill my part of the bargain. I won't say there was a price to be paid, but rather like "noblesse oblige", if you receive a privilege you are supposed to return it in some measure. They were strict with me that way, for which I am grateful....*

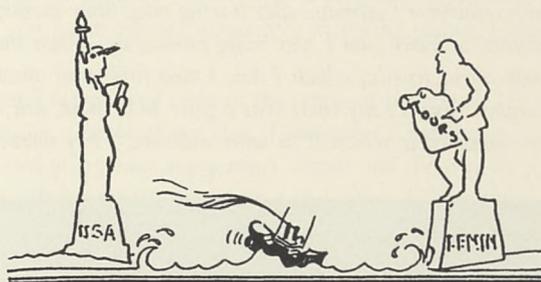


"Horseback riding was the only sport I ever liked."

## Excerpts from *No Soap and the Soviet* by "Mari Christopher"

[Editor's Note: As much as Mary Crist Fleming protests that her book, written 55 years ago in return for a trip to Russia, is a foolish one, and as much as the style is "tongue-in-cheek," I would venture to say that her perceptive commentary on life in Russia in 1935 would still be valid today. And that is "Progress"? There is still no soap in the Soviet, or little else for that matter, as witnessed by the miners' strikes last year.

For an individual with a real sense and appreciation of beauty and freedom, a month touring Russia was more than enough to reaffirm her beliefs and values and appreciation of the West. Mary Crist was no "fellow traveller." The keen observations in the story-telling may be masked and enlivened with humour, but perhaps this is more effective than the weeping that historical hindsight would really necessitate.]

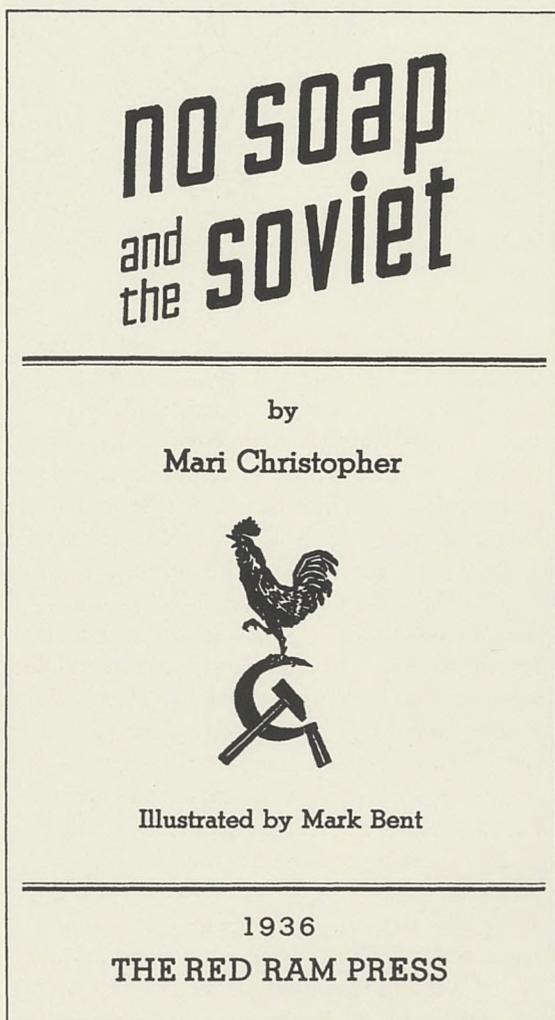


### BUM VOYAGE

Russia or bust! This positive if inelegant obsession has been gradually forming through the past couple of years, deluged as we have all been under the RED books of every sort and description—Red Smoke, Red Virtue, ditto Medicine, ditto Bread, etc.—written more than likely by weighty authorities who have dashed in at Leningrad and out at Moscow with a couple of days in a Detourist Lincoln in between. Even so, it still takes an alluring pamphlet advertising a comprehensive and organized month in the U.S.S.R. to touch off the final fatal spark of ambition to See for Yourself!

This decision is so momentous it takes your breath away and should presumably sweep anything in the way of paltry monetary considerations out of your path. It doesn't. You can risk your neck and future capitalistic support if you like, but nobody else is going to pay for you to do it. When you actually get together the wherewithal and purchase a third-class passage, it is distinctly with a feeling of achievement and the last word in self sacrifice. You are all set for a stupendous adventure whose appeal assumes greater magnitude each day until you finally board ship, filled with a sense of mental largess and a boundless intellectual comprehension. In short, you are fully prepared to be led, docile and unwashed, over one sixth of the world's surface.

The days of crossing fly by in an excited fever of reading up on Russia, attending pep-talks given by the leaders for your enlightenment, and generally working yourself into a lather of enthusiasm over the good old U.S.S.R. Studiously avoiding some ninety very odd companions of your adventure, you are still doomed to encounter during off moments several Harvard Ph.D's and the inevitable group of lady clubwomen. These last are sweet



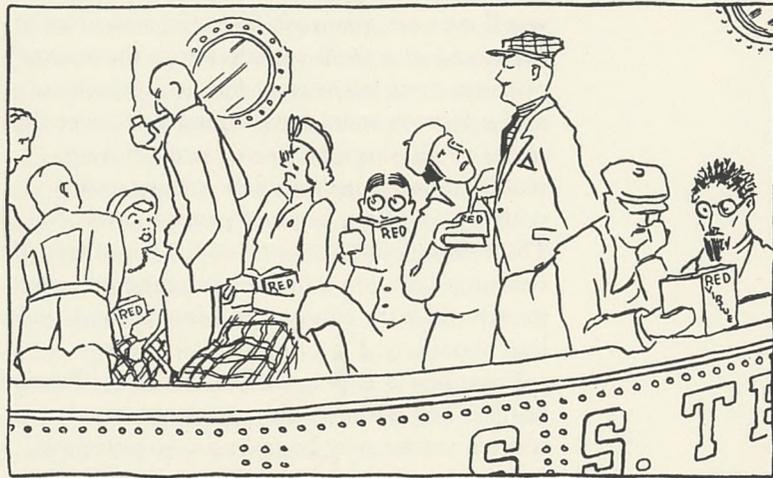
but slightly hard of hearing, so that all information has to be relayed for them to report to the "Girls" back home. The Harvard species is less easily labeled but more easily detected, even away from their natural habitat, for they are usually web-footed from walking in the Cambridge slush, have a crop full of broad A's, always travel in bands to avoid attack, and may be seen flying from Museum to Museum. Then there is Mrs. Prevent, the authority on birth control from New York, who has all the men in a huddle around her, and is going to study birth control in Russia. I might just as well tell you now as later—it's all abortion and only takes three minutes—imagine going three thousand miles to see a three-minute operation! But that's beside the point; you can always count on someone going to the Soviet to study the sex situation. Finally there will be the Wright brothers from Weazleville, Winnesota. Not the original airplane brothers, of course, but a couple of highfliers nevertheless, who are called Jug and Skike, believe it or not. These two represent the Youth of America, the Spice of the trip and the Bane of Stalin's existence.

In such approved company you speed the Hull way to Helsingfors, mapping out en route your plan of campaign and fairly bursting with eagerness to carry out final preparations. As a check to haste, however, the shopping center of Helsingfors boasts some very alluring "Bad" houses, where many of our party spent the whole afternoon and came out all washed up. You really should not waste time on your way to Russia taking a bath, though, since you won't have one during the month you're there, and it's better to get dirty gradually and then stay dirty, than it is to become soiled all at once.

All soaping aside, there's too little time anyway to solve the question of arms and the task of purchasing a sufficient supply. The League unfortunately does not countenance Russian armament stores in Finland, since this would be in direct violation of all treaties about anything. So one has surreptitiously to buy as much toilet paper and as many prunes as he deems necessary. Unfortunately, this involves higher mathematics as to the number of sheets and prunes needed per day per person with Russia equaling X the unknown quantity. It also involves a question of capacity versus transportation in regard to luggage. You can always take along an extra bag filled with old underwear and broken-down shoes. The Russians get all excited about a couple of shoes

that match, and underwear is enough of a luxury to upset the whole Five-Year Plan. In Finland you can wrap the fruit in the toilet paper, the toilet paper in the underwear, and stuff the underwear in the shoes. Then in Russia you eat the fruit, use the toilet paper, dump the shoes and underwear as you go along, and refill the empty bag with Russian dolls and statues of Lenin.

The well-equipped traveler will provide a quantity of lemons, for "A lemon a day keeps Russian tummy-trouble away." Lemons are splendid disinfectants, and that's what you'll need nothing else but. Also, by all means buy a medium-size Meta stove—Meta is like concentrated Sterno—and be sure to have it with you



wherever you are. If it's too bulky to pack there is a helpful handle by which you may suspend it from your belt, in case you have a belt. Never, however, be separated from it, since there are innumerable convenient uses to which it may be turned—such as wash basin, drinking cup and bug boiler. A Meta stove may be set up anywhere in Russia and work, which is more than you can say of anything else in the U.S.S.R. Most important of all though—Soap. It is unknown to the Soviet, is literally worth its weight in gold, and is the most effective thing possible for tipping purposes. Take in great quantities of it, or else your private piece will be the cake that launders a thousand slips.

The most painless way actually to enter Russia is to go in unconscious. This is most easily done by getting on a train at any one of the various vantage points in Western Europe and going to sleep. Helsingfors is as good a place as any, because it takes you five days on a boat from almost anywhere to get there and everybody knows there's nothing like good salt

sea air to make you sleep soundly and long. As a matter of fact, you probably won't be able to slumber as you cross the border line, for after the Finnish porters have failed to dissuade you from risking your life by entering Russia at all, they will at least insist upon administering last rites. With tender solicitude they will awaken you for a last breakfast at the farthest outpost of civilization, a Finnish railway station called Rajajoki. At this point you begin to lose your nerve and think that maybe the joki's on you! But a terrific meal of bread, rolls, butter, custard, coffee, milk, cake, oranges, cold meat, potato salad, chocolate, fruit, and mush, does something to revive your flagging spirits.

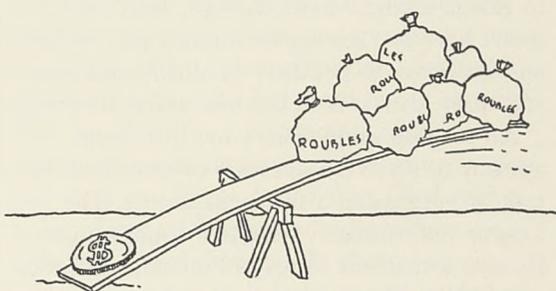
Gorging what you feel may be the last bun you'll ever eat, you rush from the restaurant at the sound of a shrill whistle. From the station platform your last way of escape, in the form of the Finnish train, is vanishing back over the tracks to Helsingfors. In its place a rickety coach drawn by an asthmatic engine awaits without—without hope of getting anywhere! Three toots from a whistle in the last stages of consumption, you jam your baggage into your mouth, fill both hands with Finnish food, and leap aboard.

From here it is only a short ride to the Russian border. The leaders suddenly remember that no written matter may be taken in, so you pass your last moments frantically reading through all recent communications with family and friends. Fond words are imprinted on your memory and then torn up and thrown out the window. American newspapers are perused and relegated to the landscape. By now you are drawing near. A few minutes more and you arrive at a small river which separates the two countries at this point. You hold your breath while the train chugs precariously over an extremely delicate-looking bridge. When it comes to an exhausted standstill you take a deep breath—of Russian air!

Surprisingly enough, life still goes on, though from this moment you might as well have landed in Mars. Instantly hordes of burly Russians appear out of the blue and swarm over the coaches, taking immediate possession of everything in sight, including the people. Buxom lassies with brawny limbs are quickly stationed at each end of every coach, and sentinels pace back and forth on the platform. Alongside the tracks an official-looking person behind what a Russian calls a table and in what he thinks is a park because it has half-dead

grass growing in the form of a sickle and hammer, is selling beer and the Russian conception of pink lemonade. Both the beer and the lemonade are being rapidly diluted by a fine drizzle. All baggage is soon carted from coach to custom house, where the officials go sight-seeing in your personal belongings and keep up a running chatter of comment on each and every article. Nothing, however, will be confiscated unless you have defied warnings and taken in printed matter of any description, in which event they will probably seize upon it. English is all Greek to the Russians, so a recipe for cheese souffle looks like the innuendo of a bloated plutocrat, whereas a "New Yorker" might easily upset the emotional life of 150,000 peasants by introducing a hearty laugh in the country.

While your first five hours in Russia are thus inspiringly spent taking your clothes in and out of your bag, somebody else is writing up your biography from your passport and translating you into Russian. If you carry a typewriter, phonograph, or camera you will go down into history, and Russian posterity will know that on the 17th of July, 1935, Mari Christopher was five feet, four inches tall, had brown eyes, a mole in the middle of her back, eleven Eastman Kodak films and one hundred and eighty two dollars and seventy-nine cents. God rest her soul if she goes out of Russia with anything more!



## ROUBLES

[After writing about the official exchange rate of 1 rouble to a dollar and the temptation of the black market exchange rate of 30 to 50 roubles to a dollar, she decides to brave the hairdresser. For anyone who knows the importance of MCF's coiffeur her visit to a Russian hairdresser is particularly entertaining.]

...Roubles came in handy too when I rashly determined to take my life in my hands and

have my hair washed. Three weeks of Russian dirt and pulverized concrete from new and crumbling apartment houses plus the growing fear of an onslaught of wee livestock, reduced me to the dire extremity of seeking a beauty parlor. This turned out to be a veritable hair-dressing establishment, a factory for the washing of hair. A large building housed the operations, with the right wing set apart for the sheep, and the left for the goats. There seemed to be regiments of people being cut, washed, waved or shaved. Conveying the shampoo idea was simple, but my innocent desire for a water wave caused an immediate Soviet. Soviet is the Russian word for "huddle" and one is brought on by the slightest crisis—crises are practically continuous in Russia. This one was caused by the fact that there are no hair-dryers in the country and so only marcelles are in demand. Not being able to speak Russian, I spoke louder English, until nothing but my vibrating vocal chords finally persuaded the hairdresser to give me a water wave and let me sit in the sun for three hours to dry. A masterful haircut was also obtained—a cross between the method used to cut curtain fringe and the bowl-on-head effect cultivated by sailors. When our husky Beautician dashed from the room for a moment, I looked fearfully at the rest of his implements and was seized with a premonition that he might return with a lawnmower; it was upsetting enough to have him come back brandishing a twelve-inch razor. Only my horrified expression and brute force diverted him from shaving my neck with it. I finally distracted him by waving a handful of roubles in his face. When he came to, he indicated that the charge was eight roubles—twenty cents. As I started to wind up a few curls, he popped off again and returned with a mob at his heels. Everybody was pointing and talking at once, and it was some moments before I realized that they were having their first look at a hairpin! Hairpins, it seems, simply don't exist, unless there are few left over from the Tzarist Regime, which may account for the present absence of long hair and whiskers. On my way out, I ran into a middle-aged woman from our party, chaperoned by a guide, who had just paid \$2.50 for the same operation—in Russia, it costs a tourist good money to have a conscience!

#### THE SUCKER'S SOVIET

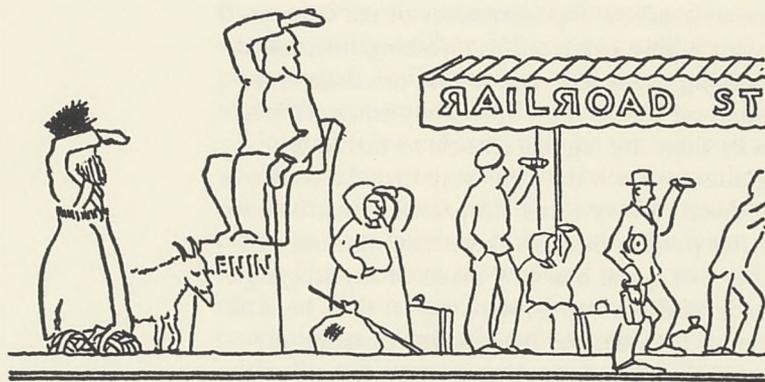
Four weeks in Russia is just two weeks longer than anybody can stand. The glow of

enthusiasm that envelopes the first fortnight suddenly reaches the saturation point and collapses into an endless chain of unappetizing meals and nondescript machinery that becomes a sheer test of endurance. You discover that U.S.S.R. is really a Detourist ad and means literally "U Sure See Russia." Detourist, the official and only travel organization in the Soviet, yanks you out of Finland and dogs your every footstep till you're a border line case on the way out. Detourist guides thus become official representatives of the Government whose password is "Nothing mentioned, nothing explained" and whose privilege is to interpret Russia the way Stalin wishes. This is why there are regular schools to turn out guides in much the same way that the Moscow Calibre Factory turns out precision instruments. After passing through these training camps, they can quote Marx or Lenin in any language, backwards, forwards, standing on their head or eating Borstch, but the simplest question off their beat will throw them completely. If you ask one how to get to the Dorgomilovsky Church in Moscow he will reply "Religion is the opiate of the people," or if you inquire which trolley car will take you to the Metropole Hotel he'll probably answer "Electrification plus Soviet Power equals Communism," which is all just too true to be much good.

This is somewhat upsetting and makes it extremely difficult to get at the truth of anything. The most searching questions bring to light the most distressing answers. Mrs. Prevent, for instance, asked the guide during a visit to an Institute of Mother and Child Welfare, just exactly what their procedure was in the matter of an abortion. The guide translated this to the doctor at the head of the Institute while we all waited in suspense. The Doctor began to wave both hands and to spout at great length what sounded like very colorful Russian. For some fifteen minutes we stood first on one foot, then on the other, momentarily expecting the guide to turn to us and relay some of this vast store of knowledge. Finally she swung around and began her interpretation. With bated breath we hung on her words. The answer came. "He says—'Why not?'"

Perhaps the best way of all to be sure that any information you get is completely unreliable is to ask two guides the same question. In Stalingrad, during a tour of the town schools, I took occasion, after passing through room on room occupied only by huge pieces of machinery to

be taken apart and put together again by the pupils, to ask, "But where are the students?" A word to the guide is suspicious, and our conductor thought the question quite irreverent compared with the long-winded stereotyped speech she was delivering on the relative merits of dynamos and then again dynamos. However, to a second insistent inquiry, she replied confidently, "Out to lunch." Three engines later, I heard someone asking another guide the same



question. This time the answer came unhesitatingly. "The students, Madame, are away on a three months' vacation."

If you had faced the guides, though, with these obvious discrepancies in regard to time, they would not have been in the slightest abashed. For while Marx means everything, time means nothing. When you began to wait for that Custom official at Belo Ostrov, you merely started what you were going to continue for the next month. Food is probably the first thing you'll start waiting for. The Russians wait for it standing up in long bread lines, but tourists wait sitting down in hotel diningrooms. They know that tourists won't walk out on them, for the only other diningrooms in Russia are the communal halls in apartment houses. You wait on iron cots in sumptuous hotel bedrooms amid gorgeous hangings and knickknacks from the Tzar's banquet hall for your baggage to show up. After the first two days, you go down to the basement and get it yourself. In the bathroom, surrounded by elaborate plumbing, you wait for the water to run. You also wait for busses, boats, trains, and anything else you didn't bring along from home. The most you can ever hope for in the way of a bath is brought up in a teapot, since the principal difference between trains and plumbing in Russia is that if you wait long enough the train will run, but the water won't.

As far as food is concerned, it isn't worth waiting for. However, since Detourist has an iron-clad rule that tourists may see only one thing in the morning and one more in the afternoon, you might just as well spend your time in the diningroom as anywhere else. Meals are ceremonies preceded by a two-hour delay where he who serves only stands and waits. They occur at peculiar hours, with lunch at four and dinner as near midnight as possible, and the time thus taken up is spent most profitably in wiping off the silver. Detourist is very particular about what you should see and even more fussy about what you shouldn't, and of course six hours' eating and ten hours' sleeping does take you off their hands for a considerable portion of the day....

When you are not eating or sleeping or seeing one of your two sights for the day, Detourist keeps you sitting in a bus....

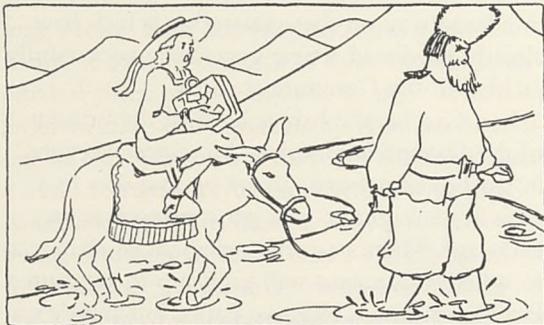
There are various other horrible things that can be done with a Russian bus, and Detourist thinks of all of them. Probably our worst experience was riding through Georgia, on a journey from Orchinikidski to Tiflis. This southern section is full of gorgeous Swissy scenery and is so far from Moscow that most of the people have never heard of Stalin and don't know there is a U.S.S.R. However, by the time five large open-air busses got through with our party, we weren't in any doubt as to our locality. For the first few hours after we started out, the riverbed, which our driver had mistaken for a road, seemed to be quite level and ran through a valley cut between steep and jagged mountains....

...the inhabitants of the town [Kasbek] had gathered around the busses to gesticulate wildly about something. They all wore the regulation Cossack hats and square sheepskin coats that covered them from neck to toe, had a wing-spread of some four feet and looked like an extremely large edition of a Snuggle Bunny without the zipper. The terrific commotion meant nothing in our young lives until one of the leaders finally told us that the road ahead was a complete washout. We knew this already, but he meant from rain. There wasn't enough gasoline to go back to Orchinikidski; and we all decided we'd rather spend the night in a mountain torrent than be just a lot of faces on the barroom floor at Kasbek. So with a hundred of us preferring the great unknown to anything we'd so far seen in Russia, the leader finally prodded the chauffeurs into braving the terrors ahead in

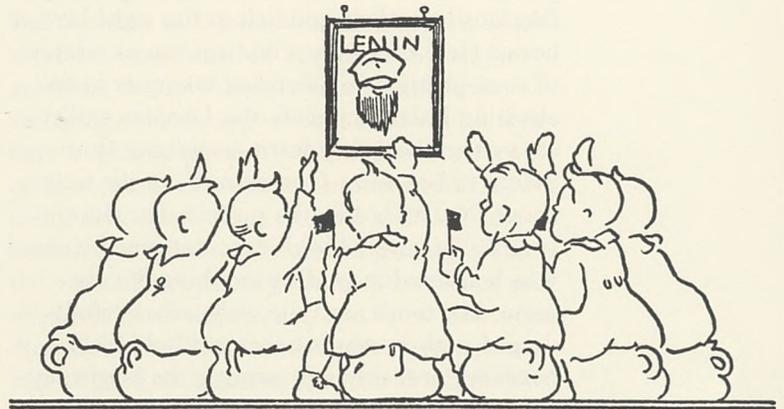
the hopes of reaching Tiflis by nightfall....

From Kasbek the road mounted suddenly way up into the mountains where it developed hairpin curves along the edge of precipices. These went to the driver's head with the result that the old rattletrap shuffled along at breakneck speed hitting the top of every other mountain. Now and then we passed a teensy-weensy hamlet holding on to the cliff for dear life, and the pinnacles were covered with discontented cows who spent all their grazing hours trying to keep from sliding into the ravine. Nothing short of a waterfall across the trail could have blocked our precipitous progress. Providentially, we soon came to one sprinkling boulders all over the road for some fifty yards. Most of the men got out at this point, and with the lightened load the bus gathered up its front wheels and jumped. The next washout we came to, however, was rapidly degenerating into a flood so that we had to abandon the busses altogether. We all dismounted laden like a packtrain with top coats, canes, Russian baskets, cameras and rolls of toilet paper. The first dozen people to wade into the rapids removed all traces of footwear and with shoes in teeth did a little Eva act. The rest grew recklessly nonchalant and thinking they'd probably never reach Tiflis plunged in regardless.

The next washout was even bigger and better, but Detourist suddenly produced a couple of donkeys out of a hat to carry the ladies across. These last were duly transported two by two screaming voluble protests at every step of the way, and looking like a premature procession out of the Ark. Others pulled their skirts up over their heads and struck out on their own with the water swirling around their midriffs so that they resembled a bunch of inverted umbrellas bobbing along with the tide. About two miles beyond this cataract, we stumbled over Passanaur, where we passed several hours, and almost passed out! Hungry enough to eat



tomatoes and cucumbers [the staple at every meal], we all muzzled into a six o'clock blupper—the meal of the day. When we were strong enough to stand it, the leaders informed us that there were just as many washouts ahead, from which we derived the intense satisfaction that we were at least holding our own. On Valuta's [the head guide, so-called because of a mouthful of gold teeth] assertion that there wasn't a bus in all the Russias that could make it, we had the joy of discovering that whereas we couldn't possibly get to Tiflis, the only alternative was to settle into the oven of the restaurant kitchen. To our amazement we were called three hours later and told that we were to leave for Tiflis after all; to our horror we found that in the drying process footgear for the whole party had been shrunk two sizes by an over-zealous landlord! In acute pain, we all limped into the new set of old busses. With the help of sky-rockets and two guides on each running-board to show us how to ford Russian rivers in three lessons, we almost collapsed, turned turtle and capsized some dozen times before finally and actually reaching Tiflis at three A.M.....



#### RUSSIAN ROOSTINGS

Most Russians dwell in brand-new apartment houses—if they are lucky. If they aren't, they are supposed to sleep in a friend's clothes closet, which is a purely hypothetical statement, since there aren't any clothes closets. In reality, their left-overs live herded into stray rooms in old houses which are waiting to be liquidated (Liquidate means destroy or utterly eradicate, and is the Government's pet word for everything that hasn't been built within the last twenty minutes), or else they simply migrate from the Ukraine to Siberia and back again, curling up in the gutter in between. However,

on an organized tour, you are carefully shown the lucky ones and their homes in the New Workers District of various towns. The Government is pretty pleased with these buildings, to put it mildly. Actually, they look a good deal like the storeroom dregs of a paper box company, and in construction seem to be just about as stable. As you stroll around midst whirling plaster, you shudder to think what would happen if the breezes should start blowing, and you walk with your toes turned pigeon in the fear that accidental contact with a wall will cause the whole structure to go into spontaneous combustion.

Living in one of these buildings is approximately like permanent residence in an Automat—everything within reach, and the all-pervading smell of dead dinners. On entering, probably the first thing to meet your nose is a large room, where the thoughtful Planning Commissar has built four walls around some 4000 cubic feet of bad air and left it to rot. The perfume of the place brings tears to the eyes and handkerchief to the nostrils. This is generally known as the Recreation Room and is the center of the communal social life. Instead of going out to the movies of an evening, the Russians have their good clean fun right here at home. Here they view vivid cinema premieres of seed-planting in Siberia or take part in an elevating little discussion of a Utopian trolley-car system; here they learn everything from “How to become a Communist” to the facts about the family life of a guppie. The floor is completely covered with cane bottomed chairs, which succeed in lending anything but the home-like touch, and the walls are tastefully draped with brazen banners and bold black headlines probably representing the bright sayings of Marx and Lenin. Readable as a Chinese laundry ticket, it’s a safe bet, nevertheless, that they’re just a few more cracks at Capitalism, Religion, and other old Spanish customs.

In Russia each smell leads to a worse one. You never think of going from place to place in the Soviet, but rather from Smell to Smell. In this case, you are drawn from the overpowering aroma of the social hall into an odorous conglomeration of sickly beets, thin-soled shoes, potatoes, matches, shapeless haberdashery, butter that looks old and discouraged, antique bread, various stages of decaying cabbage, and that’s just about all. This mess is the Community store, where all the apartment dwellers do their shopping, and wait for the next Five-

Year Plan to bring in the chicken for Sunday dinner. Waxed paper and cellophane being unheard of, parcels are done up in newspapers, if at all, so that these improvised wrappings can then be used for Roll-your-own cigarettes. From the scanty stock on the shelves, the store looks as though it had just been opened, but smells as though it should just be closed. Nobody seems to mind a little detail like that, however, for a long queue waits at the ticket office for the slip that portions out the day’s rations. The meal ticket each person carries specifies his approximate earnings, so that the price he pays per pound for butter varies according to whether he’s a ditch-digger or a diplomat. This may be the way they do it, or on the other hand it may not. We spent the afternoon trying to worm it out of the guide, and at the end of the seance weren’t quite sure whether it was her idea or ours. Anyway, it’s a swell one.

From the store you wander into the communal dining hall. Everything is depressingly dirty, and the tablecloths have enough spots on them for every meal since the Revolution. The window sills are considerably enlivened by a few anaemic weeds sprouting out of tomato cans and the fact that the flowers haven’t any fragrance is well concealed by the redolence of Borstch. The daily menus here afford the exciting variety of cabbage, bread, meat and cabbage, all equally unattractive, so that you can’t imagine being foolhardy enough to sample any of the things you see on their plates. Still, all this is just a matter of kopeks to the apartment inmates, and if there isn’t any service, at least that does away with the tipping....

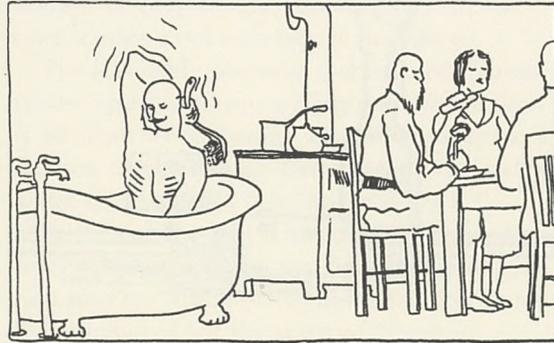
Probably one of the best local bargains is the Creche, or day nursery, for every apartment, where babies are parked at reasonable rates while Mama goes a-working. These Creches are supposed to be one of the high spots of Russian achievement and look clean compared with the rooms you’ve seen so far. The cradle is the crux of Communism, or something. Anyhow, hopes for the future are being staked in a large way on these nurseries, which have already produced a new generation successfully pickled in the Communist spirit.

In a Creche, the babies have all the privacy of the Dionne quintuplets, but since everyone in the Soviet is born, grows up and dies in a crowd, he might as well get used to it at an early age. There’s a certain element of chance as to whether Russians will grow up to work in a factory or on a Collective Farm, but there’s no

suspense whatever in their life as babies. Until they are about eight years old, they are all indiscriminately called Decembrists, because once there was some kind of revolution in that month. The fact that you call your baby a little Decembrist instead of an ootzy-wootzy gives some idea of the part that sentiment plays in the Russian household. All babies play, eat, and sleep together, and they all go in for collectivized potty-sitting. They lie around all day, wiggle their toes at pictures of Marx and Lenin and wait to become Young Pioneers at the age of eight. If that doesn't give them enough to think about, they can always look forward to being a Young Communist at sixteen, or start hoping that they'll be among the lucky few to get into the Party. They sit in little miniature chairs at long tables with a lot of other babies and are expected to feel thankful that they came along at just the right minute to enjoy the flypaper that came in last year on the Five-Year Plan. They're just ingrates if they'd rather have a ducky-wucky for their bath, or decide to kick up a helluva row because there isn't any soap, in case they've ever heard of soap. Also they could do with less exercising and without that Swedish massage ordered by Stalin as a daily routine for all little Decembrists. There's entirely too much leg-pulling and hanging-by-the-head going on, and with all this muscle training it's more than likely they'll turn into trapeze artists, and then where'll Russia be? Oh well, "Da-Da" as they say to all strange men—and "Nichevo," which is merely the Russian for "Yes-Yes" and "What does it all matter anyway?"

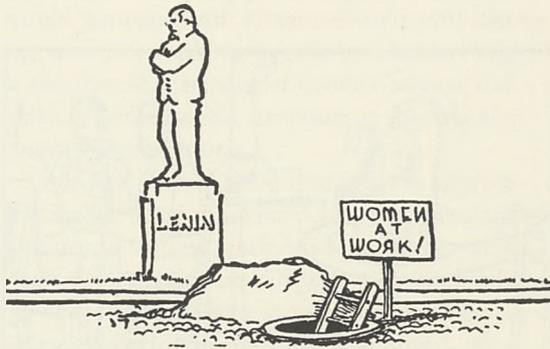
At this point we leave the infants all swinging through the air with the greatest of ease, and proceed upstairs to see the home of Mr. and Mrs.—only in the Soviet Mr. and Mrs., like all other titles, are simply boiled down to *Tovarisch* (Comrade). Of course everybody is away at the factory for the day, but living quarters may be visited just the same and are all theoretically open to the public from nine to four. Home is so humble there's no place like it, and it usually consists of three rooms. Each one has three or four beds in it, since several families share each apartment. They may eat in one of the bedrooms if they feel the urge, since it's not compulsory to go downstairs to the communal hall, but there is nary a private living or dining-room. There's a fairly good-sized kitchen with a sink, a stove, and a nice big bathtub in it, covered more or less per-

manently with boards and used as a place to chop meat and pare potatoes. In spite of the tub's pleasant social setting, baths are not too frequently indulged in, perhaps because of the universal lack of Soap and Stoppers. The kitchen sink doubles for the wash basin, and the other half of the bathroom is out on the stair landing, where it serves about four apartments, that is, some thirty or forty people....



Closets are conspicuous by their absence, probably because (a) they forgot about it and (b) there aren't any clothes to hang in them anyway. This scheme no doubt does much to cut down the yen for an extensive wardrobe and explains, as the guide said, why only black shoulder straps, instead of pink or white, are available. As for Russian dressing, socks are sweeping the country—being economical, they have a special appeal for Stalin. Shoes are a cross between an overshoe and an Indian moccasin; dresses are all one style—and look like brassieres with shower curtains gathered in at the waist. There is only one corset and one pair of gloves in all the Russias, and those have been there since the Revolution in the private possession of an Ex-Countess; after her death they'll go into a Museum. As for headgear, there isn't a hat with a brim from Leningrad to Yalta, and one of our party in a cartwheel picture-hat caused such a sensation that by now the native women have probably taken the wheels off the tractors for an advance showing of spring millinery. But this season the forgotten Russian women took to the shelter of berets, and their bobs, marcel and carmine lips bore the inevitable Soviet trade-mark of absolute uniformity, so that they all looked as like as peas in the pod. Much to the Government's surprise, the country is now flooded with feminine vanities—lipstick, perfume and nail polish! The explanations of this vary, from the theory that these were made in Russia for exportation and

then nobody would buy them, to the story that a carload of piston rings for tractors turned out to be wee feminine gadgets in the manner of a practical joke. At any rate, it was an accident, and there's still not much chance for soap and toilet paper until someone slips up again on the order blanks....



ELBOW GREASE

Russianally speaking, there are few professions possible in the Soviet—professionally speaking, there are few Russians capable of filling them anyway. In the case of 99 percent of the population, there are really only three careers available—work in a factory, work on a farm, or a place in a brass band. All of these require skill and none of them get it. This does not of course include the Idle Poor, who simply spend all their time milling around Russia accompanied by their cows, wives, children and a few tacky household possessions.

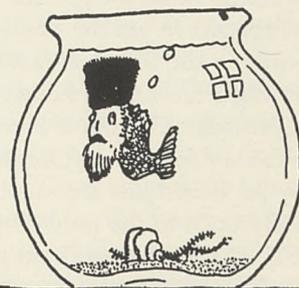
However, a stroll along any street in the Soviet Union gives you the distinct sensation that most of the population are entirely free at all hours of the day and night to accompany you on shopping trips and during any little peregrinations around the city. At first this is startling since you've been told at least once a day that Russia is one of the few nations smart enough not to have an unemployment problem. When you conversationally call the guide's attention to the mob scene, he goes off with a bang right in your face and says that there's more work to be done than there are Russians able to do it. You'd be the last to dispute the "able," but that isn't quite what the guide means. His explanation has something to do with shifts in factories.

At the end of a few weeks, you become convinced that Stalin really handles the unemployment situation by putting all the riveters into the orchestras and by letting the musicians

erect scaffolding around the new buildings. The result of this ingenious means of dealing with the problem is the disconcerting realization that even after an indefinitely long stay in the Soviet you haven't an idea in the world as to what most of the buildings look like. From a few exposed samples, though, you surmise that the scaffolding is there to keep the walls on the building; and after all, imagine the Government's surprise if they peeled off the scaffolding and found there wasn't any construction at all inside! It would serve them right if it turned out to be a graveyard, since a lot of these buildings are literally made out of granulated tombstones. Of course concrete with the customary sand and water mixture would be much simpler, but it takes up more time and has become a matter of sentiment to crack up these aristocratic slabs of black marble with gold lettering dating way back to Ararat....

In Russia you don't have to work, as long as you're willing to give up eating too. The ideal of keeping every one busy amounts to a religion where Machinery is God and Public is his Profit! However, the professional possibilities for the average man boil down to the exhilarating choice between Farm and Factory. Skill, of which there is practically none in the Soviet, is what counts, since you're paid according to it. Natural aptitude for a job is not exactly forbidden, but it is studiously ignored....

[The next three chapters—Time Out; Vim, Vigor, and Vitality; and Love Life—complete a comprehensive tour of the U.S.S.R. and bring the reader to the...]



HINDWORD

Now it can be told, when my pen is almost out of hand, that there is something yet to be said—about Russia. The hideous fact, possibly contrary to what you may so far have suspected, is that in this paradise for plumbers there are to be found three of the most valuable

substances now in captivity. This does not include Sobriety, which they've gone in for in a big way and which takes the place of Soap. If they take to liquor they're liquidated, not by a couple of nights in the hoosegow, but by having their stomach pumped and a fine imposed. Both the pumping and the fine get bigger with each offense.

Nor do I mean the tractors that divided stand and united stall, and whose omnipresence signifies Soviet supremacy in quantity at least. The time has come to speak of vaguer things, not cabbages nor yet of piston rings, but rather of some rarely communistic characteristics—in short: Spirit, Stamina and Song. Spirit is not here synonymous with wine and Stamina wasn't the name of Jug Wright's Russian girl friend.

Song, next to statues of Lenin, is probably the most redundant thing in the U.S.S.R. Music hath charms to soothe the average Russian breast and the result is that the whole country sounds like a Glee Club. They sing themselves

into anything but the bathtub, and then sing themselves out again.

The fact that the Russians live at all in the Soviet is proof sufficient of their stamina, though the outward manifestations usually take the form of Subotniks. This means any kind of social service in your free time and accomplishes all kinds of miracles from the building of subways to the stamping out of illiteracy. It certainly requires intestinal fortitude, commonly known as guts, to take your one day off for even harder work—to take it and like it!

The inevitable outcome is a tribe of Tarzans whose spirit is all too willing and whose flesh is far from weak. Lenin's Utopia has become a fixation that they'd go through hell, fire and water to attain, and their hue and cry is "Workers of the World Unite." Small wonder, with such a battle cry, that Soap and Stoppers sink into the limbo of Nichevo and that above its utterance is felt the spirit of Never say Die—say Share!

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*...My parents' school was a good school, a very strong school, and I did receive a good basic education, but I didn't want to go to college. When I graduated at 16 I wanted to study music and drama, but after a post-graduate year at my parents' school, Wildcliff Junior College, and a semester at the New England Conservatory, I had a serious bout of influenza. My mother persuaded me when I had a very high temperature to go to college and I said, "Yes, if you just leave me alone". But then I had to receive four months of intensive tutoring in Latin, French, English, and Mathematics, in order to pass the entrance examinations for Radcliffe College. Again it was their way of getting things done. Now I am grateful, but at the time I wasn't at all enthusiastic.*

*By 1931 we were acutely affected by the terrible Depression of 1929, when everything collapsed. I do remember it vividly. In two years we went from a school of 200 students down to 30 or 40. I remember thinking what courage my father had. We had a vast dining room, and we put up curtains to divide it to make it look smaller. In the big study hall which had 90 or 100 desks we took away many of the desks, trying to make it still look like a thriving school. Lots of schools closed during that period. But I remember thinking what courage my father had when he stood up in assembly and went through the rituals of the morning chapel. It was a very difficult time and I had to drop out of college for a year and a half because things were so tough; there wasn't any money. Then I went back and finished in half a year, just to be sure to get my degree and graduate in 1933.*

*My parents were so deeply affected by the Depression that they thought they were going to be forced to close and lose the school entirely. They didn't want me to be too emotionally distressed by it so they sent me to a language school in Perugia, Italy, for the summer with a housemother from their school as chaperone. They sent me to Italy with the magnificent sum of \$800 for both of us for two months. Since I spoke several languages, managed the money and hotel arrangements, I chaperoned her more than I was being chaperoned.*

*While I was gone my parents moved a few precious possessions to the summer house in Maine. They only told me later the story of how they loaded their station wagon with certain paintings and pictures, being sure they were going to be evicted and the school confiscated.*

*Actually I had a wonderful summer because Mussolini was in full power then and the Italian army was having military maneuvers down in the plains below Perugia. It was a very glamorous summer because the officers were staying at the same hotel as I was, the Rosetta in Perugia. Also, there were three Swiss boys from Zurich who were going to the University, too. One of them was the son of the head of one of the biggest construction firms in Switzerland. He was a very charming young man and we fell in love for the summer as we were going*

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through the revolving doors of the Brufani Palace. He and his two friends picked me up every morning and took me to the University, and then we came back together and my chaperone fixed tea and chocolate and Italian pastries. She always had things ready for us, so I entertained the three gentlemen in my room with her. Then we had dinner outside in the courtyard with all the very handsome Italian officers. The officers always invited me to go in their Alfa Romeos to the Lake of Trasimeno where they had speed boats and I always accepted if I could take my three Swiss friends with me. I didn't learn a great deal of Italian, because I had to speak French to the Swiss boys. Since they couldn't speak English and I couldn't speak German, we spoke French as our common language. There were a lot of Americans in my class at the University, but since I was always accompanied by the three Swiss gentlemen they only heard me speaking French. They often made comments about the way I dressed, or, "Look at her, with three men all to herself!" On the last day of classes I turned to one of those Americans and said, "Will you please close the window —there's a helluva draft!" She nearly fell off her chair in consternation, recalling all the conversations they had had about me all summer!

After college my mother became very ill with cancer and consequently I had to help my father more and more. I travelled for my parents, trying to fill the school. I used to travel all over the country and was given \$10 a day to cover the car, food, hotel, everything. Dollars went a lot further then than they do now, but it was tight. I had a little Ford automobile, and I would go round and knock on doors of anybody who expressed any interest at all in going to our school. Sometimes I would drive right through the night to save money or eat just a sandwich and a milk shake. In those days times weren't as dangerous as they are now. In other words, there was no threat of kidnapping or being attacked. I never picked up anybody on the road and I did like to drive and was a good driver, but I was very aware of the seriousness of the Depression. I am now very glad I went through it because it did teach me a lot.

I was spoiled in the sense that I was given privileges such as travel and education, but I was always expected to return something in kind. I felt a real sense of responsibility to my parents. Even though it was tough training I accepted it, because a lot of people's fathers were committing suicide, and whole families were being evicted from their homes as the banks foreclosed on them. This training certainly stood me in good stead later on in the struggle to create my own schools.



*Being the daughter of the headmaster I was always called upon to act as a sort of hostess, and to mix with people. I saw my parents doing it so I just automatically slid into the role. I was conscious of being the headmaster's daughter, but it never really bothered me other than the fact that I was usually blamed for everything because my father didn't want to show partiality towards his own child. I often got blamed for things I didn't do, because he bent backwards to be fair....*

## The Desert Song

*Starring Mary Crist Fleming as Pierre Birabeau and the Red Shadow*

The preparation, chorus practices, dress rehearsals, building of sets, painting scenery, learning the script, all these were put to the test the evening of May 30th. And what excitement! Mr. Moore (our director) was busy with character make-up, "Dorothy" ready at the piano. Mr. Martel hovered around with paintbrush in hand lest some last-minute detail be overlooked. When Mr. Hotz showed his smiling face at the stage door, we sighed with relief. For he is always our moral support, as well as our chorus director; and without him our backbone grows suddenly limp!

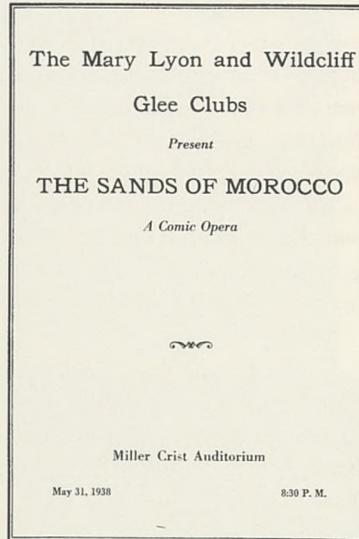
On with the show! Opening chorus on stage! Lights! A few breathless moments, then Curtain! In full swing we started, putting forth our best efforts while acting and singing, and, finally, feeling that the audience topped it as the success of the year. Now for a bit of the plot....

The first scene finds us in the camp of the Riffs, who are the supposed Bad Men of Morocco. The Riffs (who are really helpers of the oppressed poor) are worrying about Captain Paul Fontaine who is determined to capture them and their leader, the Red Shadow. Next we find Paul after he has discovered the camp of the Riffs and is planning to trap them all. Margot, Paul's fiancée, appears on the scene, having just arrived from France, and expecting a wild courtship with Paul under the Moroccan moon. In this she is sadly disillusioned, for Paul's duties take up most of his time, and leave none for love-making.

Pierre, the son of General Birabeau, is the weak boy who loves flowers and poetry and Margot, even though he will not tell her. In reality Pierre is the Red Shadow—the most dangerous man in Morocco—but of course no one knows this. His dual personality causes many tense situations.

Margot soon finds herself in love with the Red Shadow, who kidnaps her, taking her to the place of Ali Ben Ali in the hills. There she gets all the romantic adventure she has ever desired!

General Birabeau searches for Margot, and finally discovers the hiding place. He challenges



THERE ARE NO SMALL PARTS— ONLY SMALL ACTORS.  
K. Stanislavski

the Red Shadow to fight. This is the climax, for, of course, Pierre will not fight his father. The Riffs, understanding only that their leader will not accept the challenge, renounce him. Margot and the rest go back to camp and find that Pierre has killed the Red Shadow. The Red Shadow no longer exists. When Pierre sings the "Desert song" to Margot, she realizes that he has been the Red Shadow all along and all ends happily.

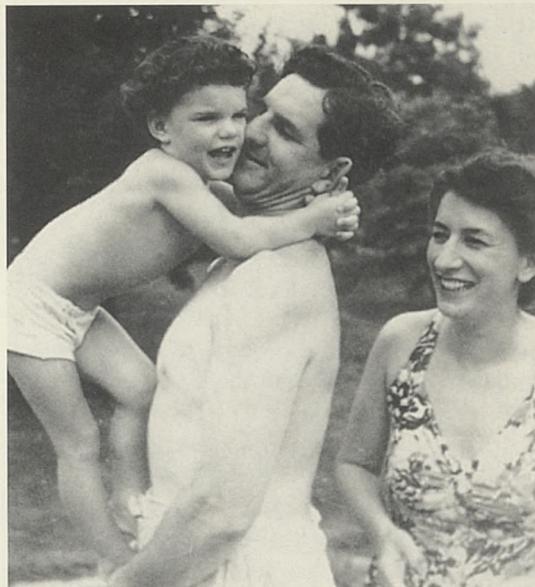
Cast: Sid, Eloise Dey; Mindar, Lucile Heise; Hassi, Pat Shearer; Benjamin, Louise Fisher; Captain Paul Fontaine, Mary Sordoni; Azuri, Evelyn Downing; Lieutenant LaVergne, Doris Vehmeyer; Sergeant DuBassac, Betty Eichelberger; Margot, Margaret Stannard; General Birabeau, Frederica Pantlind; Pierre Birabeau, Red Shadow, *Mary Crist Fleming*; Susan, Caroline Bliss; Ali Ben Ali, Katherine Dilatush; Clementina, Holly Hanson; Neri, Florence Bruzgo; Hadji, Betty Lou Waller.

*Holly Hanson Coors  
Golden, Colorado  
Former student, Mary Lyon School  
Alumni parent, Swiss Holiday*

(Reprinted from the 1938 Wildcliff Junior College—*The Mike*)

...I might have been a shy person except for my interest in the theatre. I never liked sports except horseback riding, but I loved the theatre, and acting and singing, and we did a great deal of it in school. I was always in plays and I think that keeps you from being shy. I know my children now say, "Mother, why didn't you give us any public-speaking training?", because they know how many times I have to speak in public to the school. It never occurred to me to give that training to my children, because it came rather naturally to me through my love of the theatre, and they never expressed any particular interest in the theatre. It's true now that it would be an asset for them to be able to speak easily in public. Of course, my son has learned to do so because of his banking profession, and Gai has acquired confidence because being a missionary she speaks up about her faith. Since we lived in Swarthmore I went to theatre performances in Philadelphia, and the small town of Swarthmore had a very fine amateur theatre. It was a professional small community theatre, and so I always attended their performances. I acted my first year in college with the Harvard group, but I came to dislike it because they produced very avant-garde plays and it was co-educational, because Harvard and Radcliffe collaborate; I wasn't used to that, coming from an all-girls school. So I gave up being active in the theatre. But maybe "once a ham, always a ham." I was very impressed with the outstanding actors of that period—Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontaine, Walter Hampden, Helen Hayes, and Katherine Cornell. These were the big names in my day, in America, not Europe, but comparable to Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, and John Gielgud. They were the same caliber of actor and I tremendously admired them. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to act like one of them? But that was dream stuff because then I had to come back to the realities of earning a living. I was 27 when I got married and I spent four or five years helping my father by travelling, recruiting, doing catalogs and sales for Mary Lyon School. I was also having my first two children....

With my baby daughter Gay



Little girl Gay, with papa and mama Fleming



Miss Gay and Master  
Tom at Frog Hollow Farm

## Senior Luncheon at the Wisteria

Dressed in blue dirndle print, silhouetted against the lovely background of the wisteria, Mary Crist Fleming greeted the seniors of Mary Lyon. Never had we seen such an adorable home! From the kitchen to the bedroom—all was completely model. Investigating every square inch with many “oh’s” and “ah’s,” we discovered copper ware from Brittany, original oil paintings from Italy, tremendous French coffee cups, a white Florentine desk set, and a fireplace too perfect to describe with a München donkey resting upon one of the stones. Everything subtly told some adventurous tale, and we felt as though the whole continent of Europe were spread before our eyes.

We lunched outside on the lawn, while the May sun ogled us intently, and we think, perhaps, a little enviously. We started with tomato juice, then Bill (Mr. William Thomas

Fleming, III) cooked each individual steak until it was sizzling and *nous fait venir l'eau à la bouche!* Then casserole potatoes and hot biscuits followed and Mary piling high our plates with a wonderful salad served from a bright Hungarian wooden bowl.

Mary was the perfect chef and hostess at the same time, surprising us with *real* strawberry shortcake for dessert! The cake and strawberries simply melted in the floating puff of whipped cream; we didn't think we could possibly be so hungry! After luncheon, we returned inside to inspect more of Mary's treasures. There is only one difficulty after visiting Mary. I am terribly afraid all the Seniors look upon married life as a completely different and much more wonderful institution!

(Reprinted from the 1938 Wildcliff Junior College—*The Mike*)

*After theatre, her other great love: Travel*  
**Into Yugoslavia: Six School Girls in a Ford**

Six men crisscrossing thirteen countries of Europe in two months by automobile should make an exceptional travel story. If six attractive American schoolgirls were to do the same thing, their feat should include many more thrilling experiences than one would expect to find in any "girl adventure series."

With eighteen pieces of baggage and several tons of other paraphernalia that a half-dozen women insist on carrying when traveling "light," six American girls have spent the past two summers 3,000 miles from home, Fording Europe in a V-8 Phaeton! Last summer, Mary Crist Fleming of Wildcliff Junior College, in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, and five college companions missed nothing in covering the map of Europe by automobile from its most westerly edge to the borders of the Far East and back. "Don't be foolish! Six girls can't possibly gallivant all over Europe in a car and return safely," was the substance of many a comment on the contemplated vacation.

Such frank challenges may explain the origin of what was one of the most daring and interesting motor trips yet undertaken by young women, alone and unaided by members of the "stronger sex." On both of their trips, Mary

Fleming has acted as driver-conductor. Her car was a 1936 Ford V-8, of which, after it reached America last fall, Miss Fleming said: "The car has been in Europe twice, doing 25,000 miles altogether, and still is in excellent condition. I'm fully convinced that only a Ford could make such trips with comfort and economy. It passes the most high-powered European cars on difficult Alpine roads with the ease of a motorcycle shooting by a velocipede! And its fuel consumption and easily replaced parts make it the most practical American car in Europe." Speculating on the many strange and exciting things they saw in sections of Europe which they would have missed had they not traveled by automobile, Miss Fleming added: "I hope to have a regular 'Ford Fleet' going over every summer!" Long before they reached the countries of eastern Europe, where occidental modernism is conspicuous for its absence, the people were even shocked that *women* should undertake to drive an automobile! "Women without men—women chauffeurs!" ejaculated the crowds that eyed the Ford and its six occupants. As the girls drove southwestward toward the Balkans, the natives were no longer shocked. The undertaking had then become an

LIFE IS A  
GRINDSTONE—  
DEPENDING ON  
THE QUALITY OF  
THE STONE, IT  
POLISHES YOU  
UP—OR WEARS  
YOU DOWN.

"Only a Ford could  
make such a trip"





The beginning of tire troubles as my new Yugoslav friends supervise

act of bravery, and the natives were inquisitive about reasons for attempting it.

On their trip last summer, roads through France and Italy were good, but when they reached the top of the Adriatic Sea and dipped down into the Balkans, not only the roads changed, but the people and life, as well. There the East first became apparent as it blended with the West: the hat was replaced by the tarboosh...carts by pack animals...water sellers, with sloshing, laden goat skins and rattling cups.

The experiences of this two-month automobile trip through Europe would fill many chapters, but probably outstanding was the invasion of Yugoslavia. At the border of that country, where life today is still as strange as its thousand-year-old history is fantastic, the girls were halted by customs officials. Six girls in a car! Impossible! they were told. Never before had Yugoslavia been approached by women alone in an automobile. It was a trying situation.

Records revealed that only six other American cars had ever attempted to drive across the country, and not all of these had ever made a return trip. But the young Americans refused to be turned back. In the smile-language, which the girls found particularly useful, they assured the officers that their Ford car furnished ample protection. Besides, one of them hastily dug deep into their luggage to the ice basket, and displayed a good sharp ice pick! So into Yugoslavia rolled the V-8 with six girls....

*Reprinted from Ford News (c. 1938)*

## Into Yugoslavia

**Six School Girls  
in a Ford**



### THE CARGO

Carried through thirteen European countries in two months by a Ford V-8:

- 6 Girls
- 1 Ice pick
- 6 Pairs goggles
- 3 Top coats
- 6 Steamer rugs
- 18 Hand bags
- 3 Cameras
- 1 Carry-all for maps
- 1 Radio
- 1 Portable spotlight
- 1 First aid kit
- 1 Medicine chest
- 1 Case baked beans
- 2 Cases tomato juice
- 1 Fitted lunch box
- 1 Portable stove
- 1 Box canned fuel
- 1 Ice basket

## She Was Our Passport Everywhere

My years at Mary Lyon were great—"Fording Europe" was the icing on the cake. I shall never forget it. Sailing from New York on the Normandie was fun. Henry Fonda was on board (drunk most of the time but a good ping-pong player just the same), Anatole Litvak (famous movie producer) and Colleen Moore were aboard—also two West Pointers who were bicycling Europe. They changed their itinerary to match ours and met us in several places. Mary (Dart) and Betty (Ralston) married them.



"Mary Crist's charm and gorgeous smile made 'Fording Europe' a delight"

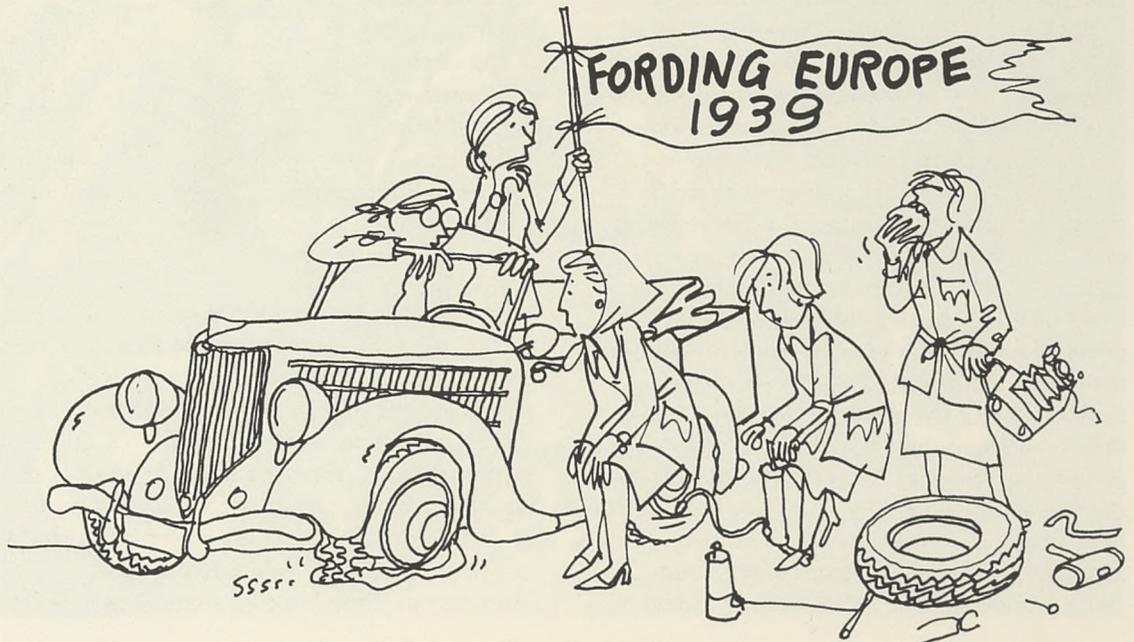
The ship anchored off Southampton to unload cars to a tender bound for England. A British plane kept diving across the bow and stern and finally hit the crane unloading the cars. I was standing a few decks above and had a wonderful picture of it. Needless to say, officers appeared from everywhere. The plane rode on our bow into Le Havre. We were told they took it to the French naval base in Bordeaux. When we reached Le Havre, there was a longshoreman's strike creating another delay. It was dark before we got our bags and car off the ship. After that, things went smoothly. We toured Normandy, Brittany, on to Paris, Biarritz, Chartres, the Basque country, the Riviera, Monte Carlo and into Italy.

One night, driving in southern France, we came to a railroad crossing with the gates down. Mary Crist blew the horn several times and a farmer appeared from a nearby house, raised the gates, closed them after we passed through, and went back to bed. Six women in

an American convertible unescorted created a sensation in every town we went through. Someone grabbed a cigarette out of Mary Dart's hand while we were slowed down in some little town. When we got to the Italian border, Mary Crist said, "Don't turn on the radio. There's a tax on them". She got out and went into the little "guard house"; Mary Dart forgot and turned on the radio! Somewhere near St. Marguerita a car smashed into us. No one was hurt and we were soon on our way again.

We toured Italy from top to bottom. In Rome, we met Balbo, who was head of the Italian Air Force, and Count Ciano, Il Duce's son-in-law. We saw troops marching in Florence from our hotel balcony overlooking the Arno river. Italy was at war in Ethiopia at the time. (We couldn't get a visa into Spain because of the revolution there. In fact, King Alfonso was in residence at the Hotel Meurice where we stayed in Paris.)

The trip on the Rhine was spectacular. Germany was different from the other countries. Hitler was in power. The Olympics were in Berlin (1936). The military were everywhere. As I recall, it was at the German border where Mary Crist had to declare our money. She had a money belt which she wore around her waist, and it took a little doing to get to it this particular time. Crossing into Belgium was the most trouble. They took up the floor boards to find some kind of number they were looking for. The inspectors were rude.



We had a rough crossing to England. From Canterbury we went to London, then Shakespeare country, Oxford, etc. Then sailed for home on the Ile de France. We were delayed 22 hours in reaching New York because of a storm. We were further delayed because the "Follies des Femmes" of Paris were on board with all kinds of animals. That held us in quarantine for a while. We arrived home safe and sound. The food was superb everywhere we went. It took me two years to get from 180 to 125. Need I say more for French pastries, Swiss chocolate and all the other goodies.

Mary Crist's charm, knowledge of Europe,

language skills, and *gorgeous smile* made "Fording Europe" a delight. She was our passport everywhere.

I think Mary Crist inherited her mother's charm. Mrs. Crist greeted us every noon and dinner time as we entered the dining room. She always had a smile for us and a personal greeting. She was a gracious lady. Everyone loved her.

*Peggy Unger Henrys  
Cranbury, New Jersey  
Former student, Mary Lyon School*

## We Did It the Way the "Grand Tour" Should Be Done



"Wonderful Mary Crist as our guide"

The year was 1937 when I travelled to Europe with Mary Crist, four other friends, and a Ford Phaeton. Mary was 27 years old, I was 20. We did it the way the "grand tour" should be done; we spent the summer (10 weeks, I believe), toured 10 countries, and crossed the Atlantic both ways by ship—the Normandie going over and the Ile de France on the return trip. What a wonderful summer for five country bumpkins with wonderful Mary Crist as our guide.

We couldn't go to Spain because of the Civil War there, and we couldn't go to Czechoslovakia because of the tension at the border with Germany, but we didn't miss much else.

Everywhere we went men and young boys were marching. Everyone knew or feared that war was coming, but to the young, crazy girls in that Ford Phaeton it was very exciting and exhilarating. We did have a few anxious moments in Munich when some Brown Shirts

"Mary's Double Life?"



stopped us, and again in Sarajevo where there was some political unrest due to a visit there of the French politician Blum.

We spent a week each in Paris, Florence, Rome, Venice, Munich, and London. The remainder of the time we toured, visiting châteaux, cathedrals, etc. Mary, of course, used every opportunity to speak the language of the people wherever we were. The five of us were in awe of her fluency in each language. She assured us that her German wasn't as good as we thought it was, but we were impressed.

The tour opened our eyes to a way of life, to cultures, to tensions, to beauty we had never known. Mary Crist has done this for many other young Americans.

I almost forgot to mention that we had 13



Four Graces in Cannes:  
Lillian McFetridge  
(Wilson), Maggie Stan-  
nard (Kephart), Evelyn  
Swift (Hadsall), Holly  
Hanson (Coors)

flat tires on our tour. Mary has a talent you probably didn't know about. She can change a flat and patch a tube!

My sister and I graduated from the Mary Lyon School. We graduated in depression years, I in 1935 and Eileen in 1937. I know it was a struggle for Mary's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Crist, to keep the schools (Mary Lyon and Wildcliff) running during those years. We had very good teachers, some were wonderful—I remember an elderly woman, Mrs. Temple, who taught English—and we were well prepared for College.

My enduring mental picture of the Crists is at the dinner hour at Mary Lyon. We all, students and faculty, gathered in the reception room before dinner for conversation and “subdued” fun. Then we all went into the dining room together and stood behind our chairs at our assigned tables. Then, with dignity and grace, Mr. and Mrs. Crist walked in, grace was said, and we ate our evening meal....

## America! America!

Have you ever been confronted with the question, “Are you glad you're an American?” And have you ever shrieked, “Yes, yes, yes!” until you could shriek no more? I have. For I've been to Europe with Mary Crist. All of us saw, in the past summer, a great deal more than most European tourists.

I met a young Frenchman in Paris who had just returned from his military training term. He had hated it. Military training is a compulsion in Europe (with the exception of England and Holland) in which every boy must spend two years before the age of twenty-one. How would you like that, you Americans who think we're in the throes of Dictatorship??

Italy.... How would you Americans like to have your houses plastered with the mottos of Roosevelt? So it is in this country every one told me I would love.... On every barn, house, stone wall, and tree trunk is Mussolini's picture in a war helmet, with “Viva Il Duce!” written below it. One of the most frequent “proverbs” is “Obey, Prepare, Fight.” Let me tell you about our “border line boat story.”

Calm Lake Maggiore spread itself invitingly below our hotel windows. This was Switzerland! All these mountains, this sand and sun, were Switzerland. All these clean, honest, simple folk were Swiss and we adored them! A boat ride



Lillian McFetridge and Kate Horwell cycle with Mary Crist in England

I hope the affection and respect for the Crist family shines through this report.

*Lillian McFetridge Wilson  
Charlottesville, Virginia  
Former student, Mary Lyon School  
Alumni parent, TASIS*

on the Lake was a most enchanting suggestion for the day. We brought along our passports, for we were to pass into Italy within an hour, and at any frontier or border line, passports, we soon found out, are extremely necessary. About us stretched the vast Alps, and somewhere nestled in the valleys would be quiet and contented villages. Everything about us seemed serenely happy. We were approaching Italy... then... Snap...like that it changed. We could have drawn the border line across the waters. The waters which were so smooth, so calm, now seemed to tremble ever so lightly, as if they too knew a difference. On our right we viewed a girls' training camp. We watched girls march, shoulder their guns, march again. On our left was the boys' training camp.... Beating time to Mussolini's efforts to be a great leader, and to create a great people, and a greater military Italy.... Just that was the difference of a border.... So intensely different, so strictly and morally different. But why? Why should a line drawn on a piece of earth decide the fate of a people, of a nation, of the world?

The Italians adore Mussolini. They worship him as a veritable god. I asked one Italian why he liked his leader so much, and he replied very simply, “When I was a small boy, he patted me on the head.”

BUT WHAT IS LIBERTY, WITHOUT WISDOM AND WITHOUT VIRTUE? IT IS THE GREATEST OF ALL POSSIBLE EVILS.

*Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)*

"I've been to Europe  
with Mary Crist"



Holly and Eve at the  
Hotel Europa



They love him in spite of the bitter taxes he presses. But how would you like to pay \$1.20 for a gallon of gasoline, to pay almost a thousand dollars in taxes in order to keep the car you own (if you make enough money to buy one), to be allowed to buy only Italian made products, no imports?

As a reward for these taxes, new buildings are sprouting up, along with new camps, colleges, athletic fields, and lest we forget.... Guns, Uniforms, Explosives, Ships, Gun Cotton, Gases, Shells, etc. .... The great Mussolini Forum in Rome, with its tremendous swimming pool and amazing athletic facilities, appears to Mr. American Citizen to be the most perfect example of modern architecture and future physical development he has ever seen. But does such a person ever stop to consider the amount of publicity and propaganda Il Duce receives for such a venture?

A most impressive memory is of Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. The Slavs seem to be famed for their uprisings. (Note: World War.) We six were squeezed in with the rest of the mob, not realizing there were no other women for blocks around. Some gun shots suddenly pierced the air, our hotel manager was running swiftly toward us shouting, "Get out of here quickly or you'll be killed! You have to leave Sarajevo immediately." And we certainly did rush out of that throng of mad Moslems! They are Moslems, you know, and they naturally hate Christians, which was another reason for the dynamite atmosphere that hung over the city.

Heil Hitler! Yes, Heil Hitler, and why? A motion every German must make or be thrust into prison. A different Germany since the beginning of Hitler's regime. A suppressed and repressed Germany. A suspicious and whispering Germany. Would Americans stand for this? *No!* We want Freedom and Liberty—to speak as we please and to voice our opinions where we please. We won't be held back; we're going ahead. We want our Free Press and Free Speech. And we don't want to be squashed and sat upon, should we utter the real truth of a subject!

In England it rather got our goat that the British should think we are so inferior to them—merely a young off-spring running wild. So we argued until we were blue in the face with the opinionated English, who aren't really conservative, as it is said, but just down right stubborn! They see a thing on one side only, and try as you may, you can get just so far before you come up against a blank wall.

The moral of this editorial is not to make you stay at home, but on the contrary, to travel more and to discover how we may make ourselves a greater nation by learning from the *faux pas* of other countries.

When they dance abroad, they dance to American jazz. When they go to movies, they see American films. Their clothes are copied from Hollywood designers, not Parisian. If they ride in luxurious cars, they're American cars. And so it goes with all Twentieth Century ideas. Naturally we can't compete with their Art and Classical Music which has come down to them through the ages and long before Columbus even discovered there was an America.

But in modern conveniences and improvements, we're leaving them far behind in the dust. Our biggest stride has been in Sanitation. In that field, we are leaps and bounds ahead of any other country. It is one of America's greatest standards, and we must strive continually to draw it to perfection.

We don't want to be colossally conceited like the English, suppressed like the Germans, or hot-headed like the Slavs. We want to be real Americans! We want to live up to our Democracy.... We don't want to degrade mentally and physically because of a war. We don't want to have opinions which cannot be



Holly—the All-American Girl

expressed. We want to be frank and honest and open minded and value the things in life which will make our nation a greater nation....

*Holly Hanson Coors  
Golden, Colorado  
Former student, Mary Lyon School and  
Wildcliff Junior College  
(Written for the Wildcliff-in-Europe  
November, 1937 issue)*

## Fording Europe



Any trip was a carrot to me when I was young. Sheer bribery, of course; a trip to Russia, for instance, if I would write a book about it. But I was always held to my word, as you see from the excerpts from *No Soap and the Soviet*, my ridiculous attempt at a book, written ironically when so many Russian specialists were writing seriously on the subject and now, with historical hindsight, particularly frivolous in light of the horrors perpetrated under Stalin.

If no one would offer me a trip, I would create one myself. So with five girls only five minutes younger than I as their chaperone, I created "Fording Europe". I bought a wonderful Ford Phaeton, convertible, of course, with a sliding center glass window as in a Rolls Royce, a baggage rack, half as long as the length of the car, which required doubling shock absorbers and springs. Ten bags stored in the rack had to be identical and were covered with a tight tarpaulin measured to the inch. Why it didn't upend the car as in the clown act of a circus I don't know, but somehow it worked and carried us for ten thousand miles across Europe. Included in this mileage was our being hoisted by a derrick on to six different boats, all of which we held up by anywhere from one to twenty-four hours for not reading departure instructions carefully, the last hoist being on to the "Ile de France" at Southampton.

I had stored all kinds of emergency parts



Breakfasting at Dives sur Mer: Mary Crist, Holly Hanson, Lillian McFetridge, Kay Horwell, Evelyn Swift



"I bought a wonderful Ford Phaeton"

Teaching the girls the delights of picnicking



"The roads were terrible in Yugoslavia"



including fuses, tire patches, sterno stove, and cans of baked beans and spaghetti in case we got marooned. The tire patches proved to be a life saver, for after doing the civilized part of the trip, staying at the Meurice in Paris, the Negresco in Nice, and the Ambasciatori in Rome, we headed for Yugoslavia. Remember, this was over fifty years ago and we were the first automobile full of only women to cross the border, to the total amazement of the Customs control.

The roads were terrible, only dirt and rocks, and the only road gang we met was a lone man pounding stones with a hammer. We had not gone very far when a mass of horses came galloping across the plain. It turned out to be part of the Yugoslavian cavalry. The sight of the long top-down Phaeton travelling at a fairly good clip in spite of the road bed, combined with the noise of the motor, so frightened the horses that they broke rank and fled in all directions.

I said the tire patches were a life-saver, for not very far into the country we had our first of twelve flat tires and not one of us had ever changed a tire before. Happily there was an instruction book in the car and by reading it out loud and looking at the pictures we managed to get the first tire changed in four hours. As we were trying to get the jack to work we spied a lone peasant slowly coming down the road. Feeling a man would at least have more strength to lift the car (we had, of course, by then had to unload all the suitcases to get to



"We had our first of twelve flat tires and not one of us had changed a tire before." Note Mary Crist's white gloves!

the spare), we showed him how to crank up the jack. Once he caught on he was so pleased with himself, and with no common language to say "stop", he kept on cranking till the car toppled. After that we decided we were better off coping alone. Fifty years ago you could drive for two days without passing another car, so the idea of waiting for help was quickly abandoned. We became very skillful, and repaired the twelfth flat in twenty minutes, patches, pumping et al. Needless to say, accommodations were unbelievably rustic and we had to carry our gasoline in containers as there were no gas stations between towns.

I returned from this particular adventure in 1937 to be married two weeks later on September 15th. My husband was so intrigued with tales of the trip that we decided to take two Ford Phaetons the following summer.



"All baggage had to be unloaded before we could reach the spare."

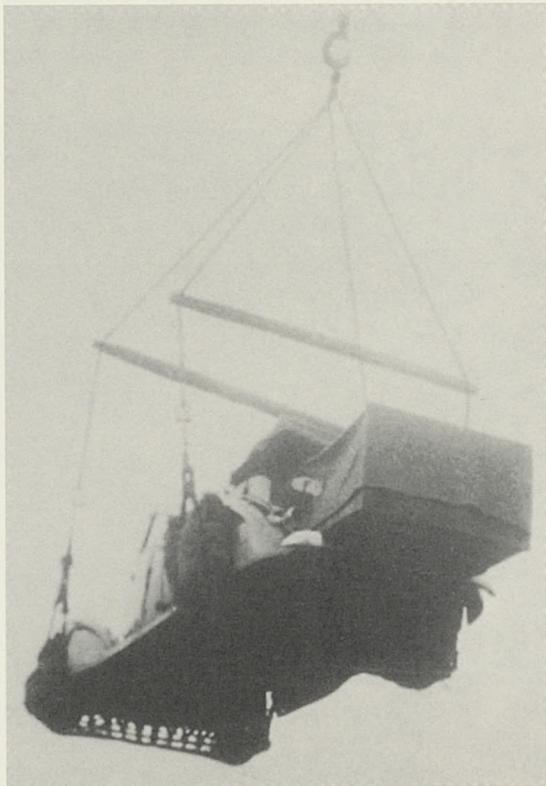




"Off we went, I a new bride travelling with nine beautiful girls!"

Off we went, I a new bride, travelling with nine beautiful girls! Even though I gave my husband the job of waking the girls each morning while they were still in curlers and with no make-up, it was still a risk, but one I was willing to take, thinking I was still young enough

One of six similar hoistings



to get another husband if I lost that one. The prettiest girls always chose to ride in his car, which always followed my car, since I spoke some languages and had done much of the trip before. Needless to say they usually fell far behind with all the joking and flirting that was going on, and we would wait impatiently until the dust settled down and we could see if he was still there. Since most of the signs were in Greek or Arabic he didn't dare fall too far behind.

Once when we needed to hoist our cars onto a vessel to cross from Bari, we failed to allow proper travel time. We screamed through southern Italian villages from Naples to Bari with our horns blowing, our motors roaring, tops down, our gals waving to the villagers, chickens and geese running frantically in all directions, old ladies sticking their heads out of windows to see if a war had started, only to pull them in suddenly as they saw our caravans approaching and leaving in a cloud of dust as we rolled out of town.

We still couldn't make the boat on schedule, but because we were two automobiles and 12 passengers they delayed the sailing for three hours. When we arrived breathless from our frantic race, other passengers angry with the delay assumed we were a famous ballet group worth waiting for and that my husband was the impresario!

We had planned to go through Bulgaria to Turkey. By bad luck the Turkish consulate in

New York was closed when we went for our visas before setting sail on the ocean-liner "Ile de France" with the two cars and our ten girls. We tried first in Paris at the Turkish Embassy and then in every capital city of Europe we travelled through, always running into a Saint's Day, a weekend, or a national strike. Our last hope was in Sofia, Bulgaria. Still no luck—we either had to lose two days for the Embassy to reopen or to push on for Istanbul, hoping to be able somehow to cross the border and get our visas once in the capital.

Needless to say the guards at the border were totally non-plussed and had no idea what to do with eleven women and one American male at midnight and with no entry documents! They finally decided to place a police guard in one of the cars, mine naturally, and we set out literally across no-man's land still a few hundred miles from Istanbul. I must have been very tired as my husband honked me down saying I was weaving across the road. The girls, of course, were all sleeping, so he made me stop for a short nap. The sudden stop woke the girls who made supper while I slept. I still remember the flickering light of the sterno stoves, the spread out plaid blankets with ten beautiful women stretched out and a very suspicious Turkish policeman, who had never before eaten American baked beans!

Dawn came as we approached Istanbul and I will always remember the storks perched on one leg on every roof top of the city—an omen for a young bride? I was allowed to ensconce the girls and my husband in the best hotel in town and off they went to showers and bed. But I was carted off to the Central Police Station after being allowed to talk to the American Ambassador, who admitted he had no clue what to do. He had never encountered this before—twelve Americans passing the border with no visas? I asked for an interpreter at least to go off to jail with me.

I thought I was being interrogated by Mustapha Kamal, there were so many pictures of him all around and the atmosphere was so tense and hostile. Their final question was: "Did you say you had difficulty getting visas in Sofia?" From the way they looked at each other I gathered I'd hit the jackpot. I enlarged the problems in Sofia as though they obviously wanted to deter me from going to Turkey. Suddenly the atmosphere changed, I was brought a tray of coffee, that mud-in-the-bottom-of-cup kind, and sweets; an officer was called in

and told immediately to stamp our passports with Turkish visas and to give Madame a special escort back to her hotel. On the way back the interpreter from the Embassy told me there was real hatred and suspicion between Turkey and Bulgaria and that without my knowing it, I'd hit upon the best ploy possible! The Ambassador was so amazed and impressed he called me at the hotel to ask all about the events, as he had never had such a case before—and probably hoped he never would again!

Studying the map and now knowing the condition of Turkish roads, we decided to put the girls on a boat from Istanbul to Constanza in Romania while we drove the distance. We could have loaded the cars on the same boat, but there was a Turkish strike in the port so no cars were being loaded. After shipping the girls off with their passports and almost all our money, I talked or rather gesticulated to two seamen sitting alongside a rather high barge tied to the dock. With more gestures, a couple of planks, and a show of money they indicated they would be willing to load the two cars and take them out to the Italian steamer and its big winch for cargo loading. The man indicated my husband would have to help him hold one plank while he held the other and I drove the cars onto the barge. It was a pretty steep incline, so you had to gather a certain speed to climb the slope. At the same time the ship was rather narrow so you had to stop abruptly or drop into the Black Sea—a bit risky, but a lot better than several hundred miles on those hot, dusty, and almost impassable roads; also, a sea voyage sounded restful after what we had been through.

So, with my husband holding one plank and the longshoreman the other, I made a running start, hit the boards, and found myself on deck all right, but immediately confronted with a wispy wire railing—and the Black Sea. Good old Ford brakes, and I even managed to do it twice! The longshoreman then put my husband and me into a row boat, rowed by a friend, indicating he would follow us to the ship. Our girls, knowing we had intended to drive, saw the barge approaching with our by-now-beloved vehicles on board and us in the row boat. All the handsome young Italian officers on board had immediately made up to our girls, being female, young and beautiful, and they were all standing on the top deck cheering and clapping as we approached. Needless to say, the girls had a gala voyage sitting at the officers' tables and dancing every evening.



"Could all this have possibly been a forerunner of Swiss Holiday?—when again with no one offering me a trip, I created Swiss Holiday Program in 1955, starting with 4 buses fanning out across Europe." Betsy Bacon supervises.

Could all this have possibly been a forerunner of Swiss Holiday? When again with no one offering me a trip, I created the Swiss Holiday Program in 1955, starting with 4 buses fanning out across Europe. It grew to 22 buses camping as they went, and, after a week's excursion into France, Germany, or Italy, returning to a beautiful villa based in southern Switzerland.

I used to spot check the Swiss-Holiday V.W. buses of campers in my Lancia convertible, showing up at any unpredictable spot just to be sure they were behaving themselves, not acting like "Ugly Americans", but doing credit to their country as touring Ambassadors.

On one of my trips I spotted one of our V.W. buses down in the valley and took off after it like a swooping eagle. As I approached I saw laundry hanging out the back, a broom and a couple of buckets banging in the wind with old shoes tied onto the handles. I stepped on the accelerator, my blood pressure mounting along with my anger. "I'll nail those young ones", I thought as I approached the bus. Then I suddenly realized there was a French license plate and a small tricolor as well as berets in the back seat. Hanging in the window at the back of the bus was a sign that read: "Nous avons une vieille dame de cinquante ans que nous serons enchantés de changer pour deux de vingt-cinq!" I wondered whether I should apply for the job? But I couldn't help chuckling as I

turned around and took off in search of another little blue really-Swiss-Holiday bus.

Could my son, Tom, have some of my blood in his veins as he drove all returning Swiss Holiday buses up the curving steep hill to Villa Verbanella that no other driver could manipulate without scratching them or as he set off with a relief bus to replace one that had broken down, so as not to delay the travels of the students? One special moment I will forever remember when he was only fourteen and had no driving license. I sent him off at midnight with a few sandwiches and very little money, but a promise to cable more, to replace a bus in Barcelona.

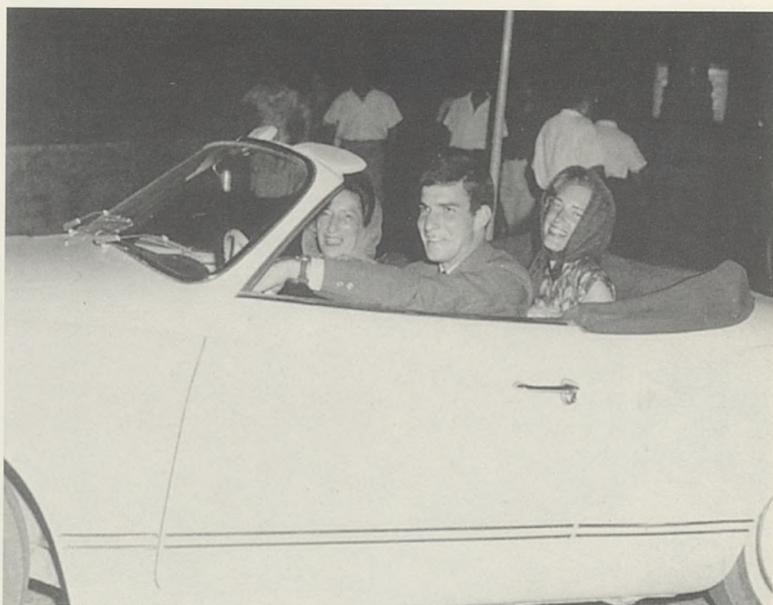


"Could my son, Tom, have some of my blood in his veins..."

He made it as he always did, his mother with fierce guilt pains until he called saying: "Where the hell's the money, Mother?"

After three years at Deerfield, four at Harvard, three and a half in the U. S. Navy, which he says was a cinch after Deerfield, he is now President of a large bank in Washington and a sufficiently good father to help his 12-year-old son clean out dog kennels on a Sunday morning!

Surely some of my blood was transplanted to my younger daughter, Lynn, as she whipped up and down the highways and byways of Italy in her small mini as Manager of ARTE—the American Repertory Theatre in Europe, our student theatre program which operated every summer for five years performing in the ancient Roman theatres from Verona to Pompeii and Taormina, and in a lovely piazza in Venice, bringing Shakespeare and Greek and American

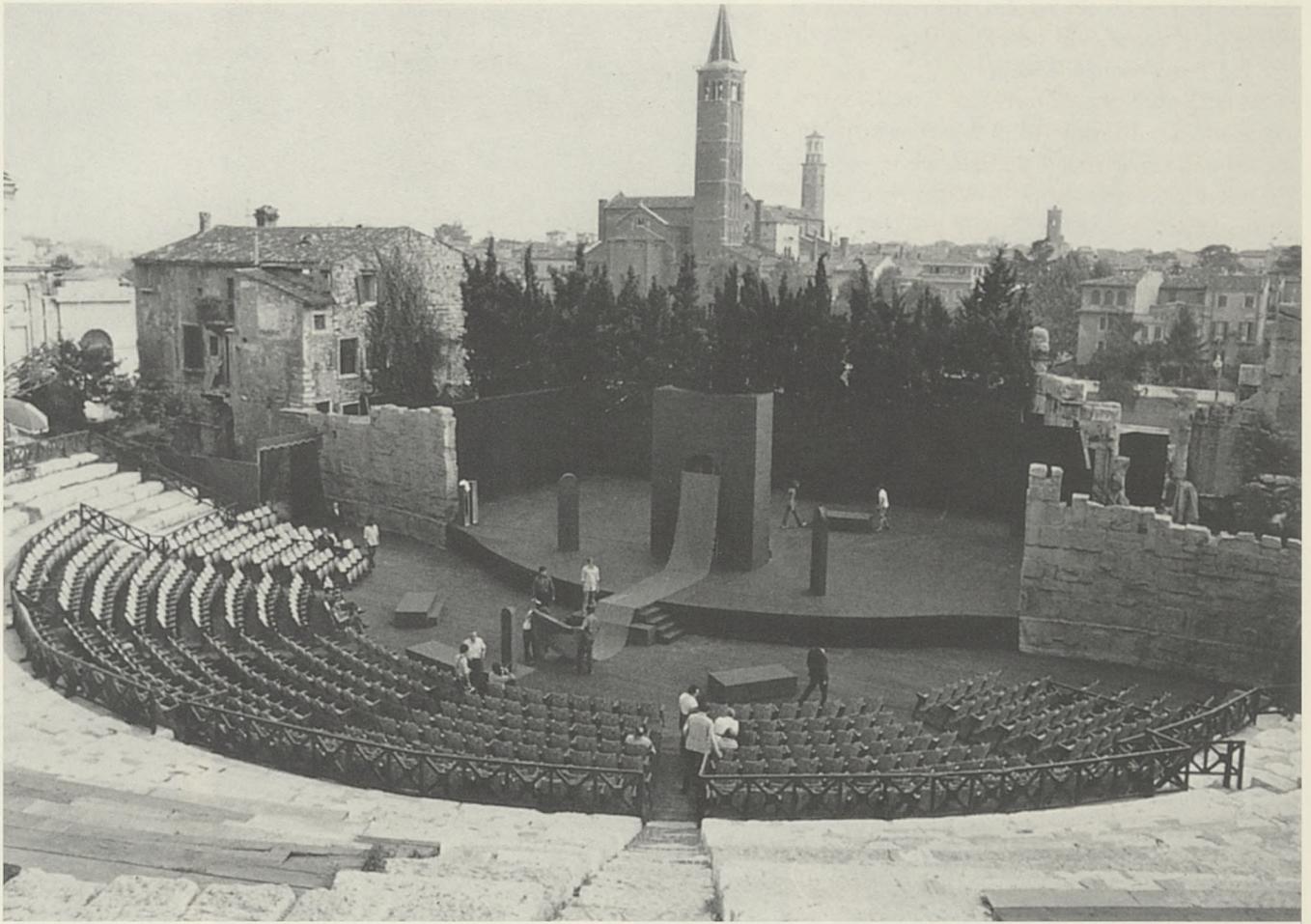


Betsy, Tom, and I enjoy a reconnaissance trip to Naples

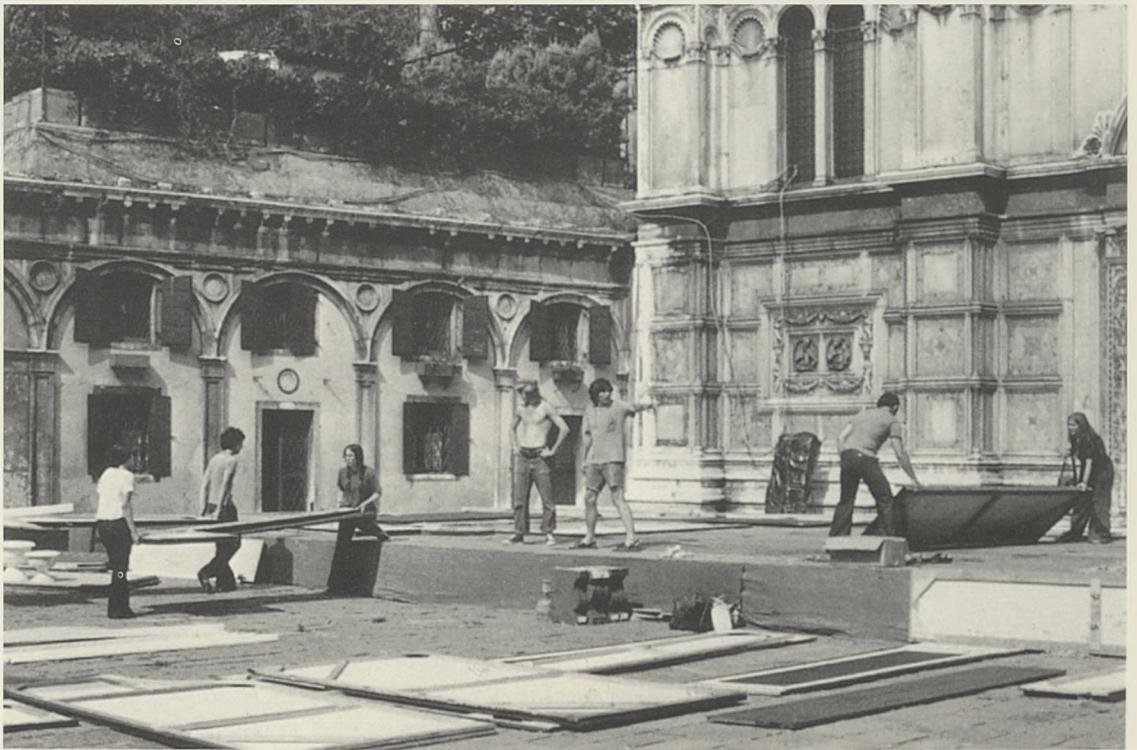


Tom, a successful banker in Washington

"Surely some of my blood was transplanted to my younger daughter Lynn..."



"Our student theatre program, performing in the ancient Roman theatres from Verona..."



to a lovely piazza in Venice

dramatists into those magnificent open-air theatres. My daughter's job was to precede the travelling actors to arrange for permits, theatres, hospitality, and more importantly the necessary powerful spotlights, putting up posters on bill boards, coping with the electrical and the ticket-takers unions, the dressing-room staff, the ice cream and coke vendors, and heaven knows what other obstacles that only Italy can so effectively throw up.

I lost my shirt backing this program but thoroughly loved attending the final show in every town, so proud of my young people's performance after the month of strenuous rehearsals, of making costumes and stage-sets, and then travelling to the next theatre. I particularly remember the fun of strolling down the main street of Taormina in Sicily en route to the magnificent amphitheatre overlooking the bay and Mt. Etna, with a full moon touching everything with shining brilliance. The actors had to dress in the hotel as there were no suitable dressing rooms in the partial ruins. The leading man took me on his arm as the cast followed us, doing part of their action and playing up to the crowd as we paraded to the theatre. It was real Commedia dell'Arte with everyone laughing, singing, and dancing as though a circus had come into town.



My daughters Lynn and Gai ready to head off for Sicily to set up the theatre tour



Celebrating after the performance



"I lost my shirt backing this program, but thoroughly loved attending the final show in every town"—here with Florentine drama critic Emilio Poesio

Lynn with her two children Adrien and Anna in Virginia



This same daughter restored a 12th-century farm house in Italy, supposedly as my retirement home (but I gave up the idea of retiring), restored the Georgian houses that make up the campus of TASIC England, bought and dismantled four log cabins in Virginia, hauled them 200 miles and reconstructed them into charming, rustically elegant homes, moved a large colonial house 300 miles by pulling it

down and loading it onto two forty-five foot trailers and putting it together again in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. She also learned to fly and did a parachute jump just to prove she could.

Not to be outdone, my elder daughter, Gai, is off in the Philippines building houses for the homeless with "Habitat for Humanity". Habitat is a Christian organization whose motto is "No more shacks." They are building houses for the homeless in many different parts of the world. My daughter is based near Manila right in the center of a project to build 150 houses on a piece of land in Kamarin, near Novaliches. With two-and-a-half million Filipinos living under a piece of corrugated metal outside a wire fence that protects the luxurious suburban homes, her and her husband's effort is hardly a scratch on the surface. But her conviction is strong that if enough individuals do something to help, miracles can be accomplished, and Habitat does work miracles. Living on \$700 a month with her husband and three children, she is happy because she is serving. I am very proud of her and feel selfish and spoiled when I realize I could not do what she is doing, yet recognize how desperately the world needs many souls like my elder daughter.



"My elder daughter, Gai, is off in the Philippines with her family building houses for the homeless..." Her daughter Daniella is in the center

Gai is happy because she is serving



N I N E T E E N - F O R T I E S

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....I had not been a political animal and I wasn't sufficiently aware of international problems and our foreign policies until the war broke out in Europe in '39. I was very aware of it then, because by that time I had travelled in Europe a great deal and had become a strong Francophile. So, during the war I worked hard for the Free French—we gave benefits, and sent money over to De Gaulle, trying to support the fight for a free France.



DANCING TRADITIONAL CAN-CAN, MARY LYON SCHOOLGIRLS MAKE A STUDY IN BLACK AND WHITE. THEY WORE HEELLESS SHOES TO AVOID SLIPPING ON THE GYMNASIUM FLOOR

*Life Goes to a Free French Show*

Mary Lyon schoolgirls stage floor show for Philadelphia socialites

In the "Ballet Militaire" the girls drilled smartly in bright red jackets, white pleated skirts and boots. Later they were

joined in a grand finale by cadets from neighboring Pennsylvania Military College. The music was by Princeton "Tigers."

The Mary Lyon School at Swarthmore, Pa. has an enrollment of only 107 girls, but few larger schools could have staged as good a show as the one shown on these pages. On Friday, Nov. 14, 40 unusually pretty Mary Lyon girls, all of high-school or junior-college age, put on a two-act floor show as part of a party given by the school's "Cercle Francais," or French

The waltz number was the audience's favorite. The students made these and all other costumes themselves and made and painted



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*I loved Europe. I had my year in Switzerland, which gave me French fluency. I majored in French in college and had some wonderful professors. Unfortunately, I wasn't allowed to spend my Junior Year in Europe, which I wanted to do, because in those days Harvard would not recognize credits from any other place but Harvard. Happily they have now changed that policy.*



▲ A BEAUTIFULLY EXECUTED WALTZ. A GROUP CLAD COMPLETELY IN WHITE DANCED TO THE MUSIC OF "PARIS IN THE SPRING." FORMER PHOTOGRAPHY FAVORITE PATTERN

lub, for the benefit of General de Gaulle's Free French. The school, including Wildcliff Junior College, draws any of its students from nearby Philadelphia and suburbs. Relatives and Philadelphia socialites consently flocked to the party. They saw two shows, at 7 p. m. and midnight, each of which began with a surprisingly professional can-can, done in authentic cos-

er own scenery to carry out the French village motif. The costumes and scenery had the same professional look as the floor show.

tume except for heelless slippers. There were waltz, tango, conga and military numbers, all with a French motif. Between shows, the visitors and students ate supper at tables fixed up like those in Parisian sidewalk cafes. With their dates, many of them from the nearby Pennsylvania Military College, the girls danced after supper to music furnished by an organization which

In the bolero number, to beguine *Begin the Beguine*, the chorus wore black skirts, gold jackets. Other numbers in-

cluded a take-off of Dancer Josephine Baker, and a dance with the girls representing each occupied country of Europe. was bullet on the program as "Les Tigres de Princeton." On Saturday night, Mary Lyon's young hostesses discovered they had a tidy sum of \$1,889.53 from two evening performances. Next day they opened a message from Jacques de Sieres, De Gaulle's representative, who wired to say "... how deeply we have been touched." For others who were touched, turn the page.

cluded a take-off of Dancer Josephine Baker, and a dance with the girls representing each occupied country of Europe.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE 149

*Dedicated to...  
Mary Crist Fleming*

THANK YOU, DEAR  
GOD, FOR A  
PERSON  
WHO KNOWS  
YOUR DAY FROM  
NIGHT,  
WHO IN THIS  
WORLD OF  
SHADOWS  
SEES LIFE IN ITS  
TRUE LIGHT.

AND GRANT SHE  
WALKS FOREVER  
WITHOUT  
REPROACH OR  
FEAR,  
PLEASE KEEP HER  
ALWAYS AS SHE IS,  
DIRECT, STEAD-  
FAST, SINCERE.

*(From The Lyoness,  
The Mary Lyon Junior  
College Yearbook, 1943)*

The United States Navy took over my parents' school during the war in 1943. They commandeered the school, though they didn't actually purchase it, and we were evacuated. It became a convalescent hospital for officers convalescing from the war at the Fourth Naval District, which was the Philadelphia Navy Yard. My father moved the school to the Barbizon Plaza Hotel in New York City, to finish the academic year. Unlike most owners or headmasters, he felt an obligation to fulfill the school's contract, which was to bring the students to the end of the academic year and to graduate those students who should graduate. My father took a terrible loss financially because putting 120 students in the Barbizon Plaza in war time, even though they gave us the two top floors and we put four students in a room, was very expensive and the parents were not asked to pay any more. A lot of schools simply said that the United States Government had taken over their property and closed them down. Eventually, after the war, Swarthmore College bought the property that my father had built up in Swarthmore, so we never re-opened there. At the end of the year at the Barbizon Plaza we closed the school, because we couldn't keep running a school in a New York hotel and the contract to the students had been fulfilled. During the Second World War, of course, Americans weren't allowed overseas, so my love of Europe had to be temporarily forgotten. After the Navy took over Mary Lyon and we closed the school at the Barbizon Plaza, my husband and I bought a farm called Frog Hollow Farm in Pennsylvania and we lived there during the last two years of the war. One weekend I had a visit from a dear friend, Nina Berkley, who had been with Harpers Bazaar, and she said, "Cris, I know you well enough to know that you are not going to stay out of mischief for very long. Something that is badly needed is a summer camp for small children, because people in New York, professional people, want their children out of the city for the summer, but they are continuing to work and so must stay in town". That is when I first met Luise Rainer, because she sent her six-year old daughter to me. I had the children of Arlene Frances, and Milton Berle, and other TV. personalities of the time. The camp was immediately successful and my own children were the same age, so it worked out well in terms of their learning to swim, play tennis, and be with other children. It was a beautiful farm with a swimming pool, tennis court, a wooded area, pony and cart, a ferris wheel and slides. My wonderful father built two log cabins down in the woods for the boys; he built them with his own hands. Our house had a big sleeping porch which held ten children, and there was a small cottage. Very soon we had a camp of fifty children from New York.



FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE FARMHOUSE

## Frog Hollow Farm

IN THE HEART of Pennsylvania's rolling, well-kept farmland is Frog Hollow Farm—a proverbially charming hundred-year-old Dutch farmhouse, with deeply recessed windows, thick walls for summer coolness and winter warmth, a massive fireplace, and all the atmosphere traditionally associated with such a thoroughly American homestead.

The farm, aside from the tilled acreage, consists of the original house, dating back to 1826 but completely modernized, a large well-built barn, a cottage, two cabins, the old springhouse, a tennis court, swimming pool and bathhouse.

The location and equipment of Frog Hollow seemed too ideal not to be shared. The owners consequently opened the facilities of their dwelling and its beautiful surroundings as a summer camp for small children—boys and girls from three to nine years of age.

Frog Hollow is situated eight miles from Norristown, Pennsylvania, and twelve miles from Doylestown. By train from New York a passenger must change from the North Philadelphia station of the Pennsylvania railroad to the North Broad Street station of the Reading Railroad.

## Children's New Year's House Party at FrogHollow

DEC. 26 till JAN. 2

Why not make this the best Christmas present of all?

We're turning the house upside down  
to give the youngsters a real country holiday.

A week of —

sledding

skating

singing

Christmas cookies and cakes

farm breakfasts

Movies at the farmhouse

silver skates

and popping corn in the big fireplace

Wildfire story of a horse in technicolor

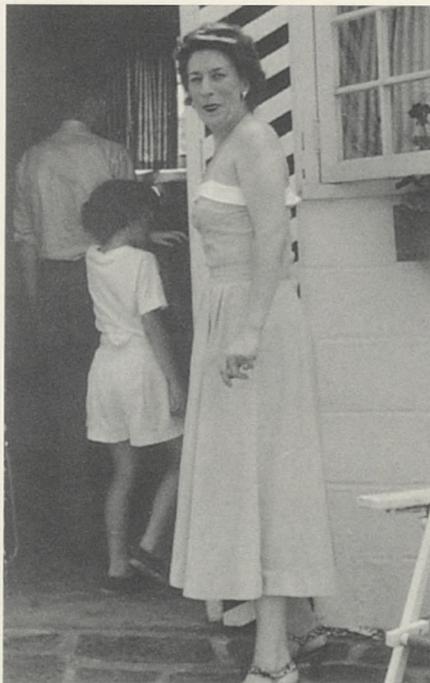
Mary with her Jingle Bells!

Indoor Circus at the Academy of Music

For reservations write

**MRS. W<sup>m</sup>. T. FLEMING**  
FROG HOLLOW FARM, RD# 2, LANSDALE, PA.

Fee for House Party is \$50 and includes  
transportation to and from New York and Washington.



Awaiting the children

Main farmhouse at  
Frog Hollow Farm





All ready for our pony ride

There was also a very large country barn at Frog Hollow, which again my dear father, at age 69, had just completely repainted. I had installed a theatre in the hayloft, classrooms for an elementary school in the bottom portion, and a large bowed bay window in the front classroom. I had just filled the window with geraniums the night before Thanksgiving so that the flowers would greet the children the following Monday morning.

What bad luck that Thanksgiving morning—the newly installed heating system caught fire and set the whole barn aflame. Happily we got the pony and the station wagon out before it burnt to the ground. There was to be a parade of all the fire companies in the area that day in Norristown so their trucks were all shined, with brass glimmering and the men in full fresh uniforms. Unfortunately for them, they had to rush to my fire. I had at least six companies fighting the blaze, but it was hopeless, the barn being of wood construction. They left for the parade all smudged and bedraggled and I stood weeping among the ashes for all the work my father had done and for the bay window and the geraniums that the children would never see.

The fire companies had cordoned off the road, but a wonderful grandmother, whose two grandchildren were with me, got through in her chauffeur-driven car to tell me that her husband, a prominent lawyer, William Clarke Mason, then head of the American Bar Association, had sent her to tell me that no matter what it cost I must immediately start rebuilding to continue my work in education. That was all the encouragement I needed and the men started that Monday to create a new and much better school building in two months time.

Incidentally, I also got the 30 pound turkey, as well as the pony, out of the barn before it collapsed and the guests arrived as invited at one o'clock, so that twenty of us still sat down to Thanksgiving Dinner!....

TWO MEN LOOKED  
OUT FROM PRISON  
BARS/  
ONE SAW MUD  
AND ONE SAW  
STARS.

"Our barn after the fire; my father had just completely repainted it."



"Our new school building after the fire"





My wonderful dad with little girl Gay

Frog Hollow Farm: Cris Fleming, her staff and all her children

## Travels Down Frog Hollow Lane

We met because of *Vogue Magazine* and then remarkable good fortune took over. During the war my mother was leafing through the magazine in a doctor's waiting room, sensing the impending heat, noise, and soot of the New York summer that was pressing in the open windows. An ad caught her eye: "Frog Hollow Farm, A Camp for Young Children, Landsdale, Pennsylvania." Suddenly, the notion that I might be self-possessed enough to go away to camp swept over her. When the brilliant yellow brochure arrived, it sounded like paradise.

The term "young children" meant a rather fluid age group, defined on the older end by Gai's age and on the younger end by Lynn's age. Thus, my brother Wally, who is Lynn's contemporary, began summer camp just before his second birthday. Looking back on those glorious summers, even the tiniest child knew where Mrs. Fleming's priorities lay, what she liked, and what she did not tolerate. She devoted as much time and energy to creating and maintaining a beautiful and picturesque set-

ting for us as she does today for older students. I vividly remember the rolling and manicured lawns and the huge swimming pool, which was the scene of many an extravaganza for parents' visiting day. Her father built two cabins in the woods next to a gurgling stream for the "older boys" (older than 5) which were guarded by a totem pole (perhaps an early ancestor of today's putti). Older girls lived in a quaint cottage. The Farm also included a tennis court, barn with hay loft (which burned to the ground—but that's another story), and the best tree house in a wonderful old apple tree. There was no linoleum, lots of red, a constant supply of rubber ice buckets, uniforms (white on Sunday), and as the decade progressed, more decorative black wrought iron. Of course, there was the archetypal convertible parked out front.

There was no such thing as a "regular day" at Frog Hollow. Mrs. Fleming devoted effort and energy to making each day memorable and special for us tots. She was determined to give parents their moneys' worth, and so quality,



Mrs. Fleming wading with Tom and Lynn

quality, quality was everywhere. It will come as no surprise that Mrs. Flemings' preferred style of dining was "al fresco," so there needed to be several different venues at Frog Hollow to accommodate the large numbers of picnics and cookouts to satisfy this passion. And even in those war and post-war years the drinks were always cold, even for the kids.

The field trips we took to "interesting sites" around the area were determined by how far we could drive before children started getting car-sick. Valley Forge, the Delaware Water Gap, Theatre in the Round at New Hope, the Poconos, were all places Mrs. Fleming thought our parents would expect us to visit. We did, but we made equally memorable trips to drive-in-movies (16 kids in the backseat), bumper cars at a local amusement park, and an indoor roller rink with organ music. Every Saturday night we had movies in the hayloft (no easy feat to lug the projector up the ladder to the loft with the plug yards away, but more of "an event" than sitting on chairs in a room), and "Knickerbocker Holiday" was a perennial choice.

Mrs. Fleming's flair for theatre and her passion for drama was everywhere evident, and I suspect we kept the crepe paper industry alive during those lean times. As "Babes in Toyland" blasted from the victrola, Gai and I with giant paper water lilies taped to our heads, gave performances worthy of Esther Williams' at the annual water



"The swimming pool was the scene for many an extravaganza"

carnival, while even the tiniest child in red and white stripes doggy paddled to “The Teddy Bears Picnic.” It was an extravaganza in the great style of Sol Hurok. And who could forget our classic production of “Rose Marie,” mouthing the “Indian Love Call” in perfect sync to an ancient and scratchy record of Gertrude Lawrence. Not taking any chances, Mrs. Fleming fortified our parents (the enraptured and perspiring audience), with frequent trips to her bedroom, where—no surprise to any of you—she had a seemingly endless supply of gin and tonics, and an astonishing supply of ice to go with them. I have many a fond memory of my father boarding the famous convertible for the trip back to the Landsdale Train Station, a full glass in hand. How he loved to tell and retell stories about parents’ visiting day at Frog Hollow!

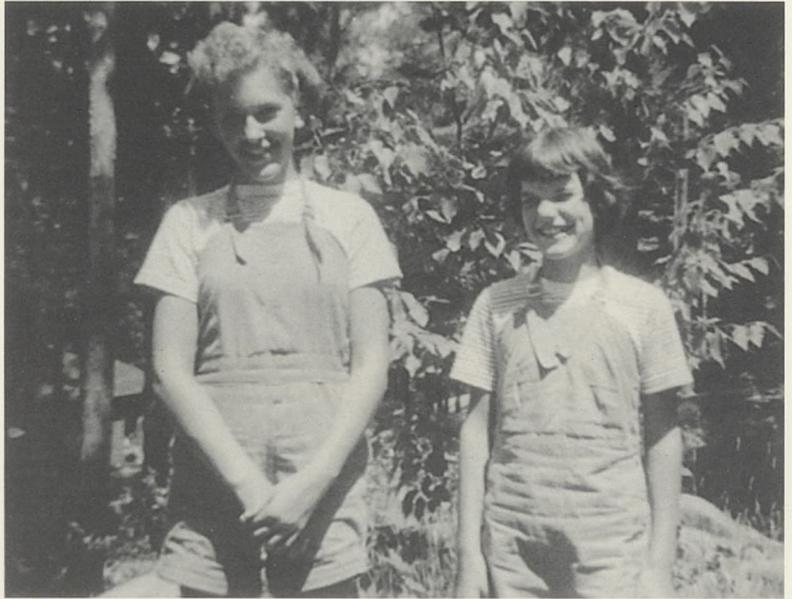
Through several summers I was the most ecstatic participant at Frog Hollow, and each year I contrived to stay longer and longer. And who of you will be surprised to learn that it was Mrs. Fleming herself who begged our parents to let us stay a little longer or arrive a little earlier. Her immense capacity for generosity and hospitality extended most particularly to us children. By then Mrs. Fleming was a single parent with three young children—a handful in itself—and yet she reached out to include many of us in her extended family. The youngest ones she bedded down in cribs next to her bedroom and shared her bathroom with diapers and assorted baby paraphernalia.

The cast of characters still dance through my head. “Grand Dad,” Jim Elford, Guy Tolman, George Clark, Hinny and Jill Newman, Johnny Yomoko, the Coles family, Crousie, Spottie, William, and Mary the Pony. There was red haired Ingrid Russell and sophisticated Ann Shoefeld (age 5), both of whom I see to this day.

As I look back over nearly five decades I am keenly aware that of all those children Mrs. Fleming “adopted,” I am especially blessed because our special relationship has endured. Again I believe great good fortune intervened in a particular way. My first year at Frog Hollow Gai and I became great friends. Mrs. Fleming not only encouraged our friendship, but she made it possible for me to spend every available minute out of school with the Fleming family. Thus I recall sharing Gai’s traumatic moments—her annoyance when Lynn was born, and the crisis of her hospitalization and recuperation when her appendix burst. I have shared so many rooms with Gai from our first bunkbed



I'm the “happy” king



Gai and I became great friends

“We were inseparable”  
—Gai and I perform with Jean Gardner at Swiss Holiday

in the cottage in 1944 to her frilly blue organza room in the main house in the early 1950s.

"Through the eyes of a child who found it all so wonderful"



Waiting on Mrs. Fleming for Lynn's wedding



Once in Europe, we were inseparable through summers in Villa Verbanella, the house in Ascona, Loreto, Montagnola, Capitignano, and countless pup tents from the Costa Brava to the Dalmatian Coast. The physical closeness first to Gai and then to Lynn made me feel in every sense "that other daughter." It is Mrs. Fleming's genius to make each of us, her devoted friends, seem very important in her life, a rare gift that her daughters share with her. But throughout my life, she has given more to me than even a daughter has a right to expect.

I have a gold-linked bracelet inscribed with the legend "Best Camper, Frog Hollow Camp, 1950." I wore that bracelet for years. I went from being a homesick and timid child to being, apparently, the "Best Camper." I remember stretching to meet those early expectations, and in doing so I became the person Mrs. Fleming imagined for me. Whatever she deemed possible for me to do or accomplish I somehow did—and soon it no longer occurred to me to doubt that I could. Mrs. Fleming thought I was "artistic" and put a brush in my hand. She told everyone I was a great swimmer when in fact I was terrified of the water and I became a good swimmer. She said she recognized leadership and assigned me a raggle taggle of children to look after—I've been leading raggle taggle children ever since.

Forty years after the date on my bracelet I sit surrounded by a collection of five decades of photographs. The effect on me is overwhelming and I am inadequate to the task. There are too many riotous stories, too many adventures and crises, too many poignant moments, too many shared confidences, too many miles travelled and memorable meals taken together to capture in a volume that I am expected to share with a host of other writers who are equally devoted to Mrs. Fleming. I realize that the seeds of my profound appreciation were well planted and nurtured in me at Frog Hollow, and while so much has changed in Mrs. Fleming's life, I now perceive how much has stayed the same. I know that most of the other contributors to this book will recall events that have happened since the years at Frog Hollow, and from the perspective of an adult. Looking through Mrs. Fleming's 70th Birthday Book I recognize every experience and characteristic that each friend described and I celebrate all of them with love and affection. I offer a glimpse of a time when few of you knew Mrs. Fleming, and my recollections are through the eyes of a child who found it all

so wonderful. That sense of enchantment has continued now for almost fifty years, and that friendship remains a most treasured possession.

I will never tire of watching the effect Mrs. Fleming has on people when they meet her for the first time. At 80, she continues to collect countless admirers and friends of all ages.

What a lady!

What a life!

How lucky to have been such a part of it!

*Betsy Bacon Newell  
New York City and Oxford  
Former camper, Frog Hollow Farm,  
Counselor, Swiss Holiday,  
U.S. Representative, TESIS*



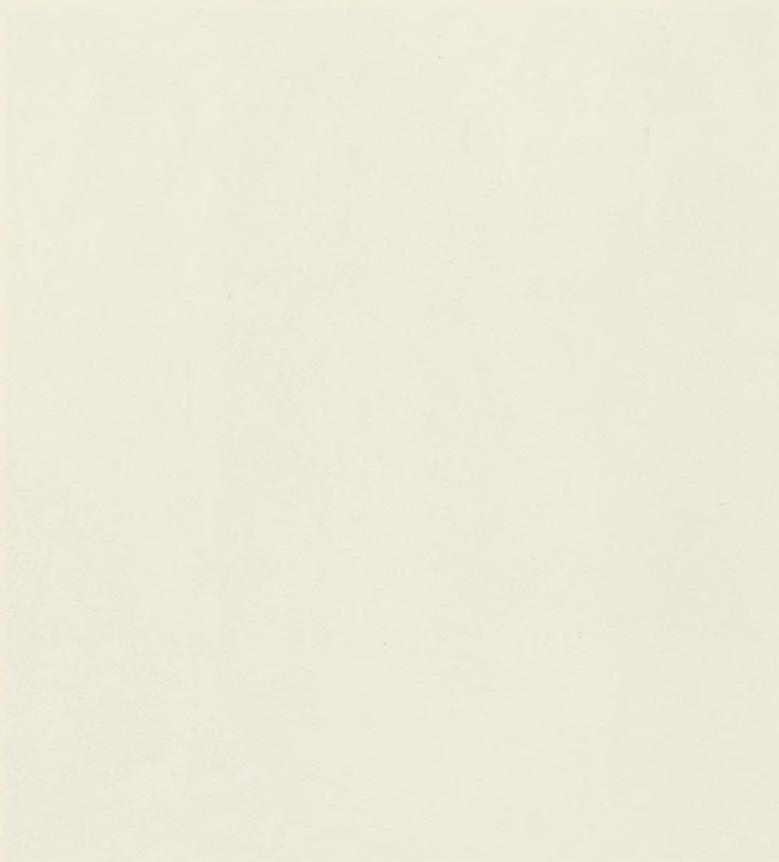
Betsy with alumnus  
Donald MacDermid  
and Lynn

## Keep Order

A Viennese psychiatrist parent was visiting Frog Hollow Farm. On being caught lining up the jumble of children's shoes in the hall, Cris Fleming apologized with embarrassment. The doctor in his Austrian accent said there was no need to apologize and proceeded to recite what became one of my mother's favorite quotations:

Keep order in space,  
And order in time,  
For disorder is chaos,  
And chaos is crime.

*Editor*



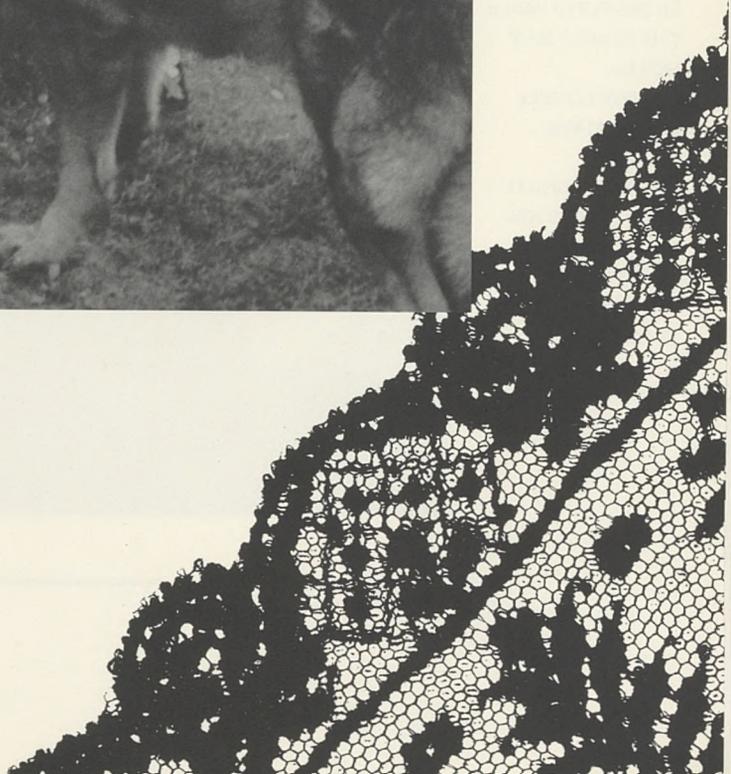
The first part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the State of New York to the Governor, dated January 1, 1912. The letter discusses the appointment of a new member to the State Board of Education. The Secretary mentions that the Board has recommended the appointment of Mr. J. B. Condit, who is a resident of the State and has been a member of the Board for several years. The Secretary also mentions that the Board has recommended the appointment of Mr. J. B. Condit as a member of the Board of Education, and that the Governor has approved the appointment. The letter is signed by the Secretary, J. B. Condit.

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N I N E T E E N - F I F T I E S

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...In a sense I suppose it was Nina Berkley who really started me off on my educational life. I had, of course, been in education in my parents' school as an assistant, but it was Nina who gave me the idea of the summer camp and that in turn went into a winter program at the farm, always for small children, and then it went from a winter program to my first summer program in Europe in 1954. You might say it started the ball rolling in terms of the idea of going back to Europe.

Also it must have been in my blood stream because I have never known anything but education. My parents were both educators, all my uncles and grandparents were either lawyers, teachers, ministers or missionaries. I was far more interested in the theatre, in music, and in drama, but of course that all helps with education. Surely one has to have some sense of interaction with the public, with people, in order to be in education. In a way my own children are also largely responsible, because I wanted them to be educated partly in Europe. I wanted them to learn languages, and seeing what happened to them, I realized the experience should be shared with other children.

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. Also, from early childhood, because I loved languages, I thought that human communication was terribly important. One enjoys living in a country, or just travelling in a country, ten times as much if you speak the language of the people. That's why I brought my children to Europe and put them in schools here. From that grew my own school because I wanted to tie the American curriculum in with what they learned in Europe and in foreign languages. They had to have an American curriculum in order to return to college in the States.

Jim Elford keeps an eye on spell-bound children, Tom, Gay, Johnny, Guy, Lynn, and friends



HOWEVER HUMBLE  
THE PLACE I MAY  
HOLD,  
ON THE LONELY  
PATHS I HAVE  
TROD,  
THERE'S A CHILD  
WHO PLACES HIS  
FAITH IN ME,  
THERE'S A DOG  
WHO THINKS  
I'M GOD.



Cris Fleming presents diplomas at a Frog Hollow Country Day School graduation to Guy Tolman, daughter Gay, and Johnny Yomoko



A rare photo of me on skis—the one and only time I went skiing with my children I panicked and couldn't go any further, so I hitched a ride up the ski lift to the comfort of the ski instructor's shoulders

My own three children: Gai, Lynn, and Tom

Unfortunately, the first summer in Europe with twenty-five children was an unhappy one because one of the children that I had brought over was stricken with polio the first day after he arrived. I had thought that was one problem that by moving to Europe I would avoid. A lot of camps in the States, before the Salk vaccine, were having problems, having cases of polio, even having children die during a summer period. Imagine the shock the second morning to wake up and find this boy was paralyzed from the waist down. He was the son of General and Mrs. Jacquard Rothschild. I was very surprised when the Rothschilds enrolled their son because the General had been on the general staff in Tokyo at the signing of the armistice with Japan and their own daughter had been raped and murdered by an American orderly when she was only 9. It was a tragic situation. I had read about it in the newspapers, but I never thought, when I moved to Switzerland, they would let their only remaining child go further than their back yard. I wrote to them saying I was surprised that they would let their son go to Switzerland after their terrible tragedy. They wrote back and said, Mrs. Fleming, if you went to Siberia, we would let Ronny go with you. It would be Ronny who woke up with polio, so you can imagine my feelings. The General was in the Walter Reed hospital in Washington for an operation and Mrs. Rothschild was on a cruise in Norway with her mother. I remember Mrs. Rothschild arriving at the Lausanne station from Norway, at three in the morning. Of course, I was on the station platform to meet her, and she said, "Mrs. Fleming, is he dead?" In those days polio was quite often fatal, and I replied, "No, he's in the quarantine hospital." And we went up and broke into his room at that time of night. He stayed in the hospital in Switzerland for a long time and visited many other hospitals, including the Mayo, where the doctors held out very little hope of Ron ever walking again. With the extraordinary determination of mother and son and endless massages, Ron was completely cured, thank God, and became a runner. Needless to say, Phyllis Rothschild, the General, and I became fast friends through this very close association.

It was not a very happy summer for me with this near tragedy. I was running back and forth to the hospital and was having difficulties in getting a decent cook. I had several young counselors from my camp in America, but I really wasn't organized. It was hard to find a big chalet with enough beds and to find a cook in high tourist season. I was a bit naive and I hadn't really expected the response of 25 families. I thought I might have only ten or twelve children. It was also the summer I was getting a divorce from my second husband. That was the first summer in Switzerland and not a very happy one....

Proud parents Jac and Phyllis Rothschild beam on their son Ron. Daughter Gay is in between and Mrs. Fleming is shepherding her first group of young people for the flight to Switzerland





"Frog Hollow in Switzerland"—last photo before boarding the plane at "Idlewild"—June 22nd, 1955

## HERE WE GO!

### *Off to the Fairy-Tale Land of Switzerland*

After ten years of camping in the pleasant Pennsylvania countryside Frog Hollow is going to enrich its program with a holiday in the lovely mountains and lakes of Switzerland. No locality in Europe seemed comparable in beauty, inspiration and abundant good living to Montreux on the beautiful lake of Geneva. It is here that Frog Hollow will spend this summer.

Rather than the old farmhouse in the hollow and the cabins in the woods Frog Hollow this year will have a chalet on a sunny hillside to shelter the children; rather than the swimming pool this year's campers will have the clear water of Lac Lemman for not only continued instruction in swimming but also the added delight of boating and sailing. There will be hikes, picnics, bicycle trips and overnights in the green foothills below the summits of the sky-high, snow-capped Alps. Conveniently located close to funiculars and train service there will be many excursions to magnificently beautiful Zermatt, Interlaken and to medieval towns full of enchantment and old folk-lore. French will be the language and the days will be packed with the rich experiences of living and playing among children of another nation.

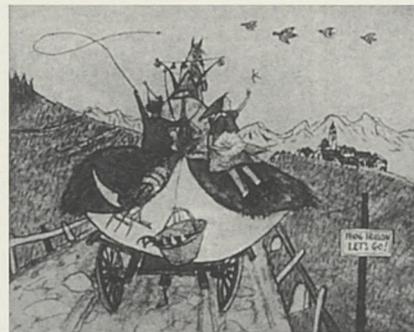
The group will fly straight to Geneva via Swissair June 22 at 12:30 P.M. from Idlewild Airport.

The tuition, all inclusive, is \$675.00 for boys and girls 6 to 12 and \$975.00 for boys and girls 12 to 15 years of age. A registration fee of \$100.00 is applicable against tuition.

Dr. Georges Buchheim of Montreux will be the camp doctor. Montreux has an excellent hospital and Lausanne and Geneva are famous European medical centers. Camp health blanks must be filled in by a physician by June 15 and accompanied by a vaccination certificate.

Clothing requirements are simple. A detailed list of needed items will be sent upon registration.

Mary Fleming Christman, leader of the group and director of Frog Hollow, was educated in Europe, headed college groups there for five summers and is just returned from two winters in France and Switzerland with her children.



FROG HOLLOW'S SWISS HOLIDAY

## Should I Give It Up?

Mary Crist Fleming certainly does not act her age. She is one of those people who never stops but develops new ideas the older she gets.

A memorable meeting I remember very clearly was the summer she ran her first Swiss camp in a chalet in Gryon, near Villars. She was quite discouraged and doubtful that her school would succeed. She asked me: "Ilse,

what do you think, should I give it up?" My response was "can you afford to keep it for another year?" and she said: "Yes." That year was the turning point when TASIS really took off. The rest is legend, as we all know.

*Ilse Nelson  
New York City*

## My Mother Has a Phobia about Trains

...And I have given up trying to persuade her to take them anymore. I once persuaded her to take the New York to Philadelphia train rather than drive, when we were travelling for alumni reunions in America. Of all times and of all places, there was a bomb threat on our train, so we had to disembark and wait for a lengthy, careful search of the train.

Another time I persuaded mother to take a train from Egham, Surrey, to I-forget-where in the English countryside. On pulling in at our destination, for the life of us we couldn't open the train door to get out. So the train slowly pulled out, much to our frustration and disgust. Some kind Englishman bemusedly and patiently explained that at the next stop we should open the window, reach out and down and open the door from the outside. Why of course! How else do you get out of a train?

I think my mother's real phobia, reinforced as it is every time she travels on a train, is from the unscheduled New York to Washington train that "never should have run." It is on this ride

that she met her future second husband, who pursued her until she married him, even by appearing on the "Ile de France" after it had pulled out of New York harbor. My mother and we three children had set sail for a year of living and studying in France. The appearance of this uninvited guest caused great consternation in our family ranks, and was especially upsetting to my sister Gai. She, my brother, and I were looking forward to a year in France alone with our mother. As my mother tells later, she never would have married John Christman if her father had been with her and had continued living on the farm with our family.

The end of this second and last marriage came on another ocean crossing with the encouragement of my mother's friend Luise Rainer Knittel, as one sees from the vignette that follows in this volume.

My mother's wisdom and judgment in others' relationships, as opposed to her own unfortunate marriages, came to the fore when Granddad announced he was planning on marrying lady so-and-so. This was many years after the long, painful death of my grandmother, and he had been living with us on the farm. Mother just "knew" this woman was a gold bricker and would not make her father happy. So my mother quietly took the lady aside and mentioned that any money or possessions he owned were now in her name. A little over a week later the ever-hopeful lady was betrothed to another, less-suspecting or "protected" gentleman. Then mother suggested Granddad call on Harriet Kistler, who had lost her husband several years before. She and Dr. Kistler had been very close friends of my mother's father and mother from the moment they arrived in Swarthmore with a baby in 1910. Dr. Kistler attended to a very sick and

HALF OF KNOWING  
WHAT YOU WANT  
OUT OF LIFE IS  
KNOWING WHAT  
YOU HAVE TO GIVE  
UP TO GET IT.

A visit from granddad  
and Aunt Harriet while  
we were in Aix-en-  
Provence as a family



frail woman and little baby and had commented to his wife Harriet how very sick Mrs. Frances Crist was. The birth of Mary Leavitt Crist had been an ordeal for her mother, and the "mold was broken" after that. Sometimes I think of my mother springing like Athena full-grown and in full armor from the head of Zeus. She is "sui generis," 'virgin' goddess, protector of civilized life.

My beloved grandfather, Haldy Miller Crist, and Harriet Kistler had a wonderful marriage in their late 70s. Harriet had some fiery Irish blood in her, a change from Frances Leavitt Crist's more puritanical view of life. She had a real twinkle in her eye, and I remember her saying to my mother on visiting our family in Tuscany years after my grandfather's death, "Mary, he was quite a man, quite a man, to the very end!"

*Lynn Fleming Aeschliman  
Free Union, Virginia*

## One Mistake I Did Make

An incident in my life with you:

My darling Cris with the most generous heart!

black dress—one shoulder free!

Oh yes, we know each other and found each other again on a big ocean liner, both leaving one country to go to another;

you with three kids and two dogs, I with two dogs and one kid—

mid-sea, mid-air, high spirits!

"That one mistake I ever made"—yes, so you said—"That fellow! Thank goodness I left him behind! But I am married, so what can I do?"

mid-sea, mid-air, high spirits!

"Give me that ring", I said, "that formerly seemed so holy, but has tarnished ever so badly!"

And so you did.

And, lo and behold, that ring took wings in my hand, flew high into the wind, then deep into the bottom of the sea. "Not just a symbol this, but that's what you must do!"

And there you laughed your wonderfully hearty laugh. "How right you are", you generously declared. Hardly able to wait until on land again, you rid yourself of that one mistake. And you were free and happy ever after! Which was [and still is] the solution for when you need not be a stern teacher—you can also free the other shoulder!



My wonderful granddad and Aunt Harriet looked after us (Tom, Gay, and me) in the Vaud one spring, while mother returned to the States to prepare for Frog Hollow

*My darling Cris! With love,  
And this on your eightieth birthday.*

*Luise Rainer Knittel  
Vico Morcote, Switzerland  
Alumni parent, Frog Hollow Farm*



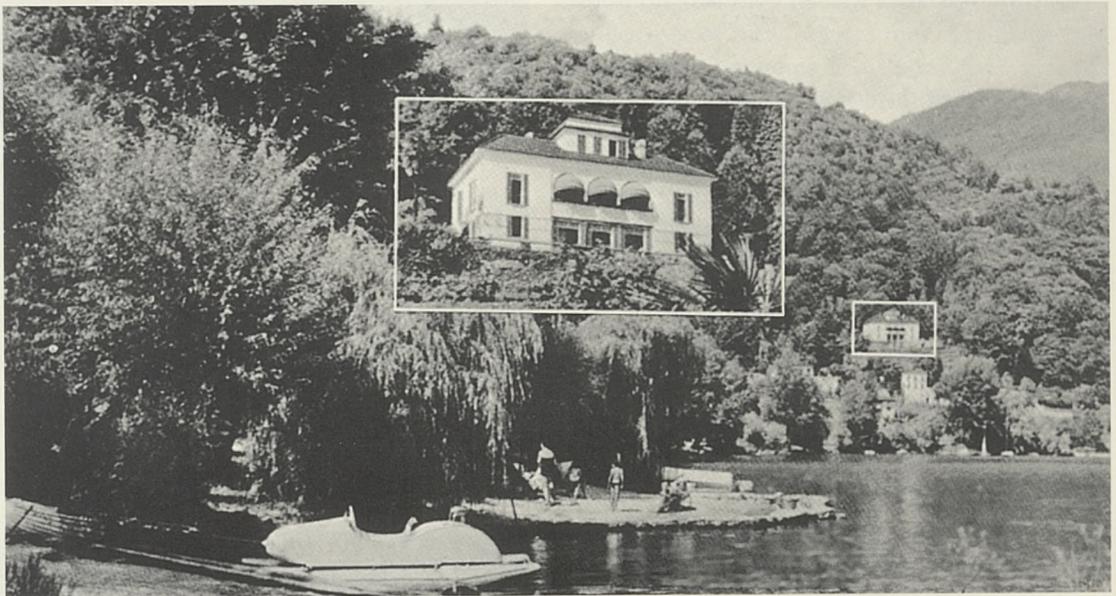
Robert † and Luise Knittel visit Cris at Capitignano



Cris Fleming with "one shoulder free"

... Eventually I wrote to a very dear friend of mine, Gordon McCouch, an artist I had met on a trans-Atlantic crossing. He was a painter who lived in Ascona and so, after the ugly experience of the Villars summer wore off, I wrote to him and said I had a very bad experience in Switzerland, and the only way I would think of coming back would be if he could find me a place in the Italian-lake part of Switzerland. I had remembered visiting him in Locarno and how beautiful it was. Sure enough, he came up with my first villa, had even engaged a cook and a maid, and made arrangements on the lake for a boat and a boatman. I was looking forward to thanking him, but unfortunately he died about a month before I came over. The Villa proved to be in a beautiful spot, and in fact it was there, when I arrived, that I said this is so beautiful I must have a school here. We actually stayed in that villa, the Villa Verbanella, two years (1955 to 1957) because the first year I had only twelve children including my own three. Then we jumped from twelve to thirty-five. I had a little house of my own for my children, but all on the same property. Then I rented another house which belonged to the owner of the big house's sister, but with thirty-five students it was stretched. When the third year's number jumped to fifty, I moved to Lugano. I tried to find a larger property in Locarno, because I loved that part of the world. In fact, we liked it much better than Lugano. But it's been good fortune or destiny that we moved to Lugano because Locarno is a cul-de-sac on the rail-road, not the through line Lugano is, with its north/south axis Zurich-Lugano-Milan-Rome. It would have been impossible for the school to grow if we had remained in Locarno...

Villa Verbanella overlooks Lago Maggiore, a beautiful spot to start a school



## She Did Save Me From an Overly Attentive Counselor

... My first meeting with Mrs. Fleming was in 1956 when in Europe with my family—she wanted me to stay at the school for the remainder of the summer instead of continuing our tour. I was whisked away—but returned the next summer and a few after that.

She did save me from an overly attentive senior counselor one year—his name escapes me—but he had gone well beyond flowers and candy—a real lifesaver that I no longer had trips in the VW bus with him!

I suppose the most lasting impressions of Mrs. Fleming are her energy, enthusiasm and power to motivate people—to inspire people into trying things they might otherwise not

have the opportunity to try, and most important to me (at that stage of life) was to trust their judgement and instill a sense of responsibility for task, school and even country....

I remember her house in Montagnola, Rosaria's breakfasts, moving the library from Lugano up the mountain and trying to reorganize it. There are many funny trip stories....

A special hello to Mrs. Fleming.

Love,  
Patti Richards Cosgrave  
Haverford, Pennsylvania  
Former camper and counselor, Swiss Holiday

## Best Thing She Did Was Push Me Out of the Nest

Cris Fleming certainly figured strongly in my life and that of my family. She took me on at Swiss Holiday as a refugee on two occasions, and the best thing she did was push me out of the nest (hers!). What a burden I was to her, yet she was marvelously kind and generous to me, when I only faintly understood what was going on around me. I was qualified for nothing, but she helped me *begin* the road to self-respect and standing on my own feet. What a drag it must

have been for her. And I wasn't even her own nestling. I am grateful to her for giving me the boot, and being a friend for so many years after—33 to be exact—to this day, across so many countries.

*Love,  
Anne Phelan McCloskey  
Chevy Chase, Maryland  
Former counselor, Swiss Holiday*

## How to Start a School

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, where the first TASIS school is located, 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 ACI 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—and when they asked me, "Che c'è, Signora?"—What's wrong? I said, "I don't know—that's why I called you!"

Happily I remembered that, travelling long distances as I often do between schools, I always carry a drinking kit—so I resorted to it once they determined I was just out of gas—and offered them a choice of gin and tonic, scotch, or "Whiskey Americana," my favorite sour mash, with salted nuts and cheese tidbits. Fifteen minutes later they drove away feeling less pain than before and thanking me for a very pleasant interlude!

You'll wonder why I tell this story. I do because over the years several people have asked me "How do you start a school?" and I'm tempted to say like the story I just recounted—you just start it. You push all the buttons—and years later if you ever have time, which I've never had, you make a blue print of "How to 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 T.L.C.—tender, loving care!

Believe me, it's a foolproof recipe! It's also portable—it can be tested in any country, as indeed TASIS has done in Switzerland, England, Greece, and France.

The beginning of TASIS may illustrate the formula!

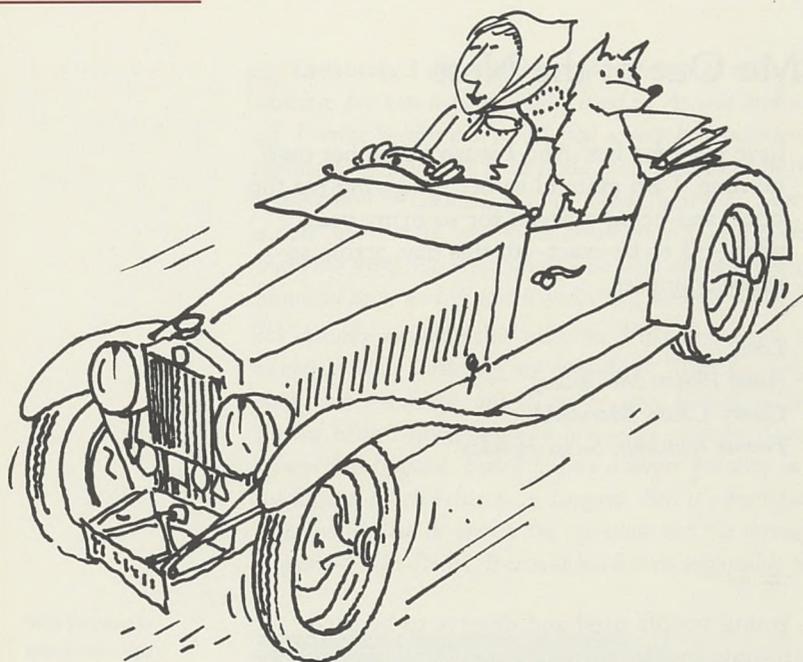
I fled to Europe from the USA 35 years ago to avoid the Pennsylvania turnpike cutting through my summer camp for small children—a small camp I started because of my 3 small children.

Sailing for France I arrived at Le Havre with 74 pieces of luggage to set up camp, 4 children, two mine and two borrowed, an MG-TC, a police dog, and a young counselor, Ted Linn, who had been with me at Frog Hollow Farm for a couple of summers. A Volkswagon bus awaited us on the dock. When all this impedimenta was crammed into the two vehicles, off we went to Locarno, Switzerland, where an



THERE IS A TIDE  
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CURRENT WHEN  
IT SERVES,/ OR  
LOSE OUR  
VENTURES.

*Julius Caesar*



artist friend had rented a villa for me—one I took sight unseen.

After crossing France, the children were so eager to reach their summer base that they convinced me to cross the Gotthard Pass at night, which meant that we reached the villa at 3 a.m., they sleeping all the way, of course, and I groggy from the drive. The villa turned out to be beautiful, high on a hill, with a magnifi-

cent view over the Swiss portion of Lago Maggiore, so magnificent, in fact, that I determined then and there—here there must be a school—a winter school.

Thus Swiss Holiday began, and was indeed the forerunner of all the TASIS programs. Obviously it kept me running like a rabbit all summer, but I still remembered my dream on the night of arrival and announced in August that *The American School in Switzerland* would open there on September 10th! Many parents said “impossible”—you can’t open a school in a month, but I did, with 3 of my own, 3 day students, and six other students who begged to stay. Incredible as it now seems to me, their parents were foolish enough to let them! Those first-year students still claim it was a very special year in their lives.

I had already hired 6 teachers so that for the 12 students academics were strong right from the start.

I remember flying to Finland where my father was fishing to *tell* him that I was going to start a school in Switzerland. After all his advice as to why I *shouldn't* and couldn't possibly on such short notice, he gave me his blessing with the words: “Mary, even if you have only your own three, *stress academic ex-*

Cris Fleming with Ted Linn in front of Villa Verbanella directing departure preparations for a Swiss Holiday trip





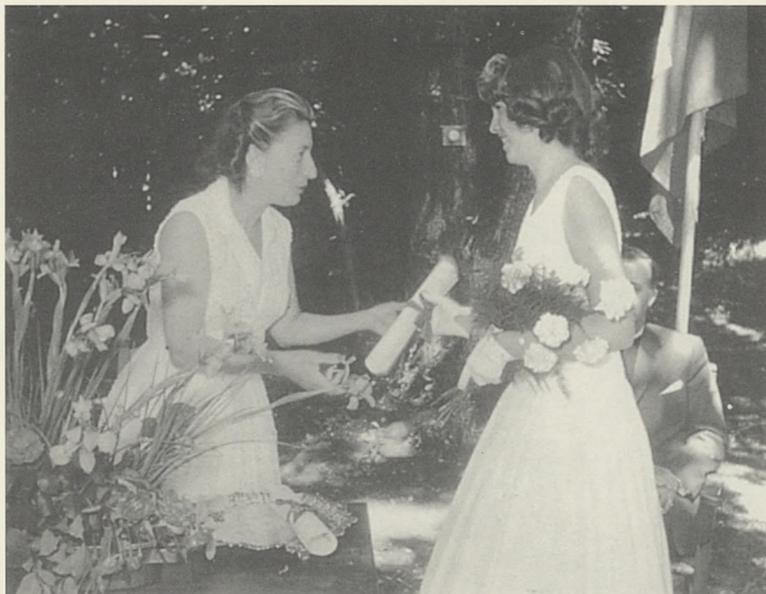
First TESIS students:  
Vicki Thompson, John  
Gage, Ellen Fairweather,  
Martin Vogt, Lynn  
Fleming, George Clark  
with math teacher  
Jim Elford

TEACH EACH  
LESSON AS  
THOUGH IT WERE  
EQUAL TO THE  
WHOLE OF  
EDUCATION.



Posing for the first  
TASIS brochure

Swiss Holidayers dining  
"al fresco" on the  
terrace of Villa  
Verbanella



Mary Kay Fitch, member of first graduating class of TASIS, receives her diploma from Mrs. Fleming



First TASIS students: John Gage, Bruce Curtis, George Clark, Ellen Fairweather, and Gay Fleming celebrate Christmas in Barcelona with Cris Fleming



Cris Fleming with Bruce Curtis, John Gage, George Clark, and Tom and Gay gather for Christmas breakfast

cellence”, and, “If I were ten years younger I’d come and teach mathematics for you!”

That first year my son, aged 13, an excellent but as yet unlicensed driver, drove me on several trips in the MG to the US embassies in Europe for me to announce to them this historical earth-shaking event—the opening of The American School in Switzerland! Actually, as the first American boarding school in Europe, it was more significant than I dreamed at the time. As my son drove, I used a typewriter on my knees as, of course, I had no secretary, and there was mail to answer even though the whole school file then fit into a 6-inch metal box!

At Christmas time I threw the whole school, that is I fit the 9 students minus the three day, into the VW bus, added a Christmas tree in a bucket in case I couldn’t find one en route, and headed for Spain.

We stopped in Avignon so I could buy a Santon creche for each student and reached Barcelona in time for Midnight Mass at the Gaudi Cathedral, followed by champagne in my hotel bedroom and Christmas breakfast around our little tree, for which each one had made and hung a bauble.

After that first year of 12 students in 1955-56, we jumped to 35 and had to annex a nearby house, but by the third year 50 students were enrolled— far too many for the Locarno campus. Where to go? No property in Locarno was large enough except the Grand Hotel, which was far *too* large.

At the last minute, as I was accompanying my Swiss Holidayers to Zurich at the close of the summer program, I was offered an abandoned, derelict, unfurnished villa in Lugano! I grabbed it, of course, and rushed back from Zurich to try to get it ready in three weeks time to receive 50 students. In so doing I somehow overlooked the need for a kitchen and dining room and had to take the whole school to a restaurant for the first two weeks. I also discovered there was only room for 30 students to sleep, so 20 were moved into a small hotel due to close November 1st. I had no choice but to build 2 prefab dormitories in the lower garden.

Since at that time women didn’t even have the vote in Switzerland, the president of the Swiss bank was so scandalized by a woman— American, and crazy enough to erect 2 pavilions in 3 weeks with no money—that of course he said no to any request for a loan. Happily the contractors and merchants were remarkably

trusting, helpful, and intrigued with the whole crazy operation, so somehow all got done!

By Christmas time of this third year and with the building project, I naturally ran out of tuition money and Walter Winiger, a young clerk from a Swiss bank that I hired two evenings a week to keep the school books, warned me that I was going bankrupt. "You simply can't make it past Christmas," he said. To which I replied, "Young man, there *is* no such word as 'can't' in my vocabulary, and if you use it you *cannot* work for me! How much money do you need?" I asked. So off I went to the States over Christmas to borrow the needed amount and to his amazement returned with it in January. He stayed with me over 20 years and through many more *near* bankruptcies!

Lest you fear you're in for a blow-by-blow account of the whole history of TASIS, suffice it to mention that in addition to TASIS being in several countries 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!!

More accurately, it's because I've been guilty of that ugly, unforgivable status of an independent private school that remains proprietary, a supposedly forbidden word in education!

TASIS *has* a Foundation, but the School is not a Foundation. After the founding of Fleming College in Lugano and transferring it into a non-profit corporation with a Board of Trustees, which made it fair game for a revolution in 1969 and thus loss of control, I closed the College and gave up that form of institution, never again to follow that formula!

Most important of all, the status of freedom and independence for TASIS 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. For it is on the *issues of values and skills* that our present public education is floundering and indeed foundering. This makes us still a nation at risk even though alarms went off six years ago warning us that as a nation we could fall far behind in skills, and thus in world competition, if our young people did not receive better

training and did not have heavier demands placed upon them, demands such as students in so many other countries take for granted.

The fault does not lie with the students. It is *we adults* and most especially with so many of our so-called "professionals" who are entrusted with setting national educational standards—our "intellectuals", our university professors, so many of whom are abdicating their responsibilities by *easing* their standards—and more alarmingly by an attempt to propagate through their courses their own *leftist*—yes, leftist convictions!

How great the irony that at this most dramatic and unbelievable moment of history, with so many countries sacrificing, suffering, and striking for freedom and free enterprise, that in our American universities, the Marxist academics are today's power elite, protected by the magic of the tenure system. A distinguished contemporary French philosopher has said, "I can't find any French Marxists. I have to import American intellectuals!"

It is not that these academics convert our students to communism, but by denigrating traditional American *values*, by discrediting our great achievements of the past, they inevitably dilute and neutralize our young people's commitment to and belief in the *values* that have made our country great and which now more than ever need vigorously to be defended.

THE AIM OF  
EDUCATION  
IS NOT THE  
KNOWLEDGE  
OF FACTS BUT  
OF VALUES.

Dean Inge,  
St. Paul's Cathedral



Villa Soldati, first  
campus in Lugano

To be sure, my strong statements apply to "higher" education, so called, in our universities. How much greater the responsibility and the urgency thus placed upon secondary schools to provide their students with solid,

basic academic preparation for true quality university level work, and even *more* importantly, with strong values and convictions that assure their resistance to dangerous propaganda and attempts at brain washing in various insidious forms.

It is in these areas that the freedom of an independent school to be tough and set high standards is so important to me. We can and do refuse to give the faddish, popular, worthless smorgasbord courses offered in so many U.S. high schools. We can *require* that every senior takes a compelling course in the Humanities, to give them the magnificent history of Western Civilization, why it is being threatened, and why

it is up to us to defend it. For, as Dostoevsky warns us, "Humaneness is only a habit, a product of civilization. It may completely disappear." Paul Valery said, "Civilizations are mortal." And H. G. Wells put it dramatically too: "Civilization is a race between education and catastrophe."

How well TASIS or any other *good* school succeeds in achieving high goals is yet to be proved by the calibre of human beings we are producing, and what impact they are having or will have on our remarkable world, on our extraordinary Western Civilization, with its beliefs in justice and in the importance of the individual human spirit.

## She Was Welcome to Our Son for a Year



When our son John was 14 in 1956 we thought he was ready for a different sort of summer experience and so, having met MCF briefly in Michigan where we then lived, we enrolled him in Swiss Holiday which was being based in Locarno. We were interviewed by MCF in New York and passed inspection and in early June John and his father met the group at the airport in New York for the flight to Milan. Among those present was Gai Fleming then about 16. In her white gloves she was a lovely, self confident, gracious young lady. Very near the end of the Swiss Holiday program MCF decided to start a school in Locarno to be called The American School in Switzerland, now TASIS. John wrote with this news and said he would like to stay. I wrote back saying "no way." He then cabled and my response was the same...so he then called his father at the office and his response was that he

had met Gai and if MCF could do that with her own daughter then she was welcome to our son for a year. And so he stayed and was one of twelve students, three of whom were Mrs. Fleming's own children.

This led to 35 years of continued association, as I became her west coast representative and visited the school annually for 23 years. What a wonderful, warm, pleasant relationship it has been. Now that I'm "old" and retired I don't see her very often and I miss her.

Our second son and our granddaughter have both been part of various TASIS programs over the years. We all three send our warmest love and best wishes for many more happy birthdays.

*Jean Gage  
San Francisco, California  
Alumni parent and  
Former West Coast Representative, TASIS*

## Turning Point in My Life

My year with Mrs. Fleming was certainly a turning point in every aspect of my life. What began as a summer travel camp became a year away from my family filled with unimaginably rich experiences for a boy from Michigan—first opera at the Roman amphitheater in Verona, midnight mass on Christmas eve in Barcelona, struggling on skis above Andermatt, crew rowing on Lago Maggiore, posing for brochure photographs in every imaginable setting. The list of those kinds of warm memories is nearly endless

and they suffuse that year in a warm glow.

Since mine was the first year of the school, I recall that many aspects were "played by ear." In some aspects, there may not have been a plan or the plan may not have worked as anticipated, but I remember the excitement of the unexpected and learning that things always worked out one way or another and that, in any event, it was the "experience" that counted.

I also picked up some earthier skills that have proven useful. Mrs. Fleming introduced me to



Ski break in Andermatt: (l.) Gay Fleming, Jim Elford, Mrs. Fleming, George Clark, Tom Fleming, ski instructor, Tony Metzger, me in my younger days, Lynn Fleming, George Metzger, Kristine, and Ellen Fairweather



One of those special Swiss Holiday costume parties—Betsy Bacon (l.) is escorted by Marc Schreiber and I'm on the right

Mrs. Fleming and I share a visit at a Reunion

bartending and the art of crushing ice with the back of a heavy spoon so that martinis (or, I suppose, even sweet vermouth) would be perfectly chilled.

I came to love Mrs. Fleming as my own "second mother," and despite the long gaps in our relationship, that love has continued through the intervening years. That's one reason it was so special to send my daughter, Lisa, to Mrs. Fleming (I understand she was the first of the second generation).

My love and best wishes to Mrs. Fleming on her birthday.

*John Gage  
Mill Valley, California  
One of the first students,  
first year of TASIS*



## Never a Dull Moment

It is with great joy that I can congratulate you, Mrs. Fleming, on your 80th birthday. You can imagine that at a moment like this my heart is full of fond memories—do you remember Thanksgiving Day 1956? Sometime in between the turkey and 11 p.m. I walked into the Villa Verbanella Alta in Minusio, hardly speaking any English. Early next morning we took off to Florence, I as the driver of one of the famous blue VW buses.

"I'm obviously shaking the hand of my favorite man!"—Marc Schreiber



That was the beginning of a fascinating period of my life—an experience I would never have missed. First of all there was Florence, a city I fell in love with the minute I got there. Then I realized the great idea behind this trip—the idea of M.C.F. for an American School in Switzerland, and I also realized its foremost purpose: to give young people the chance to understand other people and countries, other mentalities—to show them ways of life different from the way of life in their own country. To this idea you gave all your intellectual, physical and economic capacities available. And I had the chance to find out that Europe was not necessarily the navel of the world. This experience is of great value to me for making up my own mind and to judge what is happening in the world and in Europe today.

There was a young staff working at the

School those days, young people from the United States and from Europe, most of them having something in common: not simply to start a career or their own business, but to look around in a world which taught you a lot when you were ready to see and to learn.

And of course we had good times too—and certainly never a dull moment. I remember that once during a Swiss Holiday camp I dared to take off on my own for two days. When I came back the school was dead silent, no students—no counselors were around. Only a maid was there explaining that M.C.F., on coming back from a trip, found some of the students at home (probably recovering from a camping trip), and immediately organized ad hoc trips for them. Nobody should ever get the idea that there could be a dull moment.

Do you remember the Bishop from Gibraltar, who thought he could walk across the water and ended up in the pond of your patio?

During the early years of the School there were moments when some of us had some doubts whether the School could really become a success and whether the budget could ever be brought back into balance. It was thanks to your strong belief in your idea that you could highly motivate all of us again.

The way you opened your home to us was an example of your way of thinking, of your idea of hospitality which you followed constantly. This also made me feel that I worked not only for the School's director, but for a friend.

Dear Mrs. Fleming, I am very happy to send you my heartiest and most affectionate best wishes for your birthday, wishing you many happy returns in good health.

*Marc Schreiber  
Basel, Switzerland  
Former counselor, then  
Director, Swiss Holiday*

## Some Memories of Locarno Times

Streak of silver in her hair—  
Old WWII German staff car, convertible style—  
Lots of boyfriends, beautiful then—still;  
Trips to Ascona, Da Emilio's, boats on the lake, Andermatt—  
One big happy family—

*Ciao,  
Robert Sears  
Manila, Philippines  
One of first students, TASIS*

## General to the Rescue

We have known Cris for so many years, but several incidents stand out in our memory.

In 1951, I was ordered from Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, to Japan, so we took Susan, age 6, and Ron, age 4, to Frog Hollow, Pennsylvania, to leave them with Cris while we packed and prepared for the move and rather long separation of the family. Ron slept with Lynn on Cris's porch while Susan was in with the other children.

While touring Europe after my retirement in 1957, we were hurrying from Germany, Austria, and Lichtenstein to spend Phyllis's birthday on December 3 with Cris and kids. When we arrived at the school in Locarno, we found that unexpectedly Cris's math teacher had to leave, and she could not get the replacement down there until after Christmas. The school at that time consisted of seventh and eighth grades (Cris moved right along with her children), and high school. So I taught Lynn and Ron arithmetic in seventh grade, and Geometry to

Gai, et al, in high school.

A few months later we had spent a couple of weeks in Mallorca, then gone to Madrid, and were at the airport to catch our plane back to Barcelona where our VW bus was. We ran into Cris, Gai, Tom and Lynn at the airport just returning from a trip to the USA. Cris prevailed upon us to return to Mallorca and spend time there so she could recover from her trip. During that stay, we made Cris sit down and figure just how much each student was costing her, what her "nut" was, so she could find out what she should be charging, and how many students she needed.

She found out that with the tuition she was charging, and the students she was allowing to enter free, she was losing money. It was the last time we had to suggest to Cris that her tuition was too low.

*General Jacquard and Phyllis Rothschild †  
(written in 1980)*

*...I moved to the only place I could find in Lugano, because it was so late when I started looking. I had the summer program Swiss Holiday in the rented properties in Locarno. When the group was small I always used to meet them in Zurich or Milan and at the end of the summer accompany them back to the airport and kiss them all good-bye. I remember when I went up to Zurich with the summer students, I had fifty students enrolled for the winter, but I didn't know where I was going to put them. Actually I was scheduled for an operation in Zurich, but I had to cancel the appointment and say pardon me very much, but I have to go back to Lugano and find a building and start a school in three weeks. When I went back I found a property that I rented for five years.*

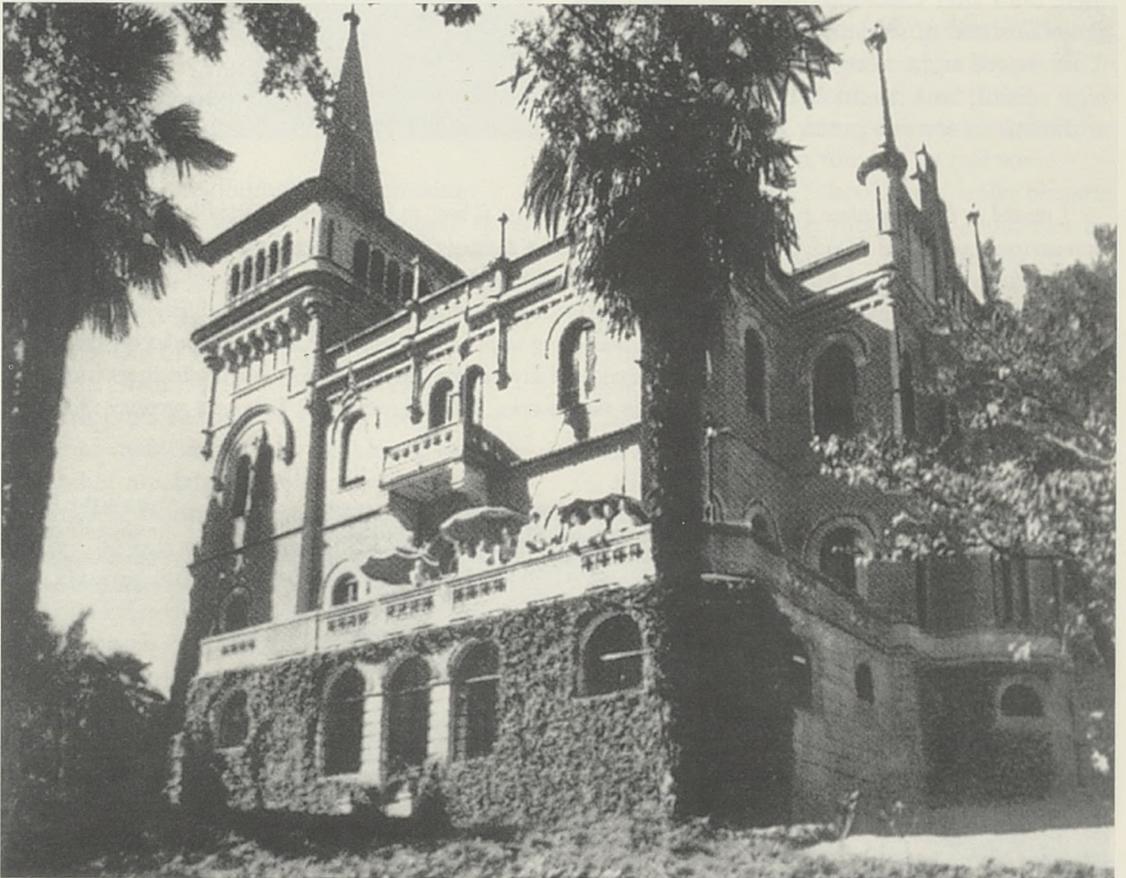


One of Cris Fleming's many greetings of a plane full of Swiss Holiday students

*The new campus was just a big piece of gingerbread cake, and I had rented it with an option to purchase within one year for a million dollars. This was a huge sum of money, and I knew I could never afford it, but at least I had the option to purchase. I spent the three weeks trying to put it into condition because it had been derelict for years — there were windows missing, with distorted frames, there was no kitchen to speak of. I got everything ready for sleeping, but had to take the children to a restaurant for the first three weeks of school because the kitchen wasn't ready, and I had no cook. At least I did open there with fifty students. Of course, I had virtually two jobs—running the school and promoting it to keep students coming to pay the bills. I lost a few students that year because I was in America a great deal, trying to raise money. I had hopes of actually being able to purchase the property, but in those days that kind of money for a property in Switzerland was shocking. It wouldn't be now, but in those days people in the States couldn't believe that a house in Lugano, which a lot of them had never even heard of, would be worth that kind of money. Eventually, I sold my option to Baron Thyssen, which is when my friendship started with him. (Actually, not too long after, the Baron sold the property and made a million dollars on it, which was a good basis for our friendship!) From him I got a five-year rental; I got no money out of the agreement since all sales money went to the owners of the property, but I did get peace of mind from having a roof over my students.*

*Even though Heini Thyssen bought the gingerbread property, Villa Soldati, I was allowed to stay there and when he sold it I still had the option of staying in it for five years. But that's when I started looking to buy because I realized I couldn't keep moving. By then it was apparent that the school was going to be permanent and a success and I was committed to living in Europe and to having my children live and be educated in Europe....*

Villa Soldati—"a big piece of gingerbread cake"



## How Many Lives Have You Swept Into?

One evening during the winter, 1958, someone knocked on the door of my small apartment at Berkshire School. I suspect I was

grading papers or reading some assignment—maybe about Ethan Frome, who was feeling “all snowed in”. I probably was feeling that

way myself. I opened the door to find Guy Tolman. And then you, Mrs. Fleming, swept in. "How would you like to travel in Europe this summer?" you asked.

I wonder how many times you have been described as "sweeping in"? I wonder how many lives, perhaps otherwise snowed-in lives, you have swept into?

And then, fresh out of the Army and all "barracks'd in", I rode with you on a train from N.Y.C. to Philadelphia. Not even my interview with you was stationary. Next thing I knew I was on a train winding its way through snow and night to Andermatt. I wonder how

many people have taken that train-ride to one of your schools, and from that point on have been caught up in your perpetual motion—not just during the school years but for the rest of their lives?

What adventuresomeness you have woven into the fabric of many lives! And what an adventure your own life has been! Eighty Fleming-years must equal about ten lives.

Happy Birthday. And many, many thanks.

*Jim Durham*

*Carpenteria, California*

*Former English teacher, TASIS*

## Recollections of Times Past

I went to work for Mary Crist Fleming in 1959. My position was secretary to her assistant Karen Mundt. I arrived at the school while all the Flemings were on vacation cruising around the Greek Isles. I was welcomed by Graziella, the maid, Herman Baumgartner, the gardener, and Sister Ida. I temporarily stayed in the baraccas, but then later moved into a room I rented from Sister Ida. Karen Mundt was also on vacation; so my first day, I walked into an empty office and opened the desk drawer. Dozens of unanswered letters were placed out-of-sight. I thoroughly read the school's catalogues and answered all those I could. After four days, the place was abustle because the Flemings were returning home. My first meeting with Cris Fleming was in her bedroom of the converted garage at Loreto. She spared no time in detailing her aspirations for the school which was then comprised of 29 students. She showed me photographs of the Joos property which she was negotiating to purchase. In her mind she had the entire property renovated and running as a school. She had the next ten years of growth visualized. She detailed at length her perception of the job that I would grow into. After a couple of hours I left in a complete daze and thought, "this lady is crazy." Nonetheless, in two years time, I was doing everything she thought I could do and although we were not moving into the Joos property, we did move into De Nobili. The move from Loreto to De Nobili was a family affair. To this day, my brother feels very guilty about having dropped a bed from one of the windows, narrowly missing Tom by a few centimeters. They met last summer—30 years later—and my brother

was amused that Tom did not even remember the incident. Cris was the major general making sure that everything got put into its correct place and that all was perfectly finished. When she was not looking, Arnold and Tom snuck off at frequent intervals to play the pinball machines at Rosina's.



"She spared no time in detailing her aspirations for the school"

One of the most enjoyable vacations Jerry and I spent with Mrs. Fleming, Leo and Anne van Brussel, Lynn Fleming, and John Amis cruising the Dalmatian coast



In one of her more girlish moments, Mrs. Fleming gets some groceries for our trip



I shall never forget the night before school opened. There was Cris up on a ladder retouching some of the spots the painters had missed. She stayed up all night and the paint was still wet when the students arrived the next day.

Another incident etched in my mind was a trip to Andermatt with the school bus. The road was closed but we forged on. The men stood on the back bumper of the bus while I prayed that we would make it. Cris was regally encouraging our efforts to proceed, never once considering turning back. The last few miles, some of us put on our skis and skied in the moonlight—one of the most beautiful runs I've made. Cris was royally driven to the welcoming hotel, and let us also not forget the inexhaustible eggnog that was left outside to brew with generous portions of liquor added frequently by Cris.

Another fond memory I have is when Cris decided to buy the house in New York City on 69th Street (over the phone) and furnish it with furniture from Europe. Since we had chartered a plane to take the Swiss Holiday students back to the U.S., Cris decided to take advantage of the baggage space and to send the furniture over to New York. However, not wanting to involve heavy customs duty, she persuaded the students to check pieces through as their personal belongings. I argued with her and told her I didn't think we could get away with it, but, needless to say, she won the argument and I found myself waving goodbye to her in her white dress at the airport. I was very nervous at the other end, and became even more perturbed when two young boys checked through the same customs agent—one with the head-

board and the other with the foot of the same bed. I was so relieved to see Betsy and Gay in a great big van ready to load all the furniture. It was at that point that there was a tap on my shoulder and a customs agent said, "Would you come with me please, ma'am." To make a long story short, to my surprise, the customs officials were concerned with a shipment of brochures describing TESIS Russia.

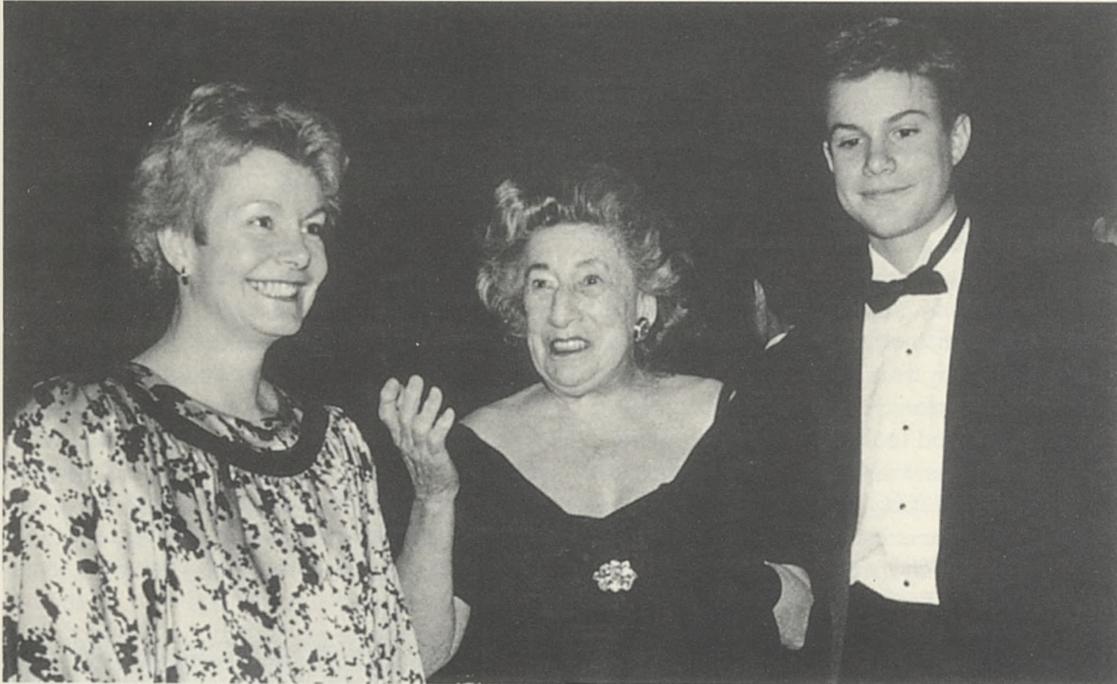
How many picnics have we all spent with Cris Fleming? And how many of us have carried the silver candelabra into the strangest of locations? Needless to say, I learned quickly how to

make an Old Fashioned and how to make Old Fashioneds under the most extraordinary circumstances. Also, can anyone guess how many employees were fired when they forgot ice?!

One of the most enjoyable vacations I've ever spent was when Cris rented a motor sailer and included my husband and me with her guests and family. We all felt included as family.

*Adele Bradbury Wells  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.*

*Former secretary and U.S. Representative, TESIS*



My son Piers and I welcome Cris Fleming on a recent visit to Washington

## Madame's Presence

Our friendship began way back in Frog Hollow days—and weren't they fun? Such exquisite dinner parties, brunches, etc. one after the other—always with Gertrude Burns keeping us all entranced as she played the piano.

Cris financed our first trip to Europe, the idea being that The American School in Switzerland might be a subject for an article in *Holiday*. Ted Patrick, the editor, seemed enthusiastic and my husband Loring [Dusty] was sure he could write a piece about the school which would benefit everyone. Unfortunately while we were still in Europe, someone got to Ted on the subject of doing a piece on Le Rosey, and he decided that was enough on the

school business—breaking your mother's and Dusty's hearts. She never reproached Dusty for it, simply saying she was "sick about Patrick's attitude," but of course Lugano was only the beginning. London and Greece were to follow—and almost Singapore! Cris is an amazing person, and will always be my very dear friend.

I do remember one special day the three of us took a boat out to an island on Lake Como—about as colorful a spot as I can think of. That in itself would have been enough for our day's outing—but Cris out-did herself that day by taking us to the Villa D'Este for drinks as a Grand Finale. There is no more gorgeous sight in the world than of that mountain-ringed lake

just at late afternoon. All the Maitre D's, as well as the waiters, bowed and scraped in Madame's presence—impressing us provincials enormously. I wish I could send you a picture Dusty snapped as we were returning from Isola di Comocino, of another small boat going in the opposite direction with its fisherman reliev-

ing himself off the rear, forming a perfect arc. We were all convulsed, but the man was totally unaware of us and our merriment, and I'm sure wouldn't have cared if he'd seen us....

*Sybil Dowst  
Doylestown, Pennsylvania*

*Mrs. Fleming's dreams are contagious. Twenty years later Fording Europe expands to Swiss Holiday.*  
**True Confessions of a Delightfully Mad and Equally Charming  
 Swiss Holiday Counselor—30 Years Later**



Super-driver Marco  
Hauert

You were right, Mrs. Fleming, when you said to me in 1959, "Marco, a young teacher can only become an old teacher". I'm getting there... at 54, still broke, still free, still remembering words of wisdom, spoken on a hot summer day in the flourishing gardens of Loreto....

Flashback sequence, close up: sweating brow, bare hands loading, unloading freight trains, night shifts at Zurich train station. Tired I rested, fell asleep in the early morning hour, woke up in Lugano. Got off the freight train, looking for a job, was hired by you Mrs. Fleming as a Swiss Holiday Counselor.... Miracles do happen! A tall, elegant, good looking young man, with spitshined loafers with a penny stuck on the side, took off a racing glove and shook my hand: "My name is Tom Fleming. Are you free now, can you follow me and drive a bus to the Zurich airport? We have to pick up students...." Could I ever! What a treat, anything was better than loading trains 10 or 12 hours a night. Little did I know, Tom was not a bus driver, he was a formula-one super minibus racer just back from the "24 heures du Mans" and about to go to "Monza". Needless to say, at the end of the nineteen fifties Europe was not equipped with freeways. America was still a dreamland on another planet and James Dean was the growing hero. So I accelerated to follow Tom, through medieval villages, narrow streets, sharp turns and stone bridges. There was no road tunnel through the Gotthard Pass, no new road over it, but the old "Tremola", which my father had walked, heavily packed in the army. Before getting so far in a left turn, over a narrow bridge, my nervous palm slipped on the steering wheel, I had no gloves as did my idol in front of me. I cannot tell a lie, Mrs. Fleming. With a delay of 32 years, I confess hitting the stone wall of the bridge, thus damaging your property and that of the Canton Ticino. Lucki-

ly, the bus bounced back, there was no traffic, Tom was way ahead instead of stopping, I accelerated. In Zurich we picked up students from America, they sang along the winding road of Lake Lucerne, over the Gotthard and down the Tremola back to Loreto where you stood with a bright smile, arms stretched out, bracelets shining in the sun, calling each child by his name as if he was your own, yet you had never seen them before.

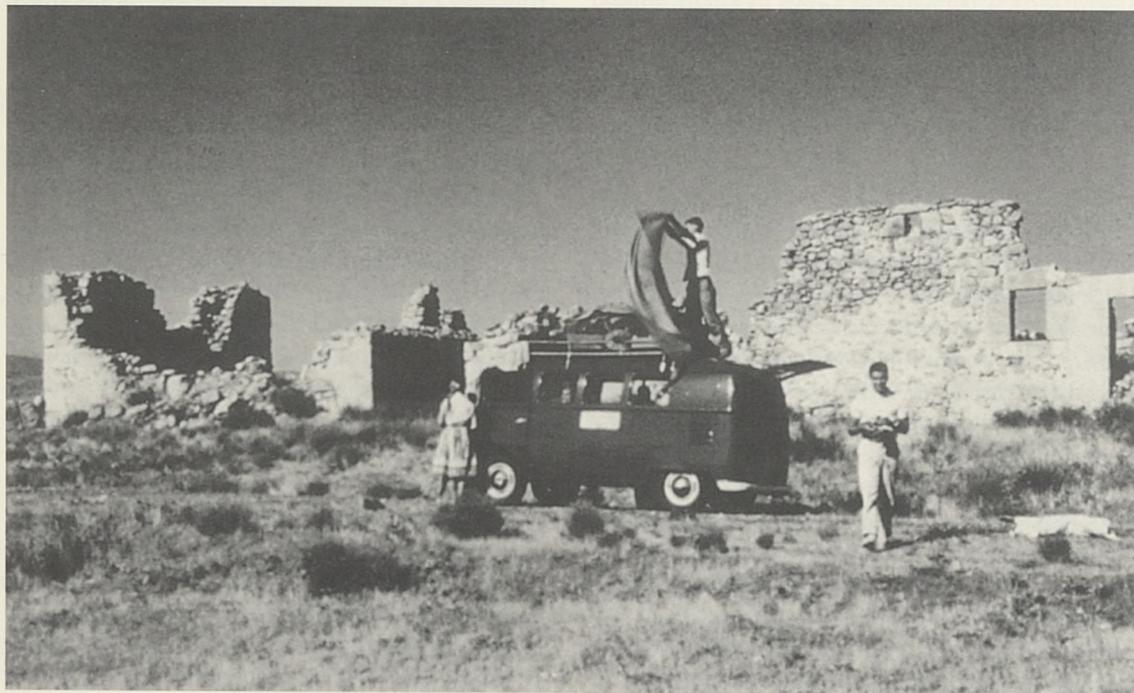
It was then the first time that I admired you. Many more times followed, too many.... Flemingland was born out of your enthusiasm, your dream, your faith—a highly intelligent drug, sugar-coated with lots of feeling from a warm heart—an impossible dream about to explode like little blue buses all over Europe. Yet, only a few months before in Locarno, not even in a house or a villa, just in a simple apartment, a dynamic not-so-young lady had decided to found an empire at an age when lots of others begin to think of retirement. She called "a school" a group of 12 kids out of which three were her own. Money brought her nothing for she had none. Beauty? Did you say women have it easy thanks to beauty? Well yes, her charm was of irresistible beauty, her mere presence cast a spell over the audience, she was clever and charming. Don't ask me what she was to others, to me she was and probably still is, a magnificent, superb, enthralling actress. Her stage was any spot on earth she set her two high-heeled feet on, her feet always well apart solidly camped, her arms outstretched to welcome the world, her heart wide open to deliver speeches that would have made the man in the moon feel at home in Loreto. Some leaders use their power to seduce negatively, but her strength is positive energy to build a world of understanding, open young minds, mix and mingle cultures, to foster knowledge in a fast

growing, ever-changing world. Napoleon would wink at his soldiers and by some miracle they'd walk all the way to Russia and back. Well, after returning from Zurich, off we drove to Milan, back to Seville, Athens, Istanbul, Libya, Rome or Berlin, Paris, Madrid or Vienna. At the time we believed ourselves to be outstanding drivers; now I know that it was just luck—all the angels of paradise racing over each blue bus to protect the singing children. Yes, I know times have changed, I've grown old, but no fool. In those happy days kids used to sing such songs as: "Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream...." Now, three decades later, they sing the same tune with different words such as, "Roll, roll, roll your joint, pass it down the line...." But the angels are still there to protect us all and we must not give up hope, not think how clever we are. Maybe we are still just lucky.

Mrs. Fleming, don't ask me why I keep writing to you. In our society, business cards are exchanged and businessmen stay in touch, for they all have some hidden vested interest, to keep smiling at each other. But you and me, we never exchanged cards. I still don't have one; if I did, under my name should be written "dreamer". Maybe I still write to you because you are my dream come true—a very platonic love story, one of first love never to be forgotten, first job, memories of youth, a newborn child called Flemingland. Somehow, I still feel

that I was a small cog in the big machine—a machine that carved my life for I still drive buses stuffed with kiddies and if I had not met Gai and Lynn and Tom, and their star mother, stepping down the stairs of Villa Soldati in Loreto, between the four columns holding up the stucco ceiling, I might not be as happy as I am to remember those crazy, mad, joyful sunny days of our youth. Maybe I simply stay in touch because, thanks to you, I keep falling in love with our youth, as years go by, days of "wine and roses" grow more beautiful, a symphony of young, laughing, enthusiastic children discovering a magnificent world. Fleming in wonderland, wonder in Flemingland. A happy dreamer finds his fortune in the future when he is young, when he is old, and has popped all the colorful balloons of his dreams and illusions, then he finds his fortune in the past. Pardon me if you are the leading character of my past, the spark of life that set off the fire of a still burning enthusiasm. How else would it be possible for a "papa" over half a century old to zoom down the snowy mountains, under blue sky, with a wild horde of juniors behind him? Some say there are such things as heart attacks, maybe, but if they exist why not meet them with a smile?

A smile I owe you, Mrs. Fleming, in fact this letter could be called: "I.O.U." For after all it was thanks to you that I learned to smile when stuck in Berlin long before the wall was built,



stuck there during the crisis when we were blocked in East Berlin, tanks moving face to face, East and West defying each other at gun point and our "Swiss Holiday" kids crawling all over the tanks, while I was taking pictures trying to get our little blue bus into the shot. Meanwhile, back in the U.S.A., parents were panicking. You calmed the parents telling them that we were dancing in Berlin discos, while others, like General Clay, got ready to protect us from the third world war which was about to explode.

You again calmed down parents when another year on another trip, newspapers world wide printed the horrible news of 10,000 or more dead, showing shattered houses and flattened tourist hotels during the Skopje earthquake. It happened the day we were supposed to have been there according to schedule. You had no news from us for it was impossible for us to call, but you told terrified parents that Marco was never on time and you assured them that we had missed the earthquake. Yugoslavia had only one paved road at the time, the one crossing from Trieste to Greece via Belgrade. We had chosen the hard way, narrow dust roads along the beautiful coastline to Dubrovnik. Before the horrible news reached Dubrovnik, a band of singing and playing young Yugoslavs was sitting on our blue bus, a small crowd following as the loud band was leading the marching parade along the walls of the ancient city. A band of wild East and West Coast kids was chanting along to cliché songs like: "When the Saints...." On the right bus mirror hung a dusty U.S. flag and on the left mirror a dusty red flag, 30 years before "Benetton" advertised "vive la difference". We drove on to Budva, Tivat, and Kolasin in thick white powdery dust. We had seen Sarajevo, taken photos of Tina Uihlein on the 1000-year-old bridge before the Mostar mosque, and camped in the mountains of Montenegro with a load of blonde, blue-eyed boys and mostly girls.

Mrs. Fleming, do you realize what could have happened? Or is the world more evil now than it was then? Could one go camping in Iran, or Turkey, or Lebanon now? At the time I thought we were smart; now I see how lucky we were. Albania could be seen just across the border. Tito's picture was everywhere and Stalin's was not far. Tourists were non-existent. Crowds gathered the moment we stopped anywhere. Driving East inland was like crossing the Grand Canyon—falling rocks, dust

now dark red, we looked like Indians. Tiny moslem villages, lots of mosques, no churches, a market place with our bus the only engine-powered vehicle crossing it, a dancing bear with a ring in his nose—it was like a stage from "1000 and one nights"—red flags everywhere, night falling, and our busload looking for a campground. By now the kids knew that not all places looked like Winnetka or Beverly Hills. When I write "kids" it includes myself, for at the time I was just two or three years older, just on the other side of the driver's license. I had never seen Beverly Hills, only Swiss Alps, but here the mountains were wild and had nothing in common with the ones I knew.

I'll never forget the top of a pass on the way to "Pecz", in a lonely wilderness, no yodeling farmers here, but a crowd of turban-clad moslems looking like forerunners of Afghan "freedom fighters" or would-be "ayatollahs", shouting, laughing at us as we stopped in search of water. It was not the kind of natives you'd meet in Andermatt, at least not then. A small group dragged me away, a bigger group surrounded our girls. My Serbo-Croatian was limited to "Jvala", meaning thanks and "Jivele", meaning "cheers". Indicating that we were thirsty, they poured a jug of clear mountain water down my throat. It burnt like hell—it was called "sliwovitz". All sneered and giggled, teeth, eyes, hands grabbing, bodies pushing. I tried to get back to the bus which was surrounded by cheerful, too cheerful, mountain men; all had to drink, but they (my charges) didn't. The party was getting wildly out of hand, when the terrible news of the earthquake, brought over the pass by a soldier with a prehistoric motorbike and a red star on his cap, calmed the audience. "Skopje kaputt", was the explanation. So was I, for at last I dare confess to you Mrs. Fleming, that wild lot had got me drunk in no time.... The valley down there turned, the road was rocky, too steep, the mountains all around were dancing; I'd never make it down there with all those kids, yet to stay here was not a good idea either. Never under any circumstance get out of first gear. All were listening to the horrible news; it was the best time to leave. The girls were screaming, rushing into the bus. I was sick; I'll remember it all my life. At that time I was your luckiest driver. Someone shouted: "Hurry, let's get out of here!". Out of fear of losing control, we climbed down the dusty winding road in

first gear only. Down in the valley the stomach returned to the land what belonged to the land. A small town, loudspeakers everywhere: "Skopje wiped off the map, thousands of dead." Police "Milizia" stopped us. A soldier climbed into the crowded bus, a young doctor for Skopje. I explained to the kids, no more singing, no more joking, a terrible earthquake has wiped a big town off the map. We pick up another doctor, a civilian. To thank us they offer us "sliwovitz". They seem in no hurry to get to Skopje. They like our girls. They ask me to stop at every tavern. What about the dead in Skopje? "The dead are dead, we are alive", comes a stunning answer in broken German. In the evening they set us up in army barracks set up for the wounded who have not yet arrived from Skopje. All night the soldiers and the young doctors were dancing with or without our girls, trying to feed me more "sliwovitz". Was it Gifford Hooker or someone else who asked "Where are we?". "No idea" was my answer. "Where are we supposed to be today?" "In Skopje." All this to tell you Mrs. Fleming why you were right when you said that we were late. Next day we drove through Skopje and we all wished never ever to be on time if it was to meet with such horror as we saw....

Greece and the young Greek gods, the "Hilton Shmilton" as you called it, strawberry milkshakes and cheeseburgers, Hydra, Epidaurus, the cruise on the Aegean was like paradise after going through purgatory. Istanbul, the blue mosque, driving on to Ankara, more flat tires than spare wheels and two wild Turks jumping out of the bush with hatchets in their hands, taking more interest in our girls than in our flat tires. We could not chase them away nor could we drive off. Again your lucky star came to help us.... Back through Athens to marvel at ancient Greece, the endless non-stop drive to Igonmenitsa. We got there over passes, coast roads, stones and dust at 6 a.m. next morning to catch the ferry to Brindisi. On the way, crossing caravans of purple elephants, pink crocodiles, and green kangaroos had slowed the driver down!

Brindisi: the place where we totalled 38 staring boys in less than a minute. All records broken. Many more followed the blue bus to what was called a campground—a Fellini-like set-up in never-never land with a Coca Cola stand and blasting music. The boys (our boys, what a shame) set up a dance floor. They put all the Italian boys in a long line and the one who

paid us a drink was allowed to dance with one of our girls. Sorry, it is only with a delay of 30 years that I can tell the truth, a most Fellini-like truth. After, came the "Trulli", Rome, and Florence with all its magic and Betty Jane never getting out of complicated stories, not to mention the boy who with the help of others was trying to load a Roman statue (for souvenir sake) into the bus. No tollways yet in Italy, only winding roads climbing up and down the Appenines. "Aida" in the Roman theatre of Verona with a thousand candles burning—I.O.U. Mrs. Fleming these unforgettable scenes, if only what's her name had not thrown up her pizza right next to me in the front row of "La Scala" in Milan. An entire front row emptied in no time. La Scala seats were to be had for free for "Il Trovatore". Well, kids will be kids, and not all stomachs can take a pizza and "Il Trovatore".

Arles, Pont du Gard, the crazy Hooker family diving off the Roman aqueduct—lucky again. Not so much when near Perpignan your "super" driver shouted "Legs up!". The front row in the bus lifted their legs a second before we hit front on the car that came around the corner. No wounded, just "bus bobo" lucky and on we drove after serious repairs and Tom bringing a new bus. Pamplona, Hemingway memories, all bulls loose in the streets, our boys showing our girls and the Spanish girls how fearless a Texan can be. More luck than ever!! Fear increases when you are helpless; I could only watch our boys from afar. No e.s.p. could stop the wild bulls.

Franco's Spain I.O. U.—its beauty, the way I.O.U. the shock of Omaha beach and the beauty of the Loire Valley. Avila, Salamanca—some fools with guns asking for our girls to get out of their tents. It took endless talking to have them lower their guns. I drove them to a shabby inn, offered them wine and the company of easy "ladies", whose toothless smiles appealed to our "heroes". Lucky again! El Escorial, the way of the catholic kings in a blue bus; Toledo, El Greco, Navacerrada, Sevilla, Cordoba, Jim and his filming his girlfriend the "mouse". Filming, sightseeing, shopping for spaghetti, camping, driving, driving through a Spain that no longer exists, so poor, so moving, so dry, so sunny, wheat fields, wheat carts drawn by donkeys, horses going in a circle thrashing wheat, farmers so polite saying with a touch of shame: "Forgive us Lord, if only we had enough bread to feed our children...." Gypsy

women building roads with gravel carried in baskets. Madrid, the Prado, Goya, Velasquez, the "Blanco oscuro", a country of hard contrasts I.O.U. Mrs. Fleming. Franco's megalomania, the memorial to the dead of the civil war built by his dying prisoners. An oncoming Citroen French license plate. A good friend, one of our students, I see his face, thin, slender body flying through the air, shattered bones. The boy's father was a producer; he was half Mexican. The boy spoke Spanish, he could communicate with the local village doctor who came to see him, chewing on a big cigar. The "hospital" I.O.U., for I had never seen anything like it. I much preferred the tangerine orchard which belonged to the doctor, in fact he was even exporting oranges as a side line to his job. I remember diving in Verzasca with the same boy after his accident. Lucky again! It was that boy who said to me once: "I'll never forget how you spoke to that poor peasant in the wheatfield. You talked to him as if he were some big shot director general...." That peasant in Spain was a great man, for judging by his hands and his face he had worked all his life for nothing.

Mara Orsi on the bridge of Avignon, my Italian girl friend, your language teacher. Thanks to Mara all your girls were safe. I was madly in love with her; she has done many of those crazy trips with us. She is the mother of our 22-year old daughter, Lisa....

Remember when you sent me off to celebrate carnival in Germany with the Post Graduates? We left Andermatt in a snow storm, walls of snow right and left. Snowfall all the way to Munich and a little blue bus skidding on icy roads. Munich, the famous German museum was less attractive than the Hofbrauhaus. Photos with liter beer mugs means German culture seen by foreign students. Songs, carnival and .... help, more snow and a bus to drive home.... Responsibility is the word that pops into a beer-drenched brain. Snow falling, police, blood test—safe is safe, no one ever stopped a car for speeding when in reverse gear. One could always say it was just being parked. All our Post Graduates were busy singing, as I drove them in reverse gear through Munich, over a bridge, back to our hotel. Lucky again, except the gearshift. Maryanne Mott was on that trip, if I remember well. On we drove from cheerful Bavaria to Salzburg. On the way at some gas station one of our girls found a handbag in the ladies

room. The Austrian gas station operator had taken down our number. In Vienna it was still snowing as I crawled into a warm bed. Police came to pick me up. The girl never told anyone about the "found" handbag. When I asked why I was in jail, it dawned on me that even the guilty ones ask the same stupid question. So I spent a freezing night with a couple of drunks in a Vienna jail. I.O.U. my release and the visit to Schonbrunn. Back to Andermatt for crazy skiing whilst Mara was skating. By now you had promoted me to the rank of "teacher". My first student was Vicky Frank. I was not very successful and should have given up the "career" right then. But, doing a poor job one tries to improve and instead gets worse and worse. Next came Dennis the Menace; I still remember you introducing his father to the school. Third student was Freda Wolff, followed by Marty.

By now your empire was growing fast like a fresh plant in spring, blossoming into many ramifications. The 12 kids in Locarno had exploded into a real school with a yearbook of 10 pages of students and 16 pages of local ads, from patrons, TWA, Gambrinus, to Tipografia Pedrazzini. The Swiss Holiday program was well under way. Many more "counselors" were racing blue buses all over Europe and Rupert Mostert felt narrowed in, so he drove a little bus through Egypt and the deserts of Libya. The Post Graduate Program was launched after our trip in reverse through Munich. At this point any wild dream was due to come true. Only Walter Winiger was madly hitting the brakes and counting pennies. We thank him for holding the dreams down to earth or else.... In this creative, dreaming, cheerful mood all illusions could be taken for real.

If I remember well, the name was Irene Bronston. At the time Jim Durham and Tony Ryser had made a school film, but to me the real dream was Irene. Someone had said that her father had made "Ben Hur" or was a big producer. On top of it all, some pros were in Andermatt filming Irene. Dream of all dreams—Hollywood. Of course I always wanted to make films, to write scripts. I just never had the guts to tell anyone. America at the time had not come to Europe yet, with its tollways, its McDonalds and Mister Proper. "Dallas" was still in Dallas and "Santa Barbara" still in California. U.S.A. was still the dreamland of the new frontier—especially for a little Swiss kid who began to work at 14 as a delivery boy,

at 15 landed a job feeding monkeys and birds on freight planes so that he could cross the Atlantic at that age with 500 rhesus monkeys and 300 birds in 1951, hitchhike without a visa to Wisconsin and find a job on a farm run by a Swede. After three months the little kid got kicked out of the U.S.A., back to school, for he was not 16 yet. Your school was the perfect excuse to get back to the U.S. and maybe immigrate legally, this time . Irene Bronston was the dream element; maybe I'd write a script for her dad and return famous to mom and dad and buy them a house. I wrote a script, read it to Mara; after the first lines she fell sound asleep. But I was not discouraged....

Montagnola followed Loreto, everything was growing out of proportion. I devoured your speeches; to me there was no greater actress from Gloria Swanson to Ava Gardner. You surpassed them all. I admired you endlessly because all you did succeeded beautifully, all the luck was with Flemingland. We were but a few but we took care of many. Only one teacher was necessary to teach Algebra II, Russian, Physics, and Chemistry. Another could teach on his own Biology, Geometry, Algebra I, and General Science. Mara did French and Latin, Anna Riva Italian and Spanish, and I taught French and German, went to Pedrazzini, dropped off Jeremy Miller, who told me: "The world will be in increasing chaos. It's a mathematical law...", brought back Madame Hausmann from her hotel, all according to your instructions. Max was told to check the john, it had been leaking; Sister Ida was asked about the sick; like Florence Nightingale she walked the school grounds with her little basket filled with medicines. Next you checked if Herr Wagner was ready for the big evening, ambassador so and so was your guest. Elena asked you what to do coming out of her clouds and Miss Bradbury was asked to send off the latest mail to the U.S.A. Like a general before a big battle you were everywhere. Then came the glamorous dinner, the candlelight, the students as the young ambassadors, the old ambassador, and you, who directed them all in a perfect choreography.

Gai and Lynn were superb assistants, Tom was very effective too, but in the end it all narrowed down to a one-lady orchestra. Like Ben Hur, you were holding the reins of all your horses in one hand and your list of things to do in the other—no Roman chariot ever counted as many horses as you were running simultaneously.

Time to conquer Egypt. Off you sent me with Sue Rafferty, Ellen Rogers, Don MacDermid, and mostly girls to Alexandria, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan—a dusty train ride wrapped in wet blankets for there was no air-conditioning. The girls found friends from Lebanon; Beirut at the time was the pearl of the Near East. The Lebanese invited all of us to the Auberge des Pyramides, Farouk's former private night club. From the Sheraton to the Pyramids, to the Valley of Kings and Queens, we remember Ellen's scream throughout the hotel when a huge lizard fell from five floors above "splash" on the roof of the lift just after she called the elevator. In Luxor Sue complained about a huge fat fly on her plate. The dark black waiter wrapped the fly in a salad leaf and ate it with a grin rolling his eyes. Aswan, where the dam was not yet built. Sue wanted to buy a little 14 year-old snake charmer and bring him home. She was appalled when she found out that he used a whip on his little girl friend or sister. Not to be forgotten in the back street of a small village near the border of Sudan, a circus. All the women in chicken "cages" the loges, all the men with big sticks beating wildly the ground with increasing frenzy, to the performance of a belly dancer in the middle of the small arena. It was our luck that kidnapping had not yet become fashionable in the Middle East.

Mara Orsi celebrates her 50th with me and our daughter Lisa



MORAL EDUCATION IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THE HABITUAL VISION OF GREATNESS.

Whitehead

In less than two years and many thousands of miles Flemingland had grown from the Atlantic to the Suez Canal, the only loss being a beloved canary who was our bus mascot and who preferred to stay at the Vezelay monastery on top of a tree rather than visit the rest of the world in a minibus. As for us, when we saw our minibus lifted in the air by a crane, loading it onto a ship crossing to the islands, we imagined a journey into the sun. What if we just kept going West? It must have been camping near Bonaparte's memorial in Ajaccio that turned our heads. Mara and myself talked about America; the kids on the bus told us how great it was... I.O.U. a superb recommendation for dreamland U.S.A. In Rusty Fletcher's room I had seen a postcard of Pebble Beach, as far as one could go West before falling into the Pacific. This was the place! It was also Mr. Fletcher's (was it Westinghouse?) private school, Robert Louis Stevenson. He recommended me, they offered me a job. I.O.U. and the U.S. Embassy a one A immigration visa, something like Werner Von Braun only had: it said for "people urgently needed" in the U.S.A. Someone obviously made a mistake or you wanted to get rid of me fast! Mara was not allowed because she was Italian and a visa for her would take years. I would "check out" the U.S. and come back to marry her. The Wild West, dream of all dreams. I crossed the land on the California Zephyr expecting to meet John Wayne on his horse upon arrival. Instead, it was a little [homosexual] with a colorful suit and high-pitched voice who picked me up screaming: "Hou, Hou, Frenchie, here I am. I am the director of the English department, I've been waiting for you..." Well, maybe I should have come with Mara. Next summer I was back driving a little blue bus for you to Greece. Your school had grown after Loreto, Montagnola, and then Vezia. All the big aristocratic properties fell under your spell. Were Versailles, Schonbrunn, the Winter Palace on the list? In general euphoria, Mara and I got married with your blessing in Montagnola. This time both of us had a job as heads of the language department at the San Rafael Military Academy.... [And off the Hauerts went for more adventures in the great land of Marco's dreams.]

If you are not asleep reading [my life's story],

you may wonder why I write all this. I don't know Mrs. Fleming; maybe simply because you are my dream come true, because of all the wonderful things I.O.U. All the beauty of the Pacific Coast, the high Sierras, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, the deserts, the open-hearted, generous, broadminded people, the youth, the joy of living, still poor but so rich, thanks to you, nothing to give except enthusiasm, the joy of living. Those ten years I.O.U. .... In Loreto, I felt like a giant ready to devour life. Now life has devoured me. Climbing the Magic Mountain to Montagnola, higher, higher with no end, when getting to the top, it's simply down, down the hill I've climbed for fifty years. How do I know I've reached the top? Not through awards and glory, just a feeling in my legs when skiing, in the head when driving, all over when getting home from work, so now it's coasting down a bit. If it were to be done again all over, I'd do the same thing with students to the Amazonas, to Kenya, Tokyo, Calcutta, the Andes, Moscow or Australia, to study geography, ecology, how to preserve our planet, for as Voltaire says in *Candide*: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin." Thanks Mrs. Fleming for giving us the kick-off for America, for the exciting first ten years of my teaching life... Is there still someone out there who remembers "Loreto"? Early days of camping, cooking out, old songs? Where have all the flowers gone? If some Swiss Holidayers were to cross me in the street we would not recognize each other, so all there is left are the joyful memories. And in the midst of them you stand so young and beautiful as ever, addressing all youngsters by the thousands, all gathered in your magic Montagnola gardens, telling them as you told us 30 years ago: "...you will be braced to whatever buffetings fate has in store and it will be said of you—They stood FOUR SQUARE, to all the winds that blew.... A very special part of TASIS will always remain with you...." Thanks for those words Mrs. Fleming. A special part did remain and may you stand, as they stood, for many rewarding, joyous years in the best of health. Happy Birthday.

Marco Hauert  
Geneva, Switzerland  
International School

N I N E T E E N - S I X T I E S

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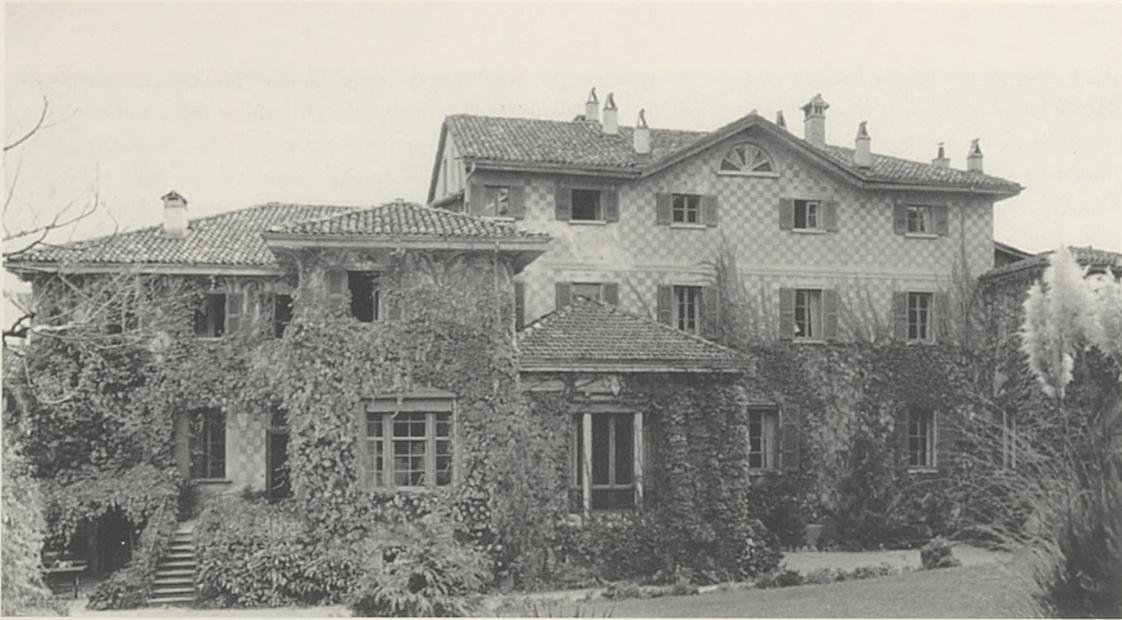


...I knew that a school couldn't be in a rented property indefinitely. So in 1960 I bought Villa De Nobili in Montagnola. I paid a half-a-million francs, which was a steal, even in those days. I was able to put a down-payment on the beautiful 17th-century villa and property by asking the parents of enrolled students to pay the tuition in advance. I have never been afraid to take risks, and happily Swiss banks have finally given me loans, which is very good of them. I collect mortgages like most women collect charms for their bracelets. I never thought a stamp collection was as interesting as mortgages, in terms of collectors' items!

Villa de Nobili—1925



Plans for expansion on the master-strategist's lap and the gates to a new campus—Villa de Nobili



Villa de Nobili when first acquired in 1960



Villa de Nobili, the heart of TASIC, gains an expanded salon and large terrace



Villa de Nobili, with its final addition, a new wing for science labs, offices, and student rooms

Soon after acquiring the heart of a permanent campus for TASIS, we bought Hadsall House, a property across the street from Villa De Nobili. My own house on the campus has always been a private house although the school uses it a great deal; my children called it Grand Central Station for many years. Over the years we bought two more properties contiguous to us, Villa Belvedere and Balmelli. Two years ago, we built a new building, Villa Monticello, because we now have 250 students. We also have to rent properties in the village. The land is limited and there is only so much construction we can do, but we will have to build one more dormitory to replace those rentals. We must also replace the provisional buildings of the gym and the swimming pool. We have made a contract with the town that we will only take 250 students, otherwise they are afraid that we will explode. They already think we have taken over the small village of Certenago. We are quite a large group of people when you consider adding a faculty of 50, so we are talking about 300 people in a village of 90 inhabitants. We must concentrate on just making a better school, not a bigger school....

Hadsall House, after library and theatre expansions



Casa Fleming

Certenago village with the TASIS campus in the center and foreground





## The Inauguration of Villa Monticello

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!

The first dream—Châteaux in Switzerland, then villas in Ticino and Italy, Georgian mansions in England, a Château in France—from 12 young people in my first dream there are 2,000 every year who walk onto my landscape with my hope and blessing that because of them and their time at TASIS the world becomes a better place to live in.

New architects and community fathers come to create new structures, new classrooms and laboratories in England blending in with the lovely architecture of the past, and here rises above the lake of Lugano and in the hills of the Ticino another home to house young people, blending in with the 17th-century buildings and the tonality of time.

In such spirit have we chosen to bridge time and continents in naming this edifice after the home of one of our greatest Americans—Thomas Jefferson—in spirit a Renaissance man, in courage and character a dauntless pioneer in the creation of a new nation. MONTICELLO, as he chose to name his home in America, reflected his love of Italy, Europe, and the old world. Education was so dear to his heart that he wanted to be remembered for only *two* things in his life.....

Author of the American Declaration of Independence

Founder of the University of Virginia

His dream and creation of one of the finest

Universities in our land makes the choice of the same name he chose for his home an honor we pay to his and our beloved Europe and a dedication to the highest standards and aspirations that he symbolized in his life and that he transmitted as a heritage to our great country, America.

With thanks to our architect, Signor Falconi, and to our Mayor, Signor Riva, and to all the workmen who have labored with the creation of this “palazzina,” I now dedicate to young people, to the future citizens of the world, this building—

### VILLA MONTICELLO

*M. Crist Fleming*

*Founder and Director*

*The American School in Switzerland*

*(Speech delivered on 27 November 1987)*



## A Dream of a School

IF YOU THINK  
EDUCATION IS  
EXPENSIVE, TRY  
IGNORANCE.

My husband was attending a meeting in Stresa. I took a bus to Lugano and another to Montagnola. An opening event was scheduled at TASIS. That was thirty years ago and Cris Fleming was making certain that all of the furniture, flowers, refreshments were ready for guests.

Cris had a dream of a school in Montagnola which would educate young people from various places, mostly American, who would learn to speak at least one second language acceptably, and would become well-traveled citizens of the world. The young people were to be properly dressed, well-scrubbed, and a credit to their school and to their country. TASIS has expanded enormously since that ambitious beginning. The plays put on by the students, the exhibits of student art work and photography are always a joy. The travel programs which were made available to the students and the dozens of innovative programs at TASIS were trail blazing, and those of us who had the good fortune to watch Cris Fleming build her academic empire from a handful of students to a major factor on the European secondary-education scene all have our own favorite memories.

Cris has always done things with style. The clothes she wears, the food she serves, the ease

with which she switches from English to Italian when her guests are more comfortable in Italian. These are just a few of the things I remember.

Everything Cris has touched, from those days so long ago, has contributed to her vision of one peaceful world where high school students learn those skills which will enable them to contribute to making the world a friendlier, happier place.

When possible I still attend TASIS graduations, watch Cris kiss the new graduates, and marvel once again at the wisdom of her vision, her energy, her high standards for the young people she has guided for more than three decades.

Of all the women I have met in my lifetime, I consider Cris Fleming one of the most fascinating, most productive, and most stimulating. She has been a good friend and a fascinating role model. Heartiest congratulations on your 80th birthday, Cris, and best wishes for many more Happy, Healthy, and Productive years, and ever more fascinating projects to develop and to share with faculty, staff, students, and friends of TASIS.

*Eleanor Gurewitsch  
Freelance Journalist  
Schenectady, New York  
Zurich, Switzerland*

## Instant Friendship Became Something Like Family Love



When we met her we thought her the most impressive, not to say glamorous woman we'd ever known; and we haven't changed our minds.

It was 30 years ago when we called on the newly arrived American School in our village of Montagnola to ask if their library could use books and magazines, and the person we approached at the gates was Mrs. Fleming. Instant friendship became something like family love.

Since then we've spent countless happy times together—contented visits—exciting holidays—magnificent “Fleming” occasions; but none so far as splendid as her 80th birthday promises to be.

May these happy meetings go on and on.

We wish you, dear Cris, with all our hearts, a Wonderful Birthday, and many Happy Years.



*Leo and Anne van Brussel  
Montagnola, Switzerland*

## Tribute to Mrs. Fleming

In the early 1960s, TESIS had something called "Swiss Holiday." It was yet another adventure in education that Mrs. Fleming was always creating. And her creations always produced a whirlwind of activity that was exciting, dramatic, and inspirational. With one year of college behind me and an earlier summer exchange to France, I was invited by this creative, inspirational woman to be a counselor at the 1962 summer Swiss Holiday.

The day I arrived she said: "Quick, take a train to Yugoslavia. One of our expedition buses needs a replacement!" That was my introduction to a pace that never let up.

Four years later, college now complete, I returned to the recently acquired Villa De Nobili outside Montagnola. This time, the day I arrived (again as a counselor) I met a fellow counselor, also invited by Mrs. Fleming, who later turned out to become my wife. The excitement, drama, and inspiration of Mrs. Fleming and her ways never cease.

Many, many thanks to a most fantastic woman!

*James Botkin  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Former counselor, Swiss Holiday*

## YOU were VOGUE PERSONIFIED!

To Mary Crist Fleming—on her very special day and year!

We go back a long way together. When we first met, you came with your parents to the Headmistresses' Association meetings, usually held in a big city, or at a resort like Atlantic City. I was always interested in the Mary Lyon School, since Mount Holyoke College was my alma mater, but *you* were the belle of those "balls", with your beautiful and striking gowns at the formal dinners.

Then there was your Frog Hollow period, when you wore perfect country clothes.

I can't possibly cover in a few sentences your achievements in your schools abroad, starting with TESIS. It was a real thrill for me to visit

your school in Lugano, the one time that *Vogue*, my employer, sent me on a school-visiting trip on the other side of the water, in the fall of 1962. I arrived late, at 8:30 p.m., but was welcomed warmly, in my travelling suit (plaid, I believe), at your perfectly lovely dinner party. I was the one who worked for *Vogue*, but YOU were VOGUE PERSONIFIED!

My former associates in *Vogue's* School Department, Helen Weist and Judith Hine, join me in sending affectionate best wishes on your birthday. Long may you wave!!

*Cheers and more cheers,  
Marian Courtney  
New York City*



## A Veritable Grande Dame

In life one occasionally comes into contact with someone truly memorable. I suspect that nearly everyone who has ever met Mary Crist Fleming has been lastingly impressed by her vision, energy, and "torpedoes be damned; full speed ahead" manner! Educator, humanist, internationalist, entrepreneur, real estate genius—Cris Fleming has inspired countless persons with her "everything is possible," "the sky is the limit" spirit. Add to this her insistence on standards and her zest for life and you have a real personage, a veritable "grande dame."

For good reason, to the world, TESIS and

Mrs. Fleming are synonymous. I cannot remember an instance when the subject of TESIS arose that was not quickly pursued by an inquiry about Mrs. Fleming—in essence, "what is she up to now?"

While I didn't always agree with Mrs. Fleming, our differences did not diminish my admiration and respect for her. Like many others, I shall always be grateful for the opportunities and expanded horizons that TESIS presented. Risk taking was more than a cliché for Cris; it was a way of life—of which I, for one, was a direct beneficiary. Only a real risk taker—or a damned

fool—would have asked me to head TASIS at the tender age of 25! And I don't think anyone has ever accused Cris Fleming of being a damned fool. I hope that to some degree her confidence and trust was justified.

While Mary Crist Fleming could have successfully run most any company—and many countries for that matter—how fortunate for several generations of students, teachers, and

administrators that she chose to make her mark in education. And what a mark she made—and is still making! Few can claim such an impact. There is no question, the world is a better place because of this remarkable, memorable woman.

*Raymond Robbins*

*Zermatt, Switzerland*

*Former science teacher and Headmaster, TASIS*

## If You Can Walk with Kings

Who would have thought that as you shared a very simple spaghetti dinner (without wine!) in our little one-room apartment in Cambridge that winter night in 1961, it would be the beginning of such a long friendship? Certainly the three of us sitting around that table—on two chairs and the corner of the bed, as I recall—didn't. I often think of that evening—and of our naivete and your graciousness. I'm reminded of Kipling's "If" and the line, "...If you can walk with kings, nor lose the common touch..." Certainly you had walked with kings, but you made us feel as though spaghetti was your favorite dish and we your best friends.

In retrospect, the subsequent seven years in Lugano seem to have gone so quickly. I had the idea of doing something with the library and you gave me "carte blanche." I learned lots and I think I gave a bit of order to the books that were there. Kris and Heather were both born during those years, and you were there with care and concern and gifts. You didn't know that you were "family," did you? And our lovely home.... How I hated to leave Arasio when Ray made the decision to return to the States! Special dinners, evenings in your home, vacations in Uzes, parties at the beach house.... It is fun to let the memory run—with so many happy thoughts.

For me, Cris, in so many, many ways you became (though you didn't know it!) a valuable role model. To Grosse Pointe I took your high standards and perhaps made a mark there because of them. The physical plant of University Liggett School became a showpiece—and to a large extent because I kept pushing and believing that it *could* be done. Beauty is important in life. Caring is important. And people tend to respond to and respect that which is and those who do! I think our fifteen years in Grosse Pointe left ULS—and our community involvements—better for our having been there. Little did they know from whence came the inspiration! I did!

And our getting re-acquainted again in 1984 with our stay in Capitignano—a relaxed time, with a little "antiquing" in Arezzo and "memorable" meals.... TASIS Suisse Romande sadly was not meant to be, but even that was a "learning experience"—and not a bad one!—for all of us. Best of all, it brought us back together!

Thanks for the memories, Cris! Let's keep making them!

*Lenita Robbins*

*Zermatt, Switzerland*

*Former Librarian, TASIS*

*....In the early 60's I was also eyeing a gorgeous property near the Montagnola campus, especially and exclusively for the Post Graduate Program. I had been to the States several months before to borrow the money to purchase it, but when I returned and prepared to meet the owner of that property, Mr. Joos, he raised the price a few hundred thousand francs for the carpets and the gilded crystal chandeliers. He had already been a difficult man to deal with, but I was so angered by his changing the agreement at the last moment that I called my lawyer to accompany me to look once more at another villa I had seen. I fell in love with that villa all over again (I had visited it several years earlier), and with cash in hand from my Stateside trip, I bought the Villa Negroni that afternoon before five o'clock in the year of our Lord 1962.*

*It is probably the most beautiful villa in Lugano and made a wonderful campus for our Post Graduate Program and later Fleming College. I eventually sold it to the town of Lugano, when we consolidated the school onto the*

*enlarged campus in Montagnola. I owned Villa Negrone for at least 10 years and completely modernized it. I had to put in all the bathrooms, because it was built in the 17th century. Happily there was space for bathrooms because they had large tin tubs, and servants who came in and poured water over them for baths. In fact I still have some of those tubs—they are wonderful for ice and beer, and chilled wine! At least the space was there so we could put in all the bathrooms for American students and the heating system, which wasn't easy. Jerry Wells, who restored my house, and is now head of the Cornell Architectural School, did all the planning, and very ingenious planning it was, because the whole heating system had to go under the villa. You couldn't possibly destroy a historical monument with functional items like a heating system!*

Villa Negrone—the most beautiful villa in Lugano



Again, the master-strategist plans a new campus on her lap. The salon before...

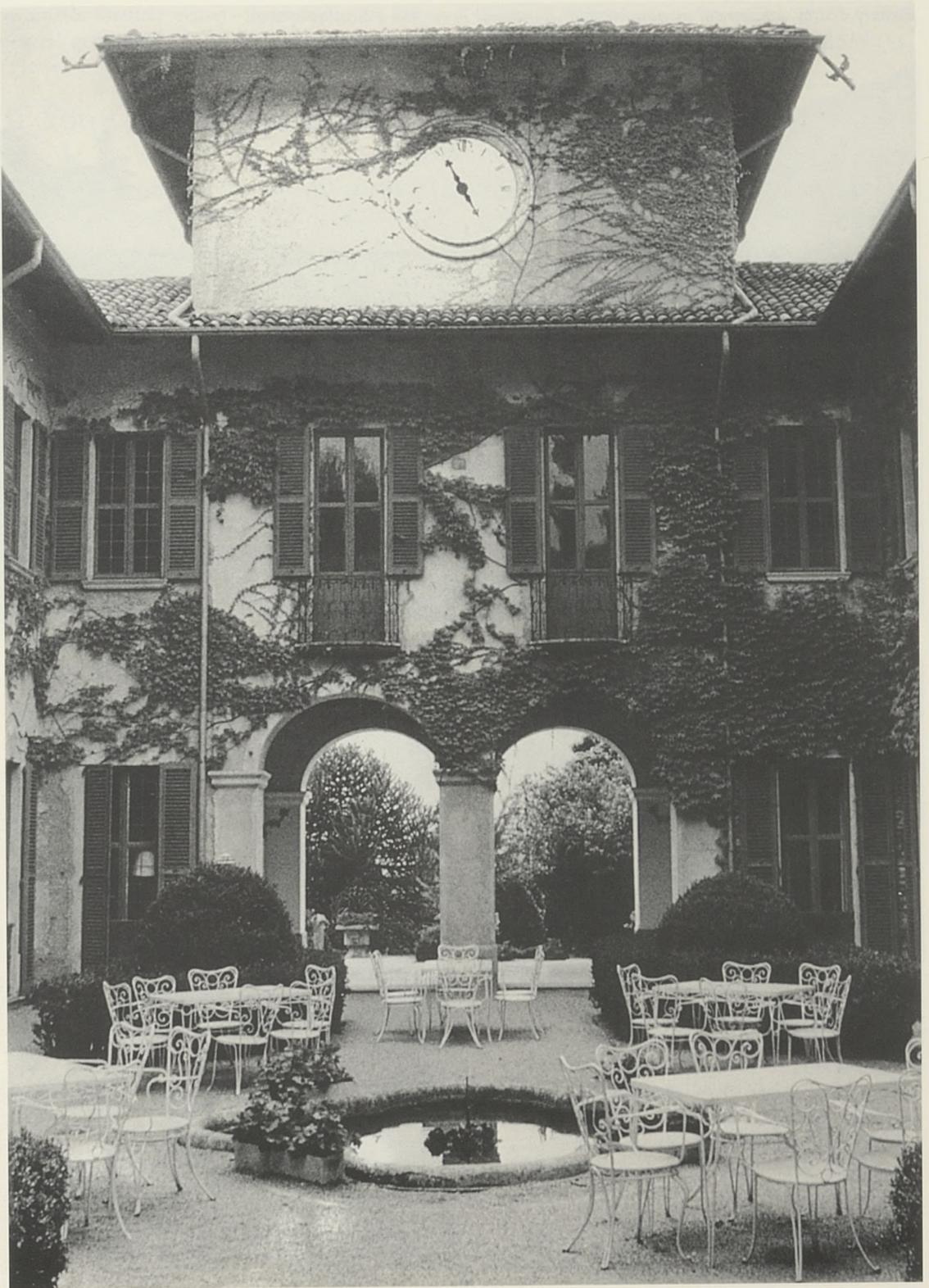


The salon after Cris Fleming's magic touch



Inspection tour of the empty villa with daughter Lynn

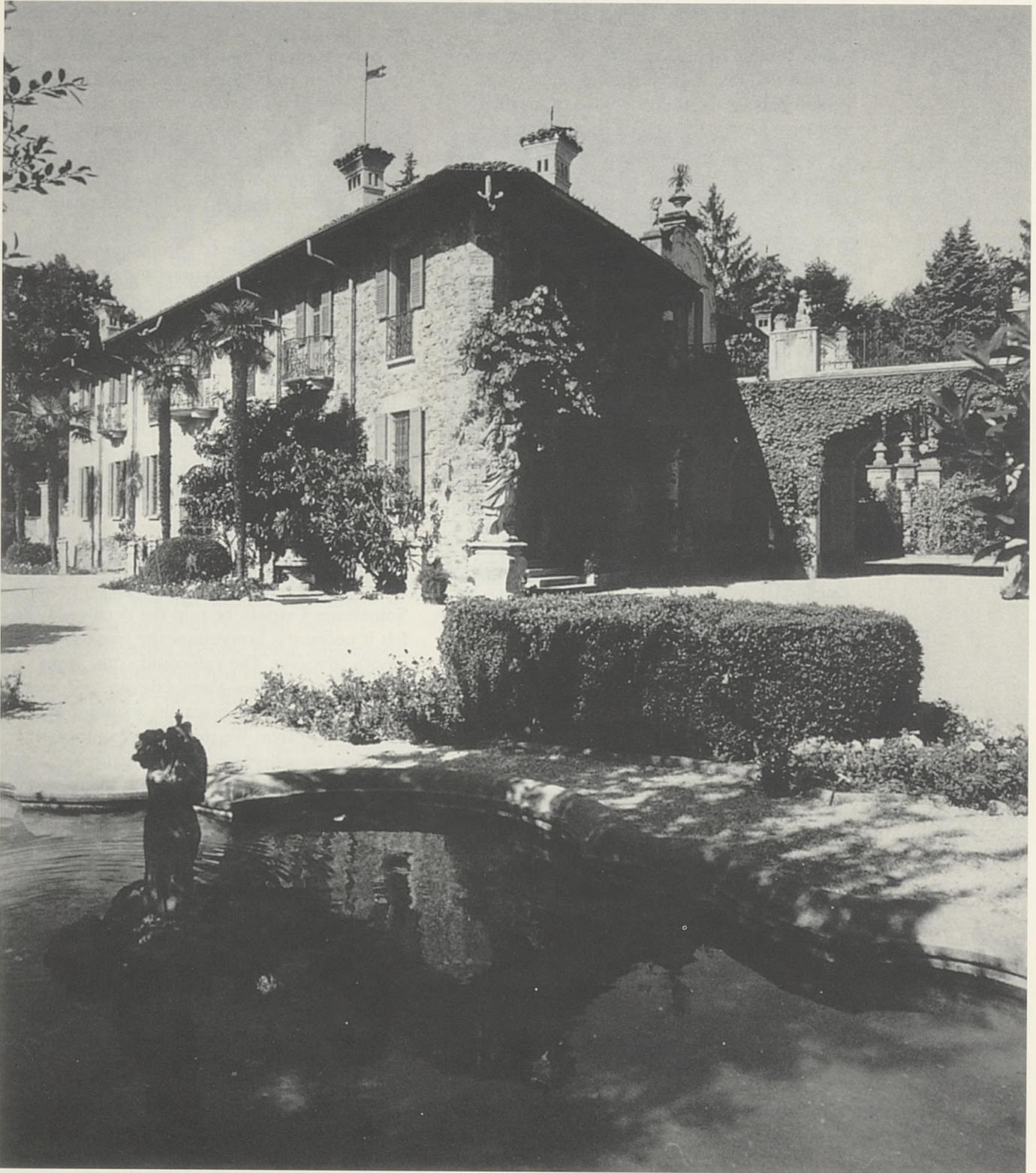
*It was all a challenge and I'm afraid I always need a challenge. Making something beautiful is very important to me. The challenge of Villa Negroni was to restore something basically beautiful, which had been allowed to run down, into a living building and place again. It was very successful. We filled it with students for years and they loved it because, coming from America, old historical buildings are part of the reason they come to Europe. The Belle Arte didn't interfere with my restoration because I was more fussy than they in preserving the authenticity of the Villa.*



Courtyard of Villa Negroni for many meals "al fresco"

*The constant need of a challenge—sounds like a disease, doesn't it? As well as the renovating, decorating, and the organizing side of a new school, there is the social side of it, getting to know the Mayor and the local people. It is very important to have the support of local people, particularly for a school of young Americans where local citizens question whether the students are going to be a cultural disturbance to the community, especially in a small community. I guess I enjoy the challenge of anything you must do to make something successful. You might as well enjoy all aspects....*

The old stables, chicken coops, and servants' quarters make wonderful student rooms, offices, and snackbar



## After All, the Relationship Between a Customer and Her Banker Is Supposed to Be Confidential

There are many, many people who know Cris Fleming as I do. All of us love her and respect her. Working with her—just talking with her—gave the dullest person the faith in anything being possible.

But write a book and relate the experiences of someone like myself? Would the average person believe the things she accomplished against what to me seemed impossible odds? I am sure most would read it as fiction. Cris would know it was true. We who knew her, know her and worked with her, would read it as true.

Our relationship all began at least thirty years ago. That's a long time! A mutual acquaintance introduced Cris Fleming to me. And I sensed at the time she was probably brought to my office because hearing what she wanted to do that mutual friend considered I was the only banker who would even listen to her plan. I was known as a brash young free-thinking banker. And I probably was. But I worked for what was then a most conservative banking house—the Harris Bank.

The program she had laid out for herself was perfectly straightforward—in her mind.

A beautiful villa was on the market in Lugano. It would make a splendid facility for a school. The American School in Switzerland was already off and running. This villa would answer another need—a college-level campus.

The fact that there was a deadline of weeks in which to act, that there were no places in Switzerland at that time which would lend money on such property irrespective of the worth of the borrower or the property, and that she had little or no money to commit to either buying the villa or financing the start up of another school simply was not germane—in her mind.

She bought the villa. She started the new school. And like everybody else who has come to know her I helped put it all together. Of course, I couldn't go to a conservative bank in the Middle West and explain to the board I had a lady at my desk from Pennsylvania who ran a school in Lugano, Switzerland and wanted to buy a villa nearby and start another school. They would have first asked where Lugano was—or perhaps even have asked where Switzerland was. They knew where Penn-

sylvania was and still is. You must remember this was in the 1950's!! Gary, Indiana was a long way from the Chicago Loop.

Among those who believed in Cris Fleming were many. And I knew if they had any money they too were or would be scared to death placing their money anywhere offshore.

We devised a scheme whereby an escrow was established in a Washington, D.C. bank. A more sophisticated bank. A bank where the board was made up of men who knew where Switzerland was, but maybe had never been to Lugano.

Into this escrow these friends of Cris's deposited shares of listed companies as collateral. They could continue to draw the dividend income and even trade in the shares. However, it was understood they would replace any shares withdrawn from the escrow with shares of equal quality and value.

Against this collateral it was arranged in Switzerland to draw down sufficient funds with which to buy the villa. Later she was able to arrange refinancing and the escrow was dissolved. Cris had her villa and she started the new venture.

Through the years I learned never to be surprised from whence she might call. Usually only to explore an idea or probably a problem. Sometimes I would be told the details—if she felt it necessary. Sometimes she just wanted a devil's advocate. The call could come from New York, London, Paris, Lugano, and later even Sydney! Other times she would drop in to the Chicago area. We might have dinner. But whatever or wherever, it was usually her desire to work through the possibilities for resolving some issue.

And as the years went by the calls were less frequent. After all, such discussions with all the people she could call on as time went by made her more self-reliant. All she ever needed was the seed of an idea. Believe me—people like myself enjoy and appreciate working with such self-starters and *doers*. Often we help and then become a rather permanent crutch. In the fifties Cris was a rare person—and, besides, she was a lady! Women did not do what she accomplished. They did not attempt to do such outlandish things.

One big reason was we men were not prepared to assist women—most women, that is. I don't think it ever occurred to me or

FREEDOM IS NOT  
A MATTER OF EASE  
BUT OF INTENSE  
DISCIPLINE.

Bole

anyone else not to help Cris Fleming. But I am sure many others like myself could never attempt to explain to someone who had never met her why we were helping Cris.

I love her, you love her...we all love her. It is astounding to realize Mary Crist Fleming is an octogenarian. They are OLD! She *never* will be old.

## Montagnola Nights

The phone rang insistently. That could mean only one thing: "The boss" was on the other end. If it wasn't "The boss" the phone rang less authoritatively, more pleadingly, more—how shall we say—more respectfully. More as if a Swiss were on the other end, which was usually the case. But when it was 7:45 a.m. and the ring was more like a fire bell than a gentle church tocsin, Mellon knew two things: one, it was MCF for damned sure, and two, he'd better get the gravelly sound out of his voice, what Wells aptly called "the morning after the night at the Della Santa voice" and sound, bright, perky, well-slept, well-fed, well—well reasonably well-dressed and above all "on the job."

This early October morn, the job meant running the post-grad program of TASIS, ready to share breakfast and news of the EEC with his charges—some of the blonds were more like depth charges, but that was another story—all 30 of these wretched of the earth from Scarsdale, Winnetka, Grosse Point, Englewood, and Beverly Hills who had run away from deprivation for a year to find themselves in the hills where the Sound of Music inspired them to work softly, play hardly, consume inordinate amounts of Birra Lugano, Tobler chocolates, and above all with diligence and devotion find ROMANCE, the ever elusive but still sought, sweet pleasures of *the Big R*.

God, maybe that's what MCF wanted. Maybe some of the wretches had not only found the big R but had been practicing it. Mellon groaned as he reached for the phone. Johnson and Nugent? My God. T. B. and Serena? Never. They defined platonic. Lana and Marty? No, they preferred horses. Block and Betsy. Yeah. That's it. Always the two quietest. Well, the storks, I mean the stocks, for them!

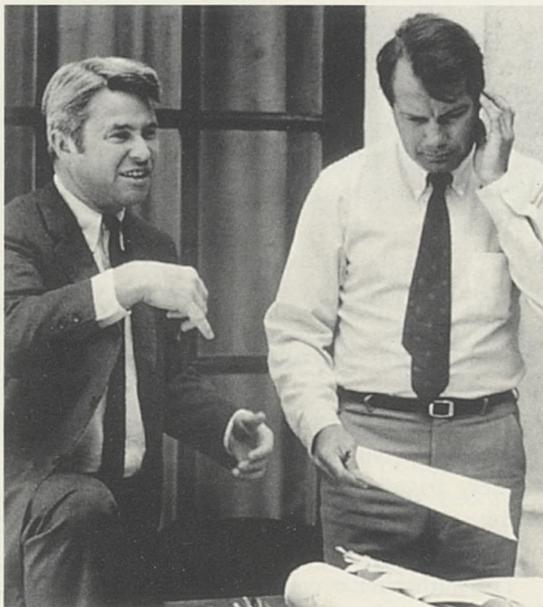
"Scuola Americana, bum giorno, Capo Gruppo, Seconda Classe, Mellone, chi parla?"

"Buon giorno yourself. How many times have I told you to speak American or Graf gets

Give Cris a big hug and a squeeze and a kiss for me.

Sorry you can't use what I have related. After all, the relationship between a customer and her banker is supposed to be confidential!

Bayard Sheldon  
Whitianga, New Zealand



David Mellon and Jerry Wells discussing and pondering developments at Villa Negroni

your lunch. Anyhow, I'm glad—and somewhat surprised—you're up and around, not to say cheerful, happy, cogent, and phonily Italian so early in the morning."

So far so good, thought Capo Gruppo Seconda Classe Mellone. She sounds like she got a good night's sleep herself. "Sorry about the Italian, but I was expecting a call from the Pope and...what, uh, can I do for you. Nothing serious I hope" (and hope and hope).

"No, nothing serious, but I wanted to catch you early to see if you and Nancy had any plans this evening. You see, m'dear, the new Bishop of Gibraltar is coming over, and I wondered...."

Mellone breathed a sigh of relief which could well have awakened the permanent residents of the Sant' Abbondio graveyard. Good old Block, good old Johnson, good old Teebers, and God love DeWitt, Dungan, Larsen, and Garrison. Fine fellows all. They still knew—they had learned from him—how to keep their "R"ing to themselves. "Why, Boss, we'd be delighted. Seven? Fine. Best bib

and tuck? Oh, the Thyssens and the Karl Heinz Boehms, Prince Philip you say, the Kennedys and Ros. Jerry and Adele. The Bigelows. Ray and Lenita. Rosaria and Graf. Tom, Gay, Lynn, and John Miele, Jim Durham. Marco Grassi with the Principessa. The Mayor and Mayorette of Florence and the head of the Italian Communist Party. O.K. DeGaulle? You're kidding. No kidding. Best bib and tuck. Gotcha. We'll be there. Ciao. Sorry I mean so long."

Montagnola Nights. He would, as years passed, always think of them as Montagnola Nights. "La Notte di Montagnola" as Felini might have put it. The narrow winding road leading to the villa; the very road where Lynn had terrified the entire local population as she careened in her Kharmen Ghia (Italian for Volkswagen) night after screeching night scaring the beejesus out of everything in sight. Yes, the Cypress Trees, the tranquil village of Gentilino where Wells the resident American architect about town had Jerry built his studio with the stunning Adele. Ah, Montagnola nights. Past the church, into the turn, the Lynn-inspired mirror to assure the wary she wasn't coming the other way. Thence to the great building itself, like its Mistress, formidable, imposing, vaguely aristocratic and withal hospitable, inviting, appealing in the grand manner, all grace outside with good booze inside.

The gathering evening glittered resplendent like the guest list. The garden was alive with the cocktail driven chatter of diverse tongues, English of course and Italian natch. But French as well, a dash of Romansch and most mellifluously the gentle tinkle of Schweizerdeutsch, the language of the gods it was said and more importantly of your local banker.

At the very center in this garden of earthly delights stood in full form, full view, her Omnipresence, founder, owner, Director and Task Mistress prima classe, the one and only redoubtable MCF. Even Mellon, used to MCF shindigs, knew this was "a special," a "black girdle night." By God, there *was* DeGaulle chatting pontifically with Liberato. Jack and Jackie en route would soon be en croute, would arrive at any minute. The best crystal gleamed. The stars matched it. The wind, gentle off the hills, heightened the sweet talk of Ticino this early autumn of 1962.

Positioned behind the shallow pool in the inner courtyard Madame Hostess carried four different conversations to ever greater heights in three different languages. Ros laughed,

Durham chuckled, Heinie tittered.

"Ah, Signor Mellone, vuole un po di salmone?" It was the ever attentive, smiling, gracious Rosaria. Graf barked his delight as the great black limo swept off the road, onto the driveway, and regally came to a halt by the great Lombard poplar known locally as the Leschetsko Tree—no one knew why. And out stepped the Great Guest of Honor, a mitre in one hand, a bust of Queen Victoria in the other, clad imposingly in bishopric black. With a hint of purple at the edges and a crimson garter for his gaiters. Sniffingly he advanced, out of the car, across the path, past the gate. Madam through years of training came to her most regal position, adjusted her famous décolletage to its appropriate-for-a-bishop level and in perfect Philadelphian said, "My Dear Good Bishop, welcome to our humble abode this splendid night." She stretched her manicured hand, and the Bishop, cocksure of himself, marched forward to kiss it, eyes cast heavenward as was his wont and walked right into the wading pool, right up to and beyond those crimson gaiters. The gasp from the notables was palpable. The Principessa fainted into Prince Philip's arms.

Only two people maintained complete decorum and self-possession. DeGaulle and Madam F. who, without batting an eye, stepped graciously into the pool herself and said: "My Dear Bishop, as you are so obviously wet on the outside, shall we go for broke and do the same for the inside? Rosaria, per favore, due martini Americani, molto secco, Rosie, molto secco! We shall begin the festivities by drying ourselves from the inside out. The rest of you are encouraged to do the same. Especially you, Charles. Vive la France, Vive L'Angleterre."

And a potentially catastrophic entrance set the tone instead for the best coming in and getting out party any Bishop of Gibraltar ever had in the whole memorable history of Montagnola Nights at Casa Fleming. To this day, the term "a game of pool" takes on a completely different meaning in the South of Switzerland from any other place in the world which is, after all, entirely appropriate as Montagnola was always different, really and truly enchantingly different, from any other place in the whole, big, rest of the world.

*Ian David Mellon*

*Chicago, Illinois*

*Former Director, TASIS Post Graduate Program*

## We All Suddenly Became Aware of a Presence

Into a hall blazing with chandeliers some hundreds of us were listening to an address of welcome by the Lebanese Foreign Minister. The place was Beirut and the date was November 1962. As the speech droned on we all suddenly became aware of "a presence." Into the hall, 15 minutes later and trailing a Mink stole, swept an electric personality—who—Mary Crist Fleming!

It took just enough time for Cris to reach the rostrum and be greeted by the Minister for many of us to fall in love with her "on sight". Her personality, after all, is just a little bit special....

At that conference, so long ago, a handful of us founded E.C.I.S. (European Council of International Schools), and its teething troubles (many), at our half yearly meetings were cushioned by the continuous hospitality and generosity of Mary Crist at her beautiful Palazzo Negroni in Lugano.

Years passed and our friendship with the whole Fleming clan increased when one day Stephen Eckard and I, co-founders of the American School of London in 1951, received a surprise telephone call from Cris suggesting a quick visit to us "for advice." Should TASIS open an English branch? Yes! was our joint and spontaneous reply. If you will include a boarding section. OK but where? You two are retired and know the English ropes better than anybody. Why don't you go to work and find me a suitable location?

After six months and many hundreds of miles which included one country estate of



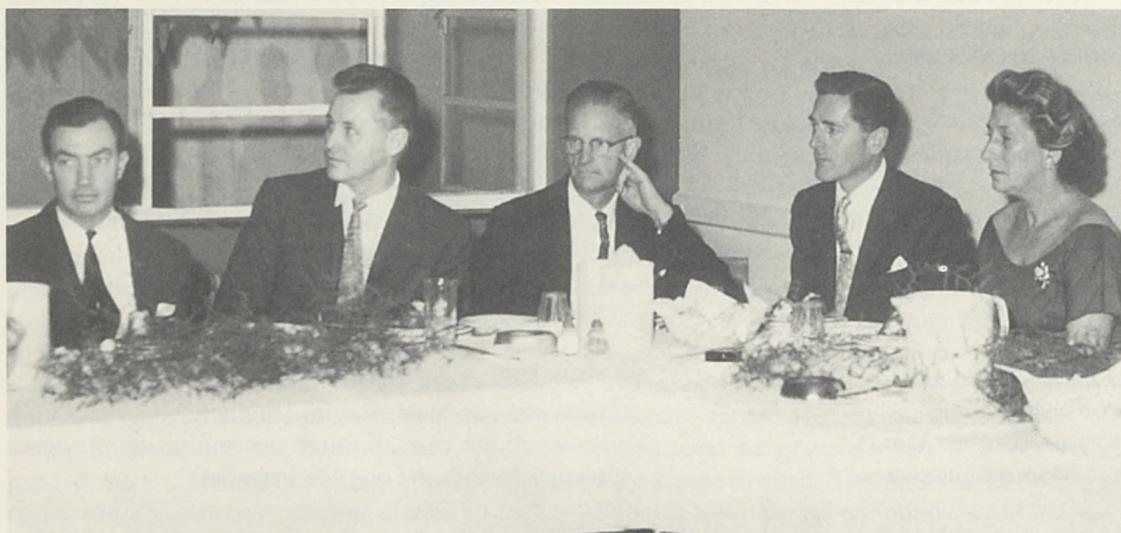
Cris and Gai Fleming  
visiting Steve Eckard

several thousand acres, 90 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, to numerous tottering London mausoleums, we then landed up on a cold dark November night at Thorpe Place. We had "landed." No question.

It is to beloved Cris that I offer this little tribute. Throughout the 18 years of our friendship, she has maintained a standard of courage, loyalty, and generosity that has no equal; without her spirit, charm and affection the world would lose much.

May this great occasion be one of many and may God bless and protect her always.

*Peter Waller †  
(written in 1980)*



"At that conference a handful of us founded E.C.I.S."—Steve Eckard is on left with Peter Waller to the left of Cris Fleming, the "founding mother" of E.C.I.S.

## Ode

*On the Occasion of the Celebration of the Eightieth Natal Day of Mary Crist Fleming*

There are loads of odes to notable dames,  
 But most don't tell ya a lot:  
 "Portrait of a Lady" says less about her  
 Than it does about T. S. El-yot.

Shakespeare's "dark lady" might well be a boy,  
 And the Bless'd Damozel's a right funny one;  
 And for all that you got 'bout the Lady of Shalott  
 She could have been a spring on-i-on.

And then there are odes of a different sort,  
 To another kind of a heroine:  
 Brilliant leaders, relentless in battle—  
 But only a fool would marry one!

'Cause who'd go for hitching with Helen of Troy,  
 Number Ten's Maggie, Jeanne d'Arc—  
 All of them ladies with manifest talents,  
 And a bite even worse than their bark!

But the lady we hymn is something else:  
 She has all of those damsels beat hollow—  
 And if it's chapter and verse you want,  
 Just hark to the stanzas which follow.

Though it wasn't the head of Zeus that produced her,  
 She surely sprang forth full grown  
 From some remarkable line of descent—  
 Though God knows she's nobody's clone!

But she learned about schools from the inside out,  
 And those lessons have never forsaken her:  
 She knows all about teachers and students and lessons,  
 And only a Trustee could slaken her...

Energy, charm and endless involvement  
 In all of the scene academe.  
 But not a word, please, about Boards of Trustees,  
 Lest you hear her obscenely blaspheme.

But now let me recall here Spring 'Sixty-three  
 And the founding of ECIS,  
 When Harrison, Paterson, Mattern and Knox  
 Were mucking about in a mess

As Denyer and Eckard and Clivaz and Chapman  
 Were falling about on their keisters  
 In a valiant attempt to stop Brother Moran  
 From attacking three Marymount sisters

Who were preaching free will and the Pelagian heresy  
 And trying to get Ernie Manino  
 To give them a grant if they promised to plant  
 One on Manino's mafioso Latinos.

What fun! What feasts! Some acted like beasts  
 In the halls of the Villa Negrone,  
 While Don Phillips pounded the ivories and spewed  
 An endless stream of baloney.

Ah, those were the days, sweet innocent days—  
 Pre-International Baccalaureate,  
 No unions for staff, no audited books,  
 And more—but I will not bore you yet

With tales of the past and the frantic antics  
 (Which no-one must now be condemning)  
 Of that frolicsome crew and their matchless doyenne,  
 Our own Mary Crist Fleming,

Who understood more, without being a bore,  
 About international education  
 Than all of the experts and gurus combined—  
 And could tell you sans pontification.

And how did she learn it? Whoever knows!?!?  
 But it's got to be the eighth wonder  
 That starting with not much but an infallible touch  
 (The hell with the occasional blunder!)

From the halls of Lugano to the shores of Kifissia,  
 Not forgetting that village near Staines,  
 An empire has risen, that miraculous TÁSIS!  
 How again? It's got to be brains...

And hard work and guts, a wee bit of luck,  
 And knowing when push comes to shove!  
 But it wouldn't have happened if she hadn't known, too,  
 About the importance of love.

That's why we're here in our thousands tonight  
 In body or mind, from wherever...  
 And to thank you, dear Cris, for the gift of yourself  
 That will live in our hearts forever:

You've raised all our sights, made broad our horizons,  
 Lightened our burdens with laughter,  
 So across all the years, through our smiles and our tears,  
 "Happy Birthday! Long life hereafter!"

*Gray Mattern Godalming, Surrey Former Director, ECIS*



Gray Mattern and Mrs. Fleming inaugurate Thorpe Hall at TESIS England

## I Was in the Hands of an Expert

My friend Julia and I with car and driver were on our way from Milan to Lugano where I had an 11:00 o'clock appointment with Mrs. Mary Crist Fleming, Director (and owner) of The American School in Switzerland. Julia, never one to overlook an opportunity to enjoy gourmet foods and—perhaps—wishing to calm my nerves, suggested that we plan to lunch at the famous Villa D'Este on the way back to Milan after my interview. This seemed an inspired idea and we agreed to do it. Our driver, an efficient man, deposited me at the big school main gates exactly on time. I was there at last after several months of correspondence.

Leaving Julia in the car, I entered the campus walking along the little roadway. There was no one in sight. I learned later it was final examination time and the students were either taking exams or studying for them. I soon saw a charming little building off to the right. The door was open so I stepped inside to find a young English girl there, Pepita Jacquet. She greeted me and assuming that my appointment concerned a prospective student offered to take me to Mrs. Fleming. On the way she walked

me through Villa De Nobili to see the salon and marvel at the ancient armory in the dining room. At Mrs. Fleming's home, Pepita turned me over to Rosaria who smiled her Italian welcome. Mrs. Fleming was not there but was expected any minute. As I was a little warm in a wool suit and still a little nervous to boot, I elected to wait in the charming little garden somewhat to Rosaria's distress. It was a pleasant place to collect my thoughts. Very shortly I heard the rhythmic tapping of high heels and Cris, tall and handsome, hurried through the carport gate. She was carrying two small antique lamps but none-the-less greeted me most cordially. She took me to her salon (where I should have been in the first place) and excused herself to dispose of the lamps. Just about then an attractive young girl carrying school books (about a senior I judged) came in. It was Lynn Fleming hoping to study to the accompaniment of the fine record player I saw there. Cris returned and we gracefully retreated to the study across the hall. The music started softly—a well known symphony, and Cris and I settled down to talk. I thought we hit it off

quite well from the start but I could tell I was in the hands of an expert. She offered me a gin and tonic which I accepted gratefully and after one sip totally forgot. I soon fell under the spell of this charismatic lady and found myself striving hard to make a good impression. After a bit Cris asked me to stay for lunch and included Julia. We had a happy chatty time. I'm sure the food was delicious but afterwards couldn't recall a single bite. After lunch we adjourned to across the road to see Hadsall House and admire the view of Lake Lugano

Cris and Gai Fleming, Michael Aeschliman and Pat Lytel enjoying a Capitignano lunch



from the terrace.

But that was not to be the end of our visit. Using our car and driver Cris took us to Vezia to see the magnificent Villa Negroni. The Villa was being readied for the Post Graduate students who would come in the fall. Workmen were everywhere but we explored it all, even the grounds which had been planted with exotic trees by the original owner. What a perfect place it was for a group of high school graduates to spend an extra year studying and travelling in Europe.

What a wonderful day it was and one I shall never forget—to see and appreciate two fine campuses but most of all to meet for the first time one of the most outstanding and gracious persons I have ever known. Villa D'Este hadn't stood a chance.

As it turned out, that day in late May of 1963 was a prologue to an association that extended for ten years at the school (plus several subsequent summer stints) and a 27-years-long friendship.

*Pat Lytel  
San Rafael, California  
Former Director of Admissions, TASIS*

## Overseas Study—The Breather Year

“I was lying in a hospital bed recovering from appendicitis when it occurred to me I didn't have the foggiest notion what college was all about,” recalls Robert Watkins, a graduate of St. George's prep school in Newport, R.I. “I wasn't ready.” Some 4,000 miles away in Lugano, southernmost city in Switzerland, Mrs. Mary Crist Fleming, 54, was pondering a related idea. “Every bit of extra maturity and training a high school graduate can get before entering college is going to help,” she said. “They need a breather, a chance to get excited again about learning.”

These two attitudes mesh so nicely that Watkins, son of the Providence Journal's publisher, is now attending Mrs. Fleming's unique precollege travel and European studies program at her American School in Switzerland. A Radcliffe graduate who wanted to give her three children both a European experience and preparation for a U.S. college, Mrs. Fleming nine years ago opened her own high school in a 17th century cobblestone Lugano villa. It now has 100 students, all Americans. Yet Mrs. Fleming still

felt that her “students were not getting as much out of Europe as they should.” So she thought up the idea of a breather year.

### IN A COAL MINE

The plan lets U.S. high school graduates, free from all the pressures of being graded, alternately study in the relaxed resort city of Lugano and travel through Europe to quiz politicians, industrialists, cultural leaders, university students. “American students can't afford to be simply tourists—that day is over,” explains the energetic director of the program, Ian D. Mellon, 31, an M.A. from New York University. The program's 88 students recently finished a two-week swing through Belgium and northeastern France. Their two dark green buses had carried them to Common Market headquarters in Brussels, a coal mine at Lens in northern France, the offices of UNESCO, Le Figaro, Le Monde and Paris-Match in Paris, Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg.

As one bus rolled through Brussels a faculty member barraged the students with questions.

"Who recently introduced the lower bank rate in France?" A student's correct answer: "Valéry Giscard d'Estaing." "Why?" "To spur investment." At the International School of Brussels, U.S. executives of Ford, I.T.T., Monsanto and Upjohn got a grilling from the students: "Why are Germany's gold reserves going down when its economy is booming?" "What marketing research have you done in Europe on oral contraceptives?" In Paris, the Americans met Gaullist students to discuss the mysteries of the world's teen-agers and the mystique of Charles de Gaulle.

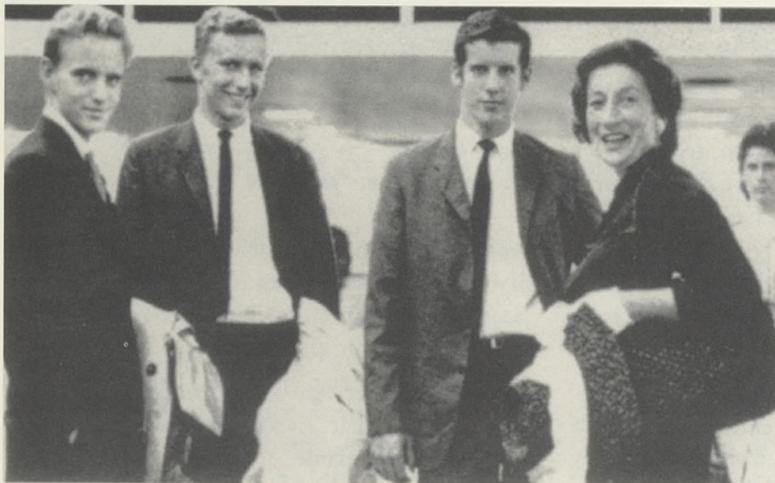
#### AT THE BOLSHOI

In earlier trips the youngsters had visited Lisbon and Tangier, explored an Olivetti factory near Naples, toured the Brolio winery in Florence, quizzed their way through East and West Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Munich. During spring vacation, some of the Americans talked

with students at Moscow University, attended the Bolshoi Theater. Back at Lugano, a lively faculty (average age: 28) related the tour experiences to such required courses as contemporary Europe, European literature, logic, and composition, French and Italian languages.

The cost of this education is high—about \$5,000 for the year, including all the trips. The school shuns "unstable problem students," and "the oversophisticated," but welcomes late-blooming students whose high school grades may not have been tops. Yale-bound Jeff Graham, 17, son of a Michigan equipment manufacturer, sums up the experience: "At Exeter I did well, but had no great enthusiasm. I was in a sort of academic mud bog, but here something seemed to catch. This place has brought a lot of us out of our little tiny shells."

*Reprinted from TIME, May 28, 1965*



"Mrs. Fleming is quite a woman... she really makes you feel that *you're* the important one—*you're* the one that's going to make history. It's really something."

*Cindy Crabtree*  
Former student of the TASIS Post Graduate Program  
(from a letter to her mother written in 1965)

"For years I have thought of writing you and thanking you for the wonderful opportunities I had at TASIS. But not until this year did I realize what a profound effect it had on shaping my attitudes and perspectives.

"Exposure to the many cultures we came in contact with taught tolerance of humanity and I find that that is precisely what I want for my four children too...."

"So many times in life we touch someone and never really know the effect we have. I just wanted you to know."

*Marilee Telfer Luttig*  
TASIS Post Graduate student, 1965  
(written in 1989)

QUALITY IN  
HIGHER EDUCA-  
TION WILL ALWAYS  
COME OR NOT  
COME ACCORD-  
ING TO WHAT ONE  
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TIME UNDER THE  
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SOME TEACHER  
WHO UNDER-  
STANDS HIM CAN  
BE INSPIRED TO  
MAKE OF HIS  
CAPABILITIES.

## An Ever-Changing “Salon”

There were a number of things about the remarkable Mrs. Fleming which a young Florentine—albeit American schooled—painting restorer *had* to notice upon meeting her in Lugano circa 1965. First and foremost were her two unusually attractive daughters. Not far behind, came her splendid and spirited “attack” on all things, and there were many, that gravitated within her orbit: the gusto and humor which she lavished on people, ideas, things, that were worthy—even, occasionally *un*-worthy—of her polyhedral attentions were astounding. In this, she displayed a form of generosity that has become in particularly short supply among the more self-obsessed generations of this gloomy ‘fin de siècle’. Memorable feature of this exuberance was the uncanny ability to commit instantly to memory names, relationships, professional and social qualifications of any of the myriad guests that ceaselessly partook of her boundless hospitality at Villa de Nobili. It was an ever-changing ‘salon’ over which she presided with effortless grace, conjuring up at a moment’s notice seatings for a dozen or more for breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner—everyone’s i.d. and c.v., of course (even the remotest friend-of-friend), faultlessly

MANNERS ARE OF MORE IMPORTANCE THAN LAWS. UPON THEM, IN A GREAT MEASURE, THE LAWS DEPEND. THE LAW TOUCHES US BUT HERE AND THERE, AND NOW AND THEN. MANNERS ARE WHAT VEX OR SOOTHE, CORRUPT OR PURIFY, EXALT OR DEBASE, BARBARIZE OR REFINE US, BUT BY A CONSTANT, STEADY, UNIFORM, INSENSIBLE OPERATION, LIKE THAT OF THE AIR WE BREATHE IN. THEY GIVE THEIR WHOLE FORM AND COLOR TO OUR LIVES. ACCORDING TO THEIR QUALITY, THEY AID MORALS, THEY SUPPLY THEM, OR THEY TOTALLY DESTROY THEM.

Burke, 1797

remembered and contextually correct. While this was, naturally, a ceaseless source of wonder for someone more used to a social environment wherein blasé aloofness was cultivated as an art form, the supreme mystery for this observer was that amid all the warmth, spontaneity, cordiality and good cheer radiating from our hostess, never, *ever* was she for *anyone* anything but . . . Mrs. Fleming. Could someone whisper “Cris” with impunity? . . . unconscionable! “Mary” with temerity? . . . one’s imagination withers at the thought! And so, the paradox persists—while the subject of our admiration may, in these intervening years, have become just a trifle more blasé, and this admirer maybe a trifle less; all the foregoing comments could, indeed should, be read very much in the present tense . . . the splendid gusto, ever more robust; the ‘salon’ ever more varied; the memory and curiosity ever more uncanny . . . now, more than ever Mrs. Fleming, now more than ever: VIVA LA SIGNORA FLEMING!

*Abbracci a tutti!*  
Marco Grassi  
Art Restorer, New York City

## Overheard

A father calls up the school and reaches the Director herself. “This is Alexander Hamilton speaking.” Without hesitation Cris Fleming quips back, “Well, this is Betsy Ross.” And then the father asks to speak with his son. It

took some rather fast back-peddaling when MCF realized that ‘Alexander Hamilton’ really was the father’s name.

*Editor*

.... After renovating Villa Negroni I started getting restless again. Even Switzerland seemed a bit small. I started thinking about France. I discovered an adorable, small 12th-century chateau called La Boissiere, in Provence. Always loving France, as I did, I started a summer program there, called Summer School in France, and later Le Chateau des Enfants. The chateau was near a small town called Uzes, which is the Premier Duche of France. It was charming and was built by a man who went to the Crusades. The chateau had crenelated towers, an inner courtyard, and a small river flowing below it.

La Boissiere went very well in the summer time, but a summer program is very different from a winter program. Economically, to have a program succeed on your own property, you have to have at least ten months of occupancy. There is no way that you can survive with a two-month or three-month summer program and maintain a property for twelve months. We tried one year to have a school there in Uzes, but it was not successful since the property felt particularly isolated in the winter; so I sold the property and we expanded our facilities in Lugano . . .



## Well-Timed Shake of Her Multibangled Wrist

I suppose it was inevitable from my first day at Frog Hollow Farm in 1948 that Mary Fleming would become one of the great influences in my life. After several Flemingless summers I returned to the fold in 1965 as a student at the Summer School in France. It was the first year for SSIF at La Boissiere, for the grand opening of which Mrs. Fleming had invited the Duchess of Uzès and her nonagenarian “houseguest,” former Prime Minister Paul Reynaud. A handful of us, whose French was not quite as bad as the rest, were assigned to greet the dignitaries. I relished the task because I knew a little about Reynaud’s less than spectacular career and his notorious involvement with another French noblewoman, Helene Comtesse de Portes, a liaison which may have hastened the French collapse of 1940. Somehow sensing the direction my questioning of the old gentleman was taking, Mrs. Fleming broke my concentration with one well-timed shake of her multibangled wrist, saving both of us from any further embarrassment. I had been

egged on by one of the French staff members, a brilliant student of politics at the Sorbonne and thus, by definition, somewhere to the left of Leon Trotsky. Mrs. Fleming could not abide the man. I thought he was a twentieth-century Rousseau.

The French survived two summers of my assaults on their language and culture. I had become a confirmed Francophile; so much of one that I married a French teacher. Mrs. Fleming was thus indirectly responsible for the best decision I have ever made.

In the late 1960s, [my wife] Lynne and I hosted two of the legendary TASIC alumni spaghetti dinners. Despite the small size of our homes and the amateurism with which we cooked the pasta, Mrs. Fleming pronounced our efforts a success—an encouragement to which we trace our current reputation for never throwing parties for fewer than fifty people.

Both Lynne and I returned to SSIF as counselor/teachers in 1970. We met the challenges of an inebriated Hawaiian student

AN OPTIMIST IS A  
MAN WHO LOOKS  
AFTER YOUR EYES  
AND A PESSIMIST  
IS A MAN WHO  
LOOKS AFTER  
YOUR FEET.

*Little girl*

hulaing on a "Cite Universitaire" balcony; the nephew of the Sheik of Kuwait with the briefcase full of travelers cheques and the talent for picking locks; a VW bus which caught fire not once, but twice; and the insouciance of teenagers for whom the chateaux of the Loire could not hold a candle to discotheques. If we could survive these tests, we could certainly teach secondary and post-secondary students in stationary classrooms. So, Mrs. Fleming was in part responsible for reaffirming our vocations.

Mrs. Fleming believes in American education and in encouraging young Americans to

rediscover their European cultural roots. Somewhere between Frog Hollow and La Boissiere she must have convinced me too, because that is what both Lynne and I try to do today. Her influence has touched our thousands of students and, in the next generation, will touch tens of thousands more.

*Wally Bacon*

*Omaha, Nebraska*

*Former camper, Frog Hollow Farm,*

*Student, then teacher,*

*Summer School in France*

## Dumb-Struck As We See Where She Has Led Us

Thinking back over our years at TASIS, there are two images of MCF that both Michele and I remember vividly. The first is the way she could captivate an audience of any age with her oratory. I still see her, at the end of a session of CDE, surrounded by a spell-bound audience of 6 to 12 year olds as she tells them about her dream, a dream of tolerance, a dream of the people of the world living together in harmony, and how by bringing children of many nationalities together in a program such as Le Château des Enfants she was fostering this dream. In her narrative she would often turn to the parent-onlookers and describe the humble beginnings of the program in the Provence. She would tell them how she had to borrow children from the

printer, the business manager and the caretaker, which brings me to my second image, that of our crazy trip from Lugano to France to begin the program.

The departure time had been set for 9 a.m. but MCF had a few last minute things to attend to so we finally set off in two cars with our only two paying children at 11:30. She was with Bob Wilson in her very sporty Lancia Fulvia leading the way and we were following behind in my little Morris 1300 that developed a very annoying steering wheel wobble whenever we tried to go above 70 mph. I don't know how but I managed to keep up—charging (for me) along the autostrada, twisting and turning through the klaxoning traffic of Turin and on

"She could captivate  
an audience of any age"



to the long, straight, country road that led to the Alps. By this time we were all feeling hungry, hot and tired and were wondering when we would stop for lunch. Suddenly, without warning, the Lancia veered to the left up a tiny dirt track and into the most idyllic meadow, with a cool cluster of trees and a little babbling brook where our two young wards could paddle. No sooner stopped than things started to appear from the Lancia; rugs for the ground, hampers of food, cold soft drinks for the children, a bucket of ice, and above all the bar. "I think we all need a little refresher dears, don't you?" So it was gin and tonics all round (except for the children). *Quelle mise en scene!* After lunch it was up and over the Col de Montgenevre, down into Briancon and while the cars were refuelled at a gas station so were we, with another light refresher from the bar which seemed to appear by magic on the boot of the Lancia. A stop for dinner outside Avignon and then the last dash along dusty, dark, tree-lined roads that were like long endless tunnels. Close to midnight we finally pull into a drive and are dumb-struck as we see where she has led us, her jewel of a medieval castle "Le Château de la Boissiere."



*John and Michele Watson  
Luxembourg  
Former Directors, Le Château des Enfants  
Former science and French teachers, TASIS*

Mrs. Fleming congratulates John Watson at the close of another wonderful Château des Enfants performance

## Wouldn't It Be Wonderful If One Could Take Those 700 Châteaux and Turn Them All into Schools?

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 in my lap.

It's not that I want to be a chatelaine 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. My family and my friends became a little worried when they heard that just in the province of Bourgogne in France there are 700 châteaux. I'd like to get there before Hilton or the Trust Houses Forte, but I am restraining myself. It's the beauty of the surroundings, the fairy-tale feeling letting your imagination run wild, the tranquility conducive to meditation and study, the history within the walls, the animal world and nature all around you, which make most châteaux perfect settings for schools. Contrast a château against a functional-built modern school (so

often over-crowded) and we wonder why much of our education in America is in such a sad state!

The Château de la Boissiere, my first château, looked like this when I acquired it, and like



Château de la Boissière before...



this when I finished.

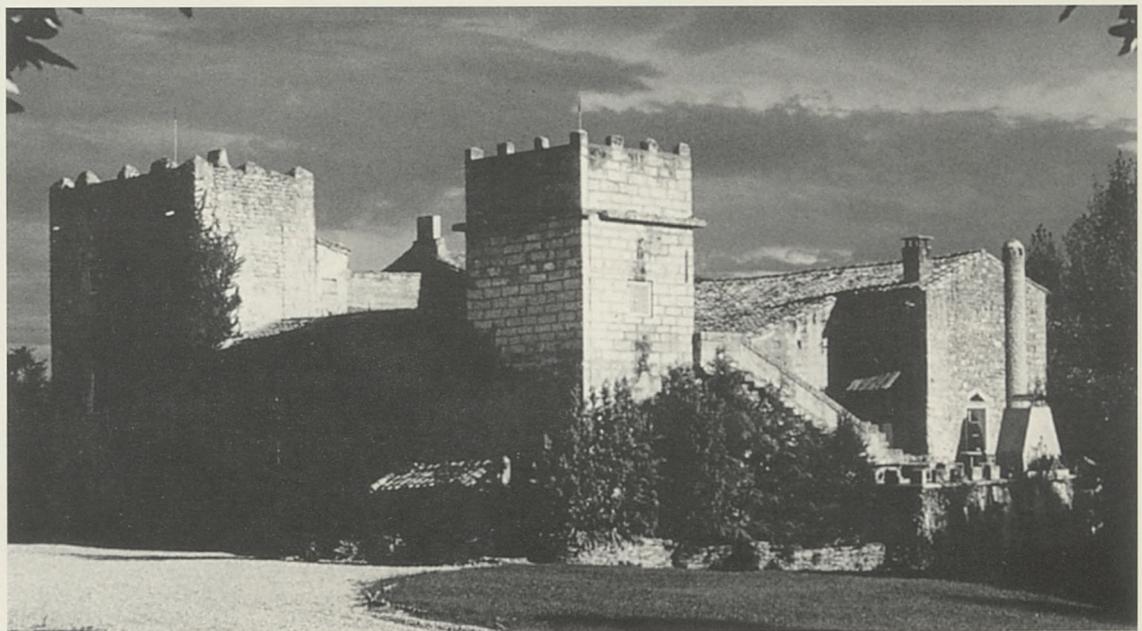
It was built in 1200 by a knight who left from there to go to the Crusades. He built it near the port of Grau du Roi, for that was the port from which so many crusaders sailed. We did, of course, add plumbing and a swimming pool, but they in no way detracted from its beauty and romance.

For five years it housed fifty young Americans every summer who fanned out from there, absorbing the language, the history, and the beauty of France. Then it became the “Château des Enfants”—a child’s fairy tale world for six to twelve-year old children. So many came each summer that it overflowed and had to be moved, and the château was sold to acquire a much larger base in Switzerland, where it still carries the name of a château created for children and the program is still overflowing.

The Château before...

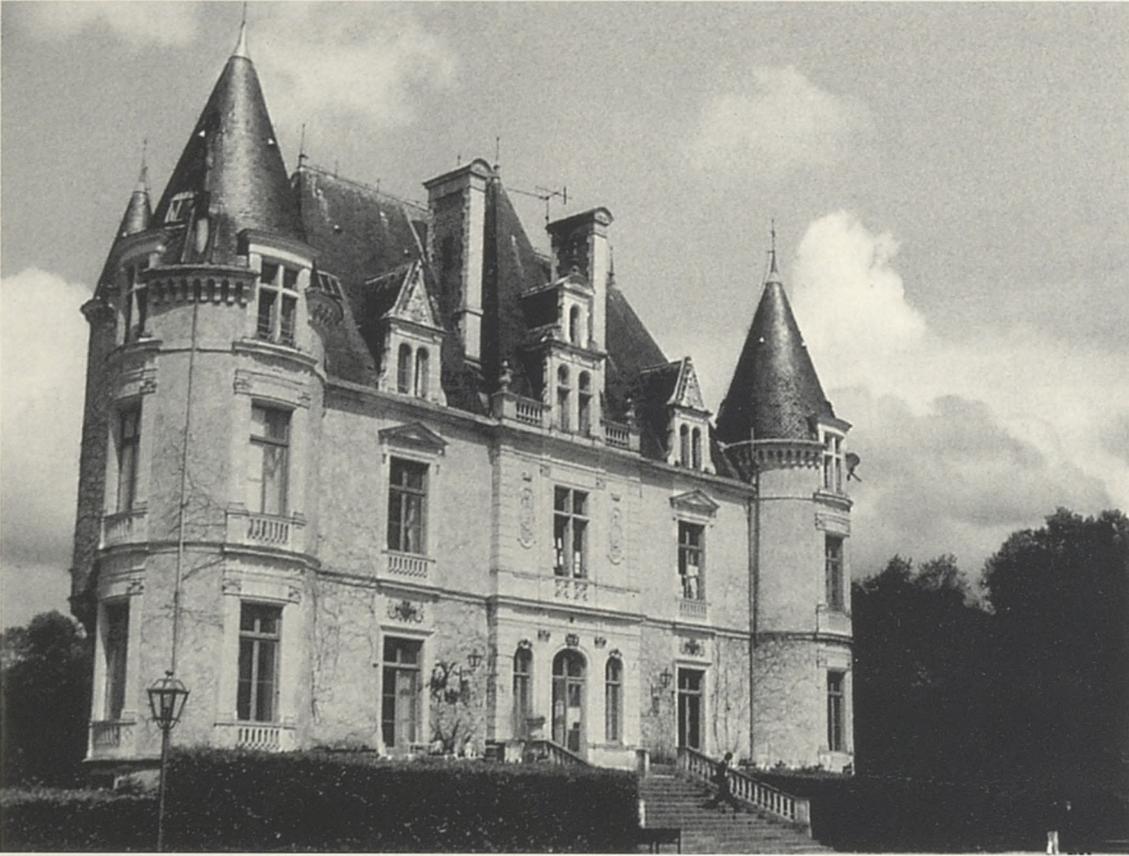


Château de la Boissière after MCF's magic touch



THE BEST SERVITORS OF THE NEW MAY BE THOSE WHO KNOW AND LOVE THE OLD AND CARRY IT OVER INTO THE NEW.

*Thomas Mann*

Château de  
BeauchampChâteau de  
Beauchamp

The second château was the Château de Beauchamp, a recently-built copy of a château since the original burned down, but it had all the turrets, sweeping views, acres of woodland, that gave it the enchantment of a castle.

Unfortunately, after five years I had to part with that château, as most present-day young people cannot handle such isolation and solitude. They are so used to noise and chaos, they are frightened by silence, and certainly never heard the “music of the stars”. They have been so long receptacles of entertainment through television and cassettes they do not know what to do with their time—or with space. So many live crowded on top of each other in cities, in tall buildings, even in supposedly beautiful suburbs, that they seek action and crowds and are afraid to be alone.

Wouldn't it be exciting and wonderful if one could take those seven hundred châteaux in Burgundy, restore them to their original beauty, adding plumbing, of course, and turn them all into schools for young people from all over the world! Divide some according to language, culture, age, special interests, but also be able to mix them so they grow up together. Different governments could contribute funds, supply their best teachers on a rotating basis and create

a curriculum designed for the twenty-first century. Taking some children from the refugee camps would change their lives and turn them into worthwhile citizens and the French Government, as their contribution, could waive its hopeless tax system!

[Ed. Note: Beware of The Dreamer!]



Mrs. Fleming is sizing up one of the 700 châteaux in Burgundy—Châteauneuf-en-Auxois, scene of her 80th birthday party

## But, Gentlemen, I Don't Know Much About Business

We've known Mary Crist Fleming for many years. Our first encounter with this impressive lady was in 1967 at an ECIS conference in Lugano. At that time I was Headmaster at the Overseas School of Rome. Besides Mary Anne, who had accompanied me to the conference's opening meeting, there weren't many women present. Suddenly a dynamic, attractive woman stood up at the head table. The crowd hushed. Stretching out her arms in welcome, in the best grande-dame fashion, Mrs. Fleming drawled just two words in her husky, warm voice: "Good morning."

Before she could continue, the audience stood up and gave her a standing ovation. Over the years, as we've come to know her better, we've realized just why all those attending the conference that day were so enthusiastic. Despite

her usual protests to the ECIS board—"But, gentlemen, I don't know much about business"—Mrs. Fleming is an astute entrepreneur. She's a serious educator, the head of three prestigious international schools. And she's one of the most vibrant, charming, sexy women we know. On the occasion of her eightieth birthday, we applaud Mary Crist Fleming. We too would like to give her a standing ovation for her commitment and her contribution to international education.

Happy Birthday, Mary Crist Fleming!

With love and admiration,

*Stanley and Mary Anne Haas  
Athens, Greece  
NESA Director*

## If and When I Die

I first met Cris in the late Sixties. I was studying singing in my late thirties and to that end was living in a village near Lugano not far from Loreto where the Post Graduate Program was housed. This was the year that English teacher Bob Holland came back from the cinema one evening to find that his new red MG sports car had been taken apart and reassembled in his none too spacious bedroom. I had met a TASIS architect called Sam and his colleague Jerry Wells and soon I had been hired by the PG headmaster to give (serious) music

talks—what Virgil Thomson used to call the 'music-appreciation' racket! I met many of the staff but somehow I missed meeting MCF. That came in Andermatt where the PGs went for the first semester in the year: skiing and schooling combined. I went up for week-ends and gave one or two lectures. One evening I noticed some rather good legs and enquired whose they were. The delightful English housekeeper (she always called the forerunner of the piano the 'harpisschord') said "oh, that's Mrs. Fleming". Most of the female members of the staff were somewhat in awe of MCF, I remember, the men less so. It was different for me, possibly because she wasn't my boss. In fact, it was very different, for I liked her straightaway, seemed to hit her wavelength, in short we clicked. I quickly had a great admiration for this tycooness and soon we were on first name terms, I was invited to dinner and soon got to know Tom, Lynn, and Gai. And so it has continued.

I have been made most welcome at her various houses in Italy, in France, and in Switzerland. She is a wonderful hostess and I go for the way she handles her life and her problems. Cris takes in everything that is going on around her but focuses on one task at a time. She is brilliant at thinking on her feet and that includes speech-making. I do a bit of the latter and so I not only admire what she says,

John Amis on a stroll at Capitignano with Cris Fleming, Lynn, Anna, Adrien Aeschliman and last, but certainly not least, Saxon



but *how* she says it—she has a natural technique, knows all about pacing and using the various parts of her voice, when to go for it, when to lower the voice so as to grab the audience's emotions.

One of her strong points is that she can switch off so that she is able to refresh herself with her social life and with sleep, not be a worrier. That, I am sure, is why she is so healthy and able. Cris has had plenty of problems, often because she trusts people. Now it is easy to remember some of the ones who have let her down; but what is great about her, is that she still goes on trusting people and there are many more of them who have *not* let her down but justified her confidence and trust. I bet most people writing about Cris will mention her generosity; and they will be right and I'd like to join them in that. I love being with her (even if she occasionally tires me out) and enjoy her company. My telephone will ring: she is here in London for two or three days, can we meet? Yes, we usually do; and just carry on where we left off last time.

The one time we did business together we didn't do much business! That was when we had a small house party combined with a mini-

festival of French music at Château Beauchamps. A good time was had by the small gathering, but I won't say more about that because I know Felix Aprahamian has written about that. More recently when we met, Cris let fall into the conversation that she had found herself, when discussing future policy with Lynn, using the following words: "*If and when I die....*" And that triggered off in my mind a vision, far off in the future, of the arrival of MCF at the gates of heaven...in a VW mini-bus, of course. While the gilt chairs are being unloaded, Cris will advance towards St. Peter, bracelets jangling, will seize his face with both hands, plant a wet kiss on both his cheeks, leaving fresh lipstick marks and saying, "Well, aren't you a sweetie to welcome me like this" and will then turn towards the green plastic ice-bucket that she has also brought with her and start to mix him an Old-Fashioned...Cris is a great gal and a great pal. She sure deserves to get to heaven because of all the good she has done and will continue to do....

*John Amis*

*Music critic, London*

*Former music lecturer, TISIS Post Graduate Program*

## You Told Me You Were a Survivor

A stunning revelation! Convinced that you are utterly ageless, we now pause in the middle of your career to shout a resounding "HAPPY BIRTHDAY". Even those who have known you longer could not hold you in higher esteem, nor more affectionately, nor with greater respect than this family. Your standards of integrity; your great courage and spirit; your entrepreneurial accomplishments are exemplary to say the least—inspirations to all. This was revealed again in those dark days of [Fleming College] Board meetings some years ago when your fortitude and courage carried me through that agonizing experience even though we didn't prevail. But you told me you were a "\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and a survivor" and you were

right—and an inspiration.

TISIS is never far away—in memory and spirit. Maude spotted a TISIS book-bag at Orchard School recently and found a youngster who had been in a younger grade in your school in England.....

The Glores send our affectionate and sincere best wishes and friendship for a very happy 1990 birthday. Where will the party be in 2000?—we're available.

*Robert Hixon Glore*

*Lake Forest, Illinois*

*Alumni parent, Post Graduate Program,*

*Swiss Holiday, Fleming College*

*Board member, Fleming College*

## All Round Wonderful Gal!

Cris Fleming was, and I assume, still is, a real "pistol"! There will never be another one from the mold. She is smart, tough, gently conniv-

ing, intuitive, a big "flirt," disciplinarian and all round WONDERFUL GAL!

So she's going to be 80 years young this

OF COURTESY, IT  
IS MUCH LESS/  
THAN COURAGE  
OF HEART OR  
HOLINESS,  
BUT IN ALL MY  
WALKS I SEEM  
TO SEE/  
THE GRACE OF  
GOD IN  
COURTESY.

*Belloc*

year. That is wonderful and I only hope the past few years have been kind to her.

Our relationship started when I was Ambassador and took my eldest son to TASIS and she invited us, including my late wife, to luncheon. It was the beginning of a most wonderful relationship. As I served on the Board of Fleming College, watching the "revolt" and attempted take-over of the College, her calmness and determination under fire (like white-hot steel) made me realize that here is no ordinary woman.

I have not had the pleasure of seeing her

## Classy Place—Classy Lady

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Summerskills lived in Ethiopia in the late '60s where daughter Wendy and son Robert attended the British School. How would they get to an American university? That's how we got to Lugano and TASIS and Mary Crist Fleming. First impressions: a classy place—traditional buildings beautifully furnished, a wonderful location with marvelous views and grounds, all run by a CLASSY LADY. Look at the way she dresses! Listen to her talk! Watch the raw intelligence flash in those brown eyes! Someone SPECIAL!

Karachi, Pakistan. Mimi and I arrived early, like 5 a.m., and our hotel room would not be ready for hours. There was a message to call St. Moritz immediately. Much worried, we did and found Peter Smith, head of the senior school: "Robert broke his leg skiing but he is doing fine. I called because one of our girls also broke a leg and I wanted your permission to put them in the same hospital room for company. It's OK, I think, they're both in traction."

Athens, Greece. We saw Cris quite often in Athens when we headed Athens College and she had TASIS in Kifissia. It was difficult for all of us under the Socialist government of the Athens College alumnus Andreas Papandreu. Before he became prime minister he said loud and clear: "If I am elected I will abolish those schools which are private and elite and foreign!"

TASIS and Cris got the worst rap. Some Greek-American parents complained to the Ministry of Education and Religion that a TASIS teacher asked for essays on *both* sides of the Turkish-Greek controversy. Without warning the Ministry fired the teacher and the TASIS librarian who supplied research materials for the students. When Cris got to town all the heads of American schools in Athens went to TASIS to show

since she was honored by the Award from the Secretary of Education here and have missed our visits as she used to come to Washington every year or so "drumming" up new and prospective students.

I'm sorry I have no photos I could send you, yet my mind brings out the most vivid pictures of a thoroughly striking, delightful friend.

*True Davis*

*Washington, D.C.*

*Alumni parent, TASIS*

her their personal support and sympathy.

Sometimes Cris stopped by Athens College to see us quietly. Delicious interludes of gin, head-master griping, speculation about the future of our respective institutions. "What do you think I should do," she mused, "about a director who is sleeping with a teacher? It's becoming a public affair?" John Summerskill showed immediate interest: "Is she attractive?"

Washington, D.C. We were in Washington looking for money for Athens College and made a call to an old friend, Steve Muller, president of Johns Hopkins University. Muller said he would be in Washington next day because Secretary of Education Bell was making an award to Mary Crist Fleming for her outstanding contribution to international education. We put on our best, sincere suits and hiked ourselves to the top floor of HEW and a fancy conference room where the Secretary said terribly impressive things about Cris and awarded her. It was no surprise really. Muller and the Summerskills and everyone else present knew Cris is a believer and a doer and she has stood for the best in American education abroad. She has made a really important contribution to the education of thousands of boys and girls—our two included.

London, England. On Phene Street in London Towne stands a home four stories tall with exquisite furnishings and wee garden and a feel about it that says CLASSY LADY. We are among the few privileged to stay on Phene Street and we are among the few that have inadvertently set off its burglar alarm and we are definitely among the few that have restored the hall paint with a very careful brush to its original Victorian splendor.

Best, though, were the times when Cris

rushed in from America or Italy or Switzerland or Greece and we had a drop or two, possibly three, and talked about everything important like ourselves and our families and our schools. Then off she rushed to America or Italy or Switzerland or Greece leaving with us a lifelong supply of vitality and charm and fun

and wisdom. Last impressions from Phene Street: that raw intelligence flashing from those brown eyes.

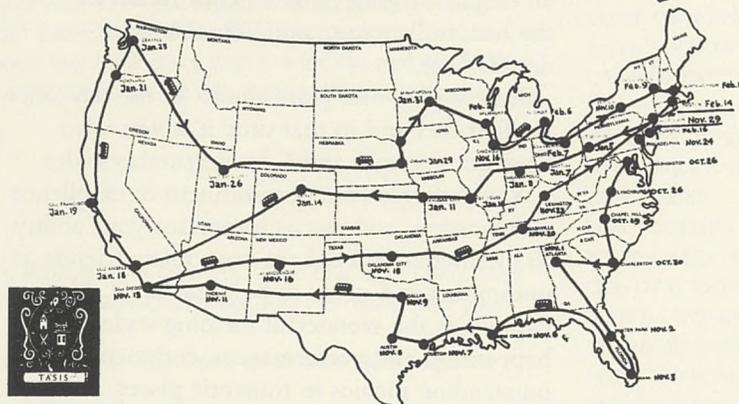
*John † and Mimi Summerskill  
Belle Mead, New Jersey  
Alumni parents, TESIS*

## The Craziest Task I Ever Did

....for Mrs. Fleming was the Spaghetti—Alumni—Tour with Brian Kusel and a Maltese chef in a caravan decorated by Betsy into a Ticinese grotto restaurant, pulled or rather dragged by an underpowered VW bus. We were barely able to shift into fourth gear, with head wind into second. I found a napkin with the geographic schedule. I chickened out in New Orleans to stay sane. Maybe you remember? I certainly do, every detail of it....

*Gerhard Schwarzacher  
St. Anton, Austria  
Former counselor, Swiss Holiday, and  
TASIS Representative*

## THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND Alumni Reunion 1968-69



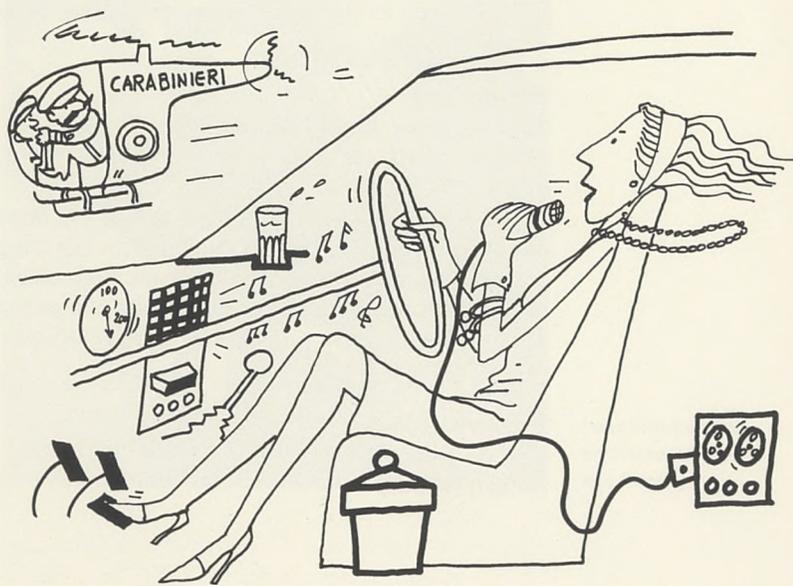
## Dictated from Planes, Taxis, Cars and from under the Hairdryer

Twenty-two years ago I left England to become Secretary to the Founder and Director of The American School in Switzerland. My first job was to type hundreds and hundreds of addresses on to flyers shaped like little blue Volkswagen buses—the follow-up to a journey that Mrs. Fleming had organized, where TESIS buses travelled across the States serving up spaghetti to alumni.

I hardly ever saw Mrs. Fleming in my early years at TESIS. Huge tape-bands, (no cassettes in those days), arrived by express airmail post from all over the world, dictated from planes, taxis, private cars, or from under the hairdryer! (Sometimes they were very difficult to transcribe, especially when she dictated in French!)

During one of her brief visits to Lugano, Mrs. Fleming told me that once while driving along the autostrada from Rome Airport, during the time of the Aldo Moro kidnapping, she was catching up with her correspondence using her hand-held dictaphone machine. Shortly after her arrival at Capitignano, there was a terrible commotion outside the door and the Carabinieri rushed in, brandishing machine

guns, insisting on examining the walkie-talkie and demanding to know Moro's whereabouts. Mrs. Fleming, unable to produce the great statesman, offered them instead a couple of her famous bourbon old fashioned, after which





they left happily, apologizing for their mistake.

I still enjoy working for Mrs. Fleming, but now that I've finished the typing of the text for this book, I hope to have a moment to catch my breath before starting on Volumes II and III, to commemorate her 90th and 100th birthdays!

Thank you, Mrs. Fleming, for all these years. Let's have lots more together!

*Sarah di Lenardo  
Montagnola, Switzerland  
Secretary to Mrs. Fleming*

## Birthday Greetings to a Great Original

Highest and most affectionate salutations to you, Dearest Cris, on your eightieth birthday. It is a wonderful milestone but only, we know, an elegant staging point to your ninetieth in the new millennium and 100—Not Out—a decade later.

It is twenty-one years almost to the day since we first met and in that time it is you who have got younger and I, immeasurably older.

Your energy, your commitment to excellence in education, and just as important your ability to mesmerize and delight your many friends, is undimmed and never to be diminished. Nor, happily, is the wonderful Fleming style of happenings and performances, commencements, outstanding picnics in romantic places, or adventures in real estate in any way reduced. *Mirabile Dictu!*

You have taken on the mantle of friend and genius hostess emeritus to three generations of my family, be it on the fields of TASIS, or your



Tuscan mountain top. How lucky we are. Long, long may you flourish.

*Nigel Blackwell  
Oxford, England*

"Project Europe and you—the force behind it all.... Not a day goes by that I am not increasingly aware of the advantages to Joan her fabulous summer has brought her.... She has gained a new maturity and confidence.... I am sensitive to her new awareness of world news and art, discrimination in friends and activities, and the happiness in receiving the letters that tell me of the warmth of relationships made...."

"Thank you for the expert leadership, guidance and supervision of your wonderfully organized Project Europe."

*Cornelia Field  
Alumna parent, Project Europe  
(written in 1967)*

"Mr. Hutchinson and I would like to take this opportunity to say how very much we appreciate the many things that your school has done for our daughter, Dana Lee. It is difficult to put one's finger on this sort of thing, but we found that she was intellectually stimulated, given a chance to mature emotionally, guided in appreciation of her European surroundings, and afforded good physical care. We could see an appreciable progress in her personality and studies in the two years she was with you and your staff at The American School."

*Virginia Hutchison  
Alumna parent, TASIS  
(written in 1968)*

"As you and *TASIS* have determined this selection [of colleges], I thought you might be interested in the power of your influence!

"...As a result of those *short* two months in Lugano, my major has changed to International Affairs, with a tentative vocation of International Business or Law! ....I am changing my language to Italian!!! You spoke at the banquet of your hope of influencing at least *one* person this summer—well Mrs. Fleming, you certainly sold me!

"...you can realize to what degree you have awakened me and made me aware of the world around me, and sparked me with the desire to explore and broaden my horizons."

*Ann Dodge*

*Former student, Project Europe*

*(written in 1968)*

"...I do want to tell you how very much I appreciate your work and effort that went into making this such a fantastic and meaningful summer for me. Never in my life have I lived a more active or more fascinating two months. I think the program that you [and your staff] put together is absolutely superb. ... I believe there is no way in which a young American can see Europe that would be more meaningful than through Project Europe. For me it was truly an experience that I will carry with me for the rest of my life...."

"I know the [others] will find in 'your Europe' an experience which will be with them for many years to come."

*Tom Powell*

*Former student, Project Europe*

*(written in 1968)*

"Of anyone, it is you who should be called the Bionic Woman! I'm sure you have one leg in Italy, your torso in Switzerland, a large hand in England, toes in France, Russia, Greece, and Germany, and your heart in the right place!...."

"I thank you for giving me the opportunity and the guidelines to learn and grow as a good and intelligent human being...."

"You are my Bionic Lady doing good in all areas of education all over the world, and you're not even interrupted by commercials! Congratulations, and love to you."

*Peter Graham Belin*

*TASIS student, 1969*

*ARTE '69-73*

*(written in 1976)*



MEN ARE QUALIFIED FOR CIVIL LIBERTY IN EXACT PROPORTION TO THEIR DISPOSITION TO PUT MORAL CHAINS UPON THEIR OWN APPE-TITES. SOCIETY CANNOT EXIST UNLESS A CONTROLLING POWER UPON WILL AND APPETITE BE PLACED SOME-WHERE, AND THE LESS OF IT THERE IS FROM WITHIN THE MORE THERE MUST BE FROM WITHOUT. IT IS ORDAINED IN THE ETERNAL CONSTITUTION OF THINGS THAT MEN OF INTEMPERATE MINDS CANNOT BE FREE. THEIR PASSIONS FORGE THEIR FETTERS.

*Edmund Burke*

Peter Belin celebrates his 21st birthday with Mrs. Fleming



NINETEEN - SEVENTIES



## She's a Magician

I remember my first meeting with Mary Crist Fleming more clearly than I remember what I did yesterday. It was in the early summer of 1970. I had been asked by ARTE directors George Marchi and Robert Wilson, both friends from the Drama Department at the University of California at Berkeley...to join TESIS's second summer theatre season as part actor, part set painter, part whatever. Because of a schedule conflict, I arrived in the Lugano evening a few days late, after everybody had already met everybody else.

The next day as we were having lunch in the elegant but humid courtyard of the Villa Negroni, I looked up from my plate and there across the way, standing under the arch, was a woman of such commanding presence that she took my breath away. Without being told, I knew immediately that *she* was Mrs. Fleming...serene and animated at the same time, cool in a dark blue dress with a wide white collar, smiling, making her way through the crowded tables, talking to students and staff, instantly changing and charging the atmosphere. Incredible. She came to our table, we stood, I was introduced and promptly fell in love.




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I've thought many times over the last two decades how fortunate I am to have known Mrs. Fleming, and how sorry I feel for those unfortunates who haven't. *Everyone* deserves a Mary Crist Fleming in their life. And I've come to the conclusion that Mrs. Fleming is a magician. A sorceress. Yes, and an alchemist. It's a known fact that she can turn base metal into pure gold. It's a known fact that she has discovered the elixir of perpetual youth.

And she changes things. She enters a room and all conversation stops; heads turn as one in her direction. The room is suddenly brighter, more vibrant; the very air is energized. She shakes your hand or gives you a hug and you're instantly a better person. You stand straighter, you suck in your stomach, you wish you'd polished your shoes. You get goosebumps. You pray you won't say something stupid. Time flies. You note the impeccably tailored dress and wonder in amazement how any wrist can support so many gold bracelets. You marvel at this force of nature and your recollections days later are a blur. She speaks to you and you *know* you're the only person in the world who matters to her at that moment.

You're transfixed, *she* has transformed you. She's a magician.

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I suspect it isn't often that one gets much time alone with Mrs. Fleming. There are always so many friends and family about, students, faculty, staff...so many demands on her time and attention. But in December of 1971, while on a brief visit to Montagnola, one evening, quite by chance, I had Mrs. Fleming all to myself. That morning she had acquired, or been given two tickets for the performance of "Madama Butterfly" at La Scala that evening. Would I like to go? Would I...? Oh, God! My favorite opera in the world's most famous opera house! YES!

We leave Montagnola not a moment too soon. She is driving. Black dress, of course, for La Scala. Gold bracelets. Mink. We no sooner cross the border at Chiasso than it's decided we need a drink. An old fashioned. In the glove compartment where ordinary people keep road maps, Kleenex and dead ballpoint pens, MCF

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has an entire bar in miniature: bourbon, ice, sweet vermouth, bitters, sugar cubes, even orange slices. I begin to mix drinks as we're roaring south on the autostrada at sixty-something mph. I'm also thinking: I don't believe this.... I do *not* believe this is happening. We're going to be arrested and spend the rest of our time in an Italian jail. But I'm wrong. The gods look down differently on Mrs. Fleming. We arrive safely in Milan and have dinner in one of the charming restaurants in the Galleria. Then the opera. Heaven. Perfect seats, naturally. The red and gold auditorium is smaller but more beautiful than I'd imagined. Tucci and Aragall are magnificent. At the intermission I realize I'm the only camel-hair sports-coat in a sea of black Italian suits. (But then, I

hadn't packed for La Scala.) I ask Mrs. Fleming if she understands the singers, knowing that she speaks Italian. "I don't know, Tom," she replies, "I'll have to pay more attention."

There's no big ending to this adventure. We aren't arrested; we do return to Montagnola late but in one piece. Twenty years later I don't recall if I mixed more drinks on the drive back. Probably not. Common sense may have finally prevailed. Nonetheless, it was a rare and perfect evening alone with an equally rare and perfect person. I will never, never forget it.

*Tom Roberts  
San Francisco, California  
Former Designer, ARTE*



Margaret Kate Natsui  
(center) enjoying a  
"Mrs. Fleming picnic"

"... Thank you for the marvelous 'house-party'/reunion! Other than my two years at TASIS, I have never had such a good time.

"... Thank you for the most gracious and generous hospitality which you extended to us. Your enthusiasm and warmth are two of the reasons we all love TASIS so much!"

*Margaret Kate Natsui  
TASIS student, 1962  
(written in 1971)*

ANYTHING THAT  
LIBERATES OUR  
MINDS, WITHOUT  
AT THE SAME TIME  
ADDING TO OUR  
RESOURCES OF  
SELF-MASTERY,  
IS EVIL.

*Goethe*

## Una Persona Come Lei

...Non la si puo sicuramente dimenticare....  
MAI! Felice di aver avuto la Sua fiducia col-  
laborando con la scuola per parecchi anni e se  
non vado errato fin dalla nascita di TESIS in  
quel di Montagnola.

Le sono molto grato di avermi dato possibilita  
di incontri con persone simpaticissime, sia in  
Ticino che all'estero e aver tentato di migliorarmi.

Nella speranza di rivederla presto, a Lei, cara  
Signora Fleming, i miei piu affettuosi  
AUGURI.

Giorgio Guglielmetti

Artist

Lugano, Switzerland



## Thank God You Were Not Born a Man

Two vignettes come to mind from my "Life with MCF":

The first took place in Los Angeles at the Bel Air Hotel in 1971. We were on one of our USA cross-country jaunts hosting alumni reunions, and had quite a late evening as I recall. At around 6:30 AM, the ground started shaking as a very sizable earthquake struck the area. (We subsequently learned that it had collapsed several freeway overpasses and had done considerable damage.) I jumped out of bed, stood

in the doorway, and watched half the water in one of the pools get sloshed out over the grounds. Having been raised in California, and being young, stupid and tired, I went back to sleep as we were not to meet for breakfast until around 8:30 or 9:00.

When I saw you at breakfast you were still somewhat shaken and when asked what you had done during the 'quake, you replied quite forcefully "I grabbed my jewels and my fur coat, and got the hell out of the room—as fast

as I could!" Ever a woman of action with her priorities right!

The other occurrence took place in 1978 in Annie's and my first, tiny house in Chicago. Once again, you were "on tour" and were spending a night or two with us during your stay in Chicago. One evening as you were about to retire in your bedroom, we heard a yelp, and we both came running. At that time, we had a tiny black kitten, whose favorite toy was a white fox stole complete with head, that had belonged to Annie's Grandmother. Apparently, the cat with stole had decided that you and your bed looked inviting, and without invitation had jumped up and given you quite a start. You will be pleased to know that both the cat and the stole are long since out of our lives.

Whether barreling down the Autostrada sipping Gin and Tonics from the infamous green plastic ice buckets, or dealing with Dr. Barr, George Lawson, or others in the "cast of thousands" who have worked for you over the years, you have always given 110 percent to everything you do. I remember Dutch Gage saying to me once before I had met you (and before male chauvinism was known as such) that "if she were a man, she'd be president of General Motors." Well thank God you were not born a man, for without a female MCF, there would be no TASIS, and there would be thousands of young people who would not have had the benefit of knowing you and being enriched by the organization you built. I for



Topper Lynn (center) brings actors, ARTE Director George Marchi, and sets into Venice

one, would not have had five of the best years of my life, found friendships which remain important today, and most importantly would not have met my wife had it not been for you and TASIS!

As you forge ahead into your next decade, you can know with certainty that you leave in your wake (jetstream is perhaps more appropriate) a world better for your presence.

Much, much love, best wishes, and congratulations on the occasion of your eightieth.

*Christopher (Topper) Lynn*  
*Aptos, California*

*Former Director of Admissions, TASIS*

## High Priestess

The sun was setting deep in the Mediterranean, its last rays outlining the steep sides of smoking Mount Etna. In the city of Taormina, high above the sea, the lamps of evening were being lit. The night was warm, only the gentlest breeze moved the flags and banners. The city was crowded and bubbling with the excitement of a festival. In the distance was heard a drum and the music of a parade. The crowds opened a path and down the winding Corso Umberto a procession advanced, and wound its way toward one of the most beautiful theatres in the world. The procession was led by a high priestess in handsome robes. She rode in a charming painted wagon which was pulled by a flower-bedecked donkey. The priestess was followed by the actors, dancers and musicians of the evening's play, all in splendid costume.



Taormina—"one of the most beautiful theatres in the world"

"Tom Roberts knows his Italians, too"



Ancient times or now? The answer is yes, both. The spirit, color, joy and even the play was of ancient Greece and Rome but, of course the company was TASI's American Repertory Theatre in Europe and the High Priestess leading the company to the theatre was Mrs. Fleming.

This ambitious company toured Europe for many years and I was invited to join them for their 1972 season. It was a summer company made up of advanced students and young professionals. The year I was with them we presented two plays, Euripides' *Medea* and Aristophanes' *The Birds*. We played the major open air Greco-Roman theatres found on the long peninsula of Italy. We opened in Taormina, Sicily, with the final performance being given in the beautiful theatre in Fiesole, just north of Florence.

I directed *The Birds* and since we would be playing to a predominantly Italian audience, many of whom would not understand English, I knew I must use every possible trick to make the play coherent and/or interesting. I was lucky to have two brilliant comedians for my male leads: Rodger Henderson and Dirk Torsek. Both are very physical actors and were able to convey much with gesture and mime. The chorus (the Birds themselves) was comprised of young, handsome American females. Tom Roberts, our distinguished designer, gave them magnificence with large bird-mask headdresses. He gave them very little else; he knows his Italians, too.

The comedy is bright and silly and great fun to play and direct as well as to watch. The best opportunity for me as director came at the very

end of the play. It has a happy ending of course, the leading characters being united in a glorious wedding ceremony. As the story takes place in the clouds (Cloud Coo-coo Land), Tom covered the stage with huge white, helium-filled balloons. He placed a charming latticed bird house in the center. At the finale, with the music at full volume, banners flying and my near-naked chorus down front, we released the balloons. They floated triumphantly up into the black night. Then, as the balloons cleared the heads of the actors, I set off a glorious display of fireworks! It was a director's dream come true; I felt like Rheinhart, deMille and Barnum and Bailey combined.

Touring is always a rich experience but this particular one had an extra dimension. We would arrive in town, hot and tired from travel, find the theatre, lay out the props and costumes and rehearse, just as you might on any tour and then, sometime during the performance, sitting backstage awaiting your cue, it would occur to you: the realization of where you really were. We were playing in the very theatre for which these two-thousand-year-old plays had been written.

This was an experience of a life-time and one for which a great many people—both on the stage and in the audience—will be deeply grateful to that high-priestess, Mrs. Fleming.

Jack Cook  
San Francisco, California  
Former Visiting Director, ARTE

FAMILIARITY  
WITH BEAUTY CAN  
ONLY BREED  
MORE BEAUTY.

Rorimer, Metropolitan  
Museum (doubled  
attendance)

## Hired by Mail

My first, and most vivid memory of TASIS, and of Mrs. Fleming, is the fact that I was hired by mail, without benefit of interview, examination, or investigation. Perhaps not an odd turn of events: but it was to me. At a certain stage of my life I had itchy feet, wanderlust, and a developing disgust for the traditional and sedentary lifestyle I had been leading. I was reading an article and pictorial layout in some flossy glossy magazine [perhaps *Town & Country*, *Harpers*, or *Vogue*] about a gorgeous looking educational facility in some place called Lugano, owned and operated by a mysterious yet fascinating lady named Fleming: who had emerged from a spot bearing the unlikely name of Frog Hollow. At about that time I met a fellow here in Toronto, a long-time resident of Lugano, who was here on a tour of duty with The Fidinam Group. He of course extolled the virtues of living in Lugano: but when I asked him if he was familiar with TASIS he merely raised his eyebrows and made no comment.

Not to be deterred, and as I was looking for an adventure and some European teaching experience, I fired off an impassioned plea to Mrs. Fleming, wondering if she might have a place on her staff for a middle-aged, yet still mentally active teacher of History, albeit a Canadian. My letter, perhaps only for its presumptuous nature, seemed to intrigue her, and I soon received a letter from the then Headmaster George Lawson, that he had been *instructed* by The Director to hire me. I certainly felt wanted. I was tremendously flattered by all of this: although I later came to realize that almost anyone without two heads and a criminal record, and who was bold enough to take the plunge, was welcomed at TASIS with open arms. Nevertheless, in retrospect, my time at TASIS was the greatest adventure of my life, and my years there were my happiest.

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As time went by, and Mrs. Fleming seemed to find me a tolerable fellow, she would, when introducing me to her friends and business associates, and after extolling my modest virtues, would loudly proclaim: "and he's a Canadian too." That would always provoke strange looks: and some were impolite enough to ask what was a Canadian doing teaching American History? I always responded [and deeply felt]

that this almost heretical situation was bound to produce an impartial, dispassionate, and fresh approach to the subject.

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I also vividly remember one of the annual traditional Thanksgiving Dinners at TASIS. Mrs. Fleming seemed to think that my wife and I (particularly my wife) had a touch of class and a few social graces, and therefore asked that we sit with and entertain a certain Mrs. Getty, who happened to be visiting the school at that time. Unfortunately Mrs. Fleming in her speech to the school, chose the occasion to berate Richard Nixon, the American involvement in Vietnam, and the sorry state of the American Republic in general. Mrs. Getty seemed to be outraged by all of this, no doubt being a right-wing reactionary and solid Republican. Whatever the reason, she leaned over to me, said she had listened to enough of this, was going to walk out, and would I be good enough to escort her to the door. Covered with confusion I felt I had to do so: but the look I received from the speaker as we crossed the room would have reduced Hercules to a shuddering hulk. Her daughter, Lynn Aeschliman, who was standing in the doorway, and whom we had to pass, did not look too pleased either. I thought I was finished at TASIS, but mercifully neither of these ladies, as indeed was their style, ever made reference to this alarming display of disloyalty on my part.

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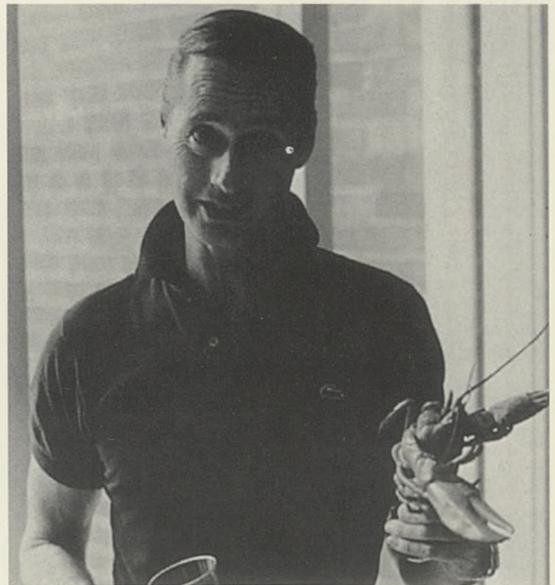
Another incident often springs to mind, especially during periods of international currency fluctuations. I just forget the point in time and the exact year, but the U.S. Dollar had been almost fatally devalued. Naturally, as the school fees were payable in Swiss Francs, a lot of American parents were hurting: and if they were hurting, so was TASIS. Mrs. Fleming called us all together in The Library, told us of the situation, explained that it was only a "temporary inconvenience," but pointed out that we might all have to put our shoulders to the wheel, and even might have to forego our salaries for a month or two. There were a few mutterings of discontent, so, if only to break the tension, I pointed out that the Canadian

Dollar was very healthy at the time, even fetching a premium, so why did TESIS not conduct its future affairs in that currency. I was rewarded with a rather wan smile by Mrs. Fleming.

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The lady was, and remains, one of the most electrifying personalities I have ever known. I absolutely adored her and counted it a peculiar privilege to have worked for her, however briefly. She had more than “a touch of class” and I, being slightly devious myself, greatly admired her methods and her results.

*Gordon Heyd  
Toronto, Ontario  
Former history teacher, TESIS*



## Entre Nous, Dear

The very first time I met Mary Crist Fleming, 18 years ago now, she was talking about retiring. Frankly, from the outset, it was pretty obvious, she didn't mean it. “Entre nous, dear,” as she is fond of saying. In fact, it was my guess that this was a little test of hers. If for some reason you agreed that this was a reasonable, prudent and desirable course of action, you were off her “A” list forever.

I remember her standing by the liquor cabinet tucked near the fireplace at Casa Fleming in Lugano, with the emerald green upholstery and Lucia standing guard. She stocked your choice of poison and some pretty exotic alternatives. But she herself preferred her perfect Old Fashioned mixed by a hand other than hers. My friend Michael had this job at the time. She had just had an extra gas tank welded into her dark green Volvo station wagon. This was to make the frequent round trip between Montagnola and Florence an on-the-fly no-gas-necessary round-trip. Despite what her daughter Lynn was telling me, this seemed someone unlikely to retire soon. I had a certain amount of practice in these matters with my own mother, a near contemporary of hers. She didn't mean it either.

I'm sure others will remember her best as an educator, but I look back on her most fondly as a woman of business. When I think of MCF, of her charm, and her vision, of her occasional eccentricities, I remember someone who taught me perhaps better than any other, how to do

things in the grande style...and pay tourist prices. I never saw anyone work quite as hard at being naturally gracious. I still can see her pouring over her books of alumni and student photographs before any gathering.

I have to say that I never met a more resourceful, shrewder and irrepressible entrepreneur. She is often a model to me when things aren't going as they should. Once when I was reviewing the history of various programs for a new catalog, I commented on how many there had been (22 or so at that point). The only common thread seemed to be Mrs. Fleming's sense of style. Her response was, “If I had stuck with any of these programs as they were, dear, there'd be no TESIS. The only thing we have in common is the little blue buses.”

I must admit that the cleverest lesson I ever received on keeping appearances up and fixed costs down, was the way she used the rental houses in Montagnola as flexible dormitory space that could go up and down with enrollment. And no-one could tell because it was never clear where the village stopped and the campus began in the first place.

I think I once held the record for having more jobs in a shorter period of time than anyone at TESIS (although I wouldn't bet 5 francs on it). During one tumultuous transition, I remember cautioning Fernando Gonzalez when he took over the Director of Development position. I told him that Mrs. Fleming

will tell him that she'll want to cut down the cost of the next catalogs. From sore experience, I suggested that he ignore this, and always opt for quality over savings if he wanted to last through the next project. (It must have been good advice.) Overhearing, MCF said, "That's right, dear."

My advice to anyone who is listening to her now, as she approaches her eightieth year,

is...not to take seriously any talk of retirement. She doesn't mean it yet...or ever. Entre nous, you can count on it.

*MacRae Ross*

*Arlington, Virginia*

*Former history and English teacher, College Counselor, and Special Projects Coordinator, TESIS*



## MCF: A Few Personal Glimpses over 18 Short Years

Who still wears gloves with insouciance, yet can tuck up her floor-length evening skirt to cope with a sudden small flood in her powder room as faculty dinner guests are arriving? Who loves ice cream and opens all gifts with gratifying glee, no matter how trivial they may be, managing to convince the giver that it is exactly what she has always longed for?

Who has made the European "kiss greeting" such a trademark that a senior would find Commencement incomplete without a small memento on his or her cheek in honor of the occasion? Who has so thoroughly earned the soubriquet "Autostrada Rose" that, as she was spreading cheese on crackers and mixing gin and tonics in our back seat, she passed one to the driver, who was hitting 140 kms. per hour, asking gently, "Don't you think you could go a bit faster, dear?"

Who has been honored in all spheres for her immense achievements in the field of education, from the United States Government to that of her peers, and is always so perfectly coiffed and made up, ready for any occasion, that, when embraced by an old friend, she was asked by the startled gentleman, "Is that a pistol you're packing, Cris?" [referring to the lipstick she always carries tucked in her brassiere].

Who has such poise that she can keep smiling, undisconcerted, when a senior, tentatively holding his first legal aperitif at the cocktail party preceding the Senior Banquet, tips it right down her décolletage when she gathers him in for the traditional warm welcome?

Who has such interest in all she meets, regardless of their worldly importance, that she recognizes and remembers everyone, as epitomized by her greeting of the delighted black maid of some of her hosts whom she hugged, saying, "We old gals have got to stick together, haven't we, Lulu-Mae?"

Yes, you've got it!



"who still wears gloves with insouciance"



"opens all gifts with gratifying glee"

"wearing the unheard of—tennis shoes"



Kate and Fernando Gonzalez stand behind Mrs. Fleming with Hillary Hylan, Elizabeth Acer, Anne van Brussel, and Bob Bruno enjoying the party, too



She's **Merry**,  
She's **Caring**,  
She's **Fantastic**,  
She's our **MCF**.

What a daunting task. Oddly enough, to write something was easier ten years ago when we knew Mrs. Fleming less well. There have been so many events in these action-packed 18 years since we joined TESIS—from her arrival with Lynn and Michael at Les Tapies in the middle of the night, accompanied by thunder and lightning, to her picnicking in Iran—wearing the unheard of—tennis shoes (yes, we've seen a picture—actual proof!).

What a complex and fascinating character she is, driven by her intense interest in people, her desire to improve the world's prospects by educating young people to live together in harmony and cooperation, and her will to achieve the impossible. We have all had moments of wondering whether the world was topsy-turvy or the right way up, but it has always been interesting, challenging, and ultimately extremely satisfying. We look forward to the wonderful festivities, and will feel privileged to help Mrs. Fleming mark her entry into her ninth decade—indomitable as ever, with the unquenchable thirst for life and enjoyment of it which have made her such fun to work with and to know.

*Kate and Fernando Gonzalez  
TASIS England, Thorpe  
Director of Alumni Affairs and  
Director of Development*

## ...and Puppy Dogs' Tails!

An intense supporter of the concept of independent education, I am having a new experience as to how it actually works.

The same weekend that I retreated to the country for a quiet period to package my educational philosophy for this article, I undertook, in all innocence, to wean four basset puppies, aged three weeks. You will, therefore, understand if my approach to the young seems both biased and over-simplified.

As I dip the small creatures' noses into the warm milk, watch them wade deep into the pan instead of drinking, then drag their dripping ears over the sheepskin rug, I realize how very comparable bringing up puppies is to running a school.

You 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 and at the student council meeting; 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 to 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." We do this in the hope that large quantities of man's wisdom

and experience will be in some measure transferred to these new manifestations of human endeavor that we are trying to educate.

With pups it is easy—just get a larger trough and they'll wallow blissfully. But how about the walls of the "milk pan" when you mean a school?

At a time in American education when magnificent gymnasiums were being built, when any good school boasted five or ten sports fields, when endowments rose along with the walls of auditoriums and chapels, when campuses were intentionally set so far apart that you had to belong to the varsity track team before you could visit a member of the opposite sex, I had a different idea.

I believed walls to the world should be flattened. I believed in having no specific campus, but instead, choosing any large area and using it as a campus. I took my cue from the needs of the young so well expressed by Wallace Stegner: "We simply need that wild country available to us even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in it. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope."

I could have chosen Alaska, Tibet, or Timbuctoo, but I chose Europe, all eleven countries, and tossed in North Africa, Russia, and a couple of Greek islands for good measure. I keep adding new "sports fields" each year, the latest is



Prague, the next one could be Peking!

No campus, hence no need for formalized buildings. Put the whole thing on wheels, on a boat, in prefab houses, in tents. Wine cellars make great Chemistry labs and the original purpose they served is undoubtedly a far greater contribution to humanity than what comes out of many of our white-tiled mausoleums!

No buildings, no limiting boundaries. A vigorous international faculty dreams less of the endowed chair and is instead alive to learning with the students, eager themselves for exploration, eager to crawl over barriers in other men's minds and to delve into those limitless regions that evade the pages of text books.

No limit to language. Any true communication between human beings is gratifying and the exchange of ideas in a foreign language is doubly rewarding to an accomplished linguist. In Europe, with boundaries close and distances short, there is constant opportunity for the disciplines of language and the sense of exhilaration that goes with achievement.

No limits to beauty. The Lord, indeed, made "America, the beautiful" but over the centuries the hand of man has combined with the finger of God to create timeless works on every hillside and in every hamlet of the European countryside. Within a few kilometers, frescoes, churches, monasteries, Roman bridges and feudal villages, to say nothing of magnificent cathedrals, extravagant palaces and galleries, are there for the beholding. The Grand Canyon is grand indeed, but it is hundreds of miles from where most of us live, the Washington Monument is majestic but it is one-of-a-kind; the Statue of Liberty is a glorious lady but she stands lonely at the entrance to our country.

No limit to History. The piazza of every town, or the castle crowning every surrounding hill, holds the history of centuries. Civilizations are there for the digging. Not many young Americans are enchanted with history, but here again, by dowsing their noses in the "feeding trough," some sense of excitement may capture them. This brings me back to my theory of immersion.

An indictment against America is the exact opposite of my intent. My thesis of immersion stems from the experience of my own children's education in foreign lands, and from thence a strong conviction that young Americans deserve, and indeed should demand, the kind of education calculated to train them as citizens of a country whose role is world leadership. There is great concern and much criticism

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,*  
Education and Survival



about the chaos of our present system of education. The young are disenchanted and the old dismayed, so certainly a search for a new formula is timely and well worth a trial.

Therefore, I do not care where the "wild country" is. It could be Brazil, Africa or Israel. Certainly Mexico is a likely one. I have chosen Europe for my experiment because to me it signifies the greatest concentration of the greatest variety of benefits created by man.

I do not believe that an incursion into Europe, or any other foreign land, as an educational experiment should be limited only to the formally structured academic year. There are limitless variations on the same theme that should encompass the summer months and the normal vacation periods so as to maximize the immersion process.

The spirit of Huckleberry Finn in almost every American suggests that the most desirable mode of travel is any kind of outdoor journeying with a knapsack on the back. The recent wave of "thumbs-up" Americans on every highway in Europe would seem to indicate a return in kind to this "Sawyer and Finn" legend. The renunciation of hotels is often not due to lack of funds but an attempt to recapture the soul of the vagabond. Even though they are alarmingly unkept and seemingly unrepresentative of our great country the search of these young people is often admirable. Certainly traveling the route of the grand hotel or the petit pension is no true way

to sense a country. For what natives of any land are ever found in their own hotels? It is in the villages, on the hills and away from hotels that the traveller comes closest to discovering the character of the country and its inhabitants.

Consider the invention of the wheel as one of the most important landmarks of history. Consider that today's students can journey as far in a year of their young life at school as Marco Polo did in a lifetime. How amazing and how wisely we should use the incredible opportunities this phenomenon offers. So along with my theory of immersion, I believe strongly in the function of the wheel.

In the summer, out of the academic routine, under the aegis of a European student guide, small buses full of students and camping gear can explore hundreds of kilometers of European terrain. In the fall and spring, small groups of students can put Geology classes into the field. Mountain huts shelter climbers as they venture into the Alps or the foothills of the Jura or Appenines. Enthusiastic cyclers place their "wheels" on a train to cover the first tiresome stretches and get into cycling areas that are particularly rewarding.

While less personal as a mode of travel a larger bus for the winter months is equally effective in bearing groups of twenty-five and thirty-five students across the borders of neighboring countries or on four-day weekend visits to Munich, Florence, Bern, Basle, into France or even to Ljubljana. Steel wheels on steel tracks turn through the night as couchettes carry groups to Paris for a five-day Thanksgiving break. Wheels on runways lift other groups into European skies as they fly to Prague or to Copenhagen. This sounds expensive, but with careful cost control, special group rates, the use of package and student tours, an amazing amount of Europe can be seen and absorbed. Classes are concentrated, meet on Saturdays, or double periods, to make up for time out of the classroom. In terms of generating greater curiosity, greater first-hand knowledge, and enhancing the desire to learn in so many subject areas the benefits of travel are immeasurable.

To quote Mark Twain upon his return to the United States after a summer of European travel in 1867. "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

ILL FARES THE  
LAND,  
TO HASTENING  
ILLS A PREY,  
WHERE WEALTH  
ACCUMULATES  
AND MEN DECAY.  
*Goldsmith*

Now we have the two chief ingredients of an educational scheme, large-scale immersion and the concept of mobility. Surely these match the world of the twentieth century where one can be on a bus in Madison Avenue at high noon and that evening be in a gondola in the canals of Venice; where it is commonplace for the businessman to leave his Stateside office and a few hours later be in the offices of the foreign subsidiary; where, in an equally small space of time, Air Force One carries our President from the Oval Room to the Palaces of Peking. There

will be no retrogression from this kind of life in our century and the more we can groom our young people to live with it and learn from it and not be exhausted by it, the better the preparation we have given them for "the shock of the future!"

*Mary Crist Fleming*  
(Article that appeared in the  
1973 Vincent Curtis Educational Register;  
to be republished in 1990)

## Lightning Struck and I Suddenly Felt Like Tamino

Reason and experience persuade me to believe that nobody has ever met Cris Fleming under what might pass as ordinary circumstances. It must always be an epiphany, a sense of becoming a born again "Cris-tian" that accompanies the beginnings of all Cris's friendships. We all have our own story and I have waited for years to spill my particular beans.

I was forty, considered myself wearily familiar with all worldly surprises and directed a Hellzapoppin Junior-Year-Abroad program in Florence when I was approached by two gentlemen who introduced themselves as emissaries of an institution called Fleming College at Vezia in southern Switzerland. They had organized an ambitious arts-festival for their students during the Thanksgiving break and lavishly invited me to attend together with my family and "as many students as might be interested." I was blessed by over a hundred undergraduates and about twenty graduates who were all convinced that I had sold my soul to the devil when they heard that they would be the guests of Fleming College for three days and as many nights, Thanksgiving dinner included and as for the arts-festival...well, they would take that into the bargain, too. Maybe they were right and I had sold my soul to the devil...or if not my soul at least the sweat of my brow. The arts-festival consisted of any number of lectures and presentations given in languages unknown to the two gentlemen who invited me and I was put to work doing simultaneous translation for some twenty hours a day. Not that I could complain! I met some fascinating people, learned a great deal and watched with great satisfaction as my brood of students enjoyed themselves to the hilt. On balance, the price paid was almost irrelevant.

Returning to Florence, I thought it correct to send a little letter of thanks to the mystical Mrs. Mary Crist Fleming who had extended the invitation via her two ambassadors but who had been prevented from attending the arts-festival by transatlantic obligations. Within a month I received a rather curt letter from a secretary. Mrs. Fleming had instructed her to let me know that (1) my invitation had been issued without her knowledge (2) she was delighted that my students had enjoyed themselves at Vezia but that, too had not been authorized by her and that (3) Fleming College had been disbanded. I was mortified at first of course but then decided to shrug it all off. Whatever games had been played had been played without my knowledge or connivance. I was as blameless as the flowers of the field and if I had encouraged my students to make the most of their opportunity and they had eaten rather more turkey than was polite, I could hardly be indicted. Still, it might be prudent to avoid Vezia and Lugano for the next few years. Vaguely, through the usual foreign program grapevine, I heard details of what had happened at and to Fleming College but filed such reports in the most remote attics of memory.

Then, without warning or preamble lightning struck and I suddenly felt like Tamino when the Queen of the Night appears in the "Zauberfloete." I was bidden to lunch at Doney's in Florence by a series of telephone calls. On Monday at one-thirty. No, Mrs. Fleming had had to leave for the Middle East and would not be able to meet me until Wednesday at two. Make it Thursday at one. The suspense mounted and suddenly I stood stammering at the table of a strikingly handsome woman dressed in black (that Queen of

WOULD THAT I  
WERE A BEGGAR  
ON THE STREETS  
OF FLORENCE  
BEGGING TIME  
FROM THOSE WHO  
SQUANDER IT.

*Berenson*

the Night, again!) who wore a modish hat even though it was a hundred in the shade and who welcomed me as if we had been comrades on the Kon Tiki's first voyage. Fleming College? It seemed to mean no more than the nuisance of having a passing pigeon mess up a brand new coiffure. It took me months before I realized how deeply those events had wounded her and still more months to realize that she nevertheless could not find it in her to bear a grudge against those who had betrayed her trust. She was never too busy to remember but she was far too busy to feel rancor. You had your tonsils out and then there was plenty of ice cream to get you over the hurt. There was always plenty of ice cream, I learned, in Mrs. Fleming's life, there was never any reason to look anywhere but ahead.

And so we began our friendship on the spot. Sight unseen she had decided to like me and I... why, suddenly I couldn't remember that there had been an epoch in my life when I hadn't known, admired, relied on, delighted in Cris Fleming.

We got to work at once. I had been appointed by her to be *eminence grise* for her latest project. Project? Make that plural because we had discussed at least seven totally diverse ventures and possibilities before dessert was served. I was swept away. I hadn't the time to remind myself that I was a blasé man of the world who was a bit bored with life. I was a yahoo from Eight Ball, Nebraska on a tour of MGM

studios. I was Archimedes watching his bathtub overflow. Anything was possible from now on and that wasn't even the half of it. I was a born-again "Cris-tian.

This much I am willing to share with all of Cris's other friends. All that she did for me in our years and decades of friendship, *that* I want to guard jealously for myself. The general outline is probably known to all who know Cris: the good times, the infusion of zest and courage that she knew how to bestow, the loyalty in times of need, her way of listening that made you feel far more intelligent than you really are... but at the same time stimulated you actually to become more intelligent than you have ever been before... all who have crossed Cris's path have known these moments. But each of us has known it with an inflection that is too personal, too important a part of our lives to be spoken of publicly. In all her life, I believe, Cris has never treated two people in the same manner. She enters into the spirit of each particular friendship, of each particular encounter as something unique that lies outside of routine or convention.

Like a very much luckier Nathan Hale, I have only one regret: I have always, always been too old for Cris.

*Fred Licht*

*Boston, Venice, Florence*

*Former Board Member, Fleming College Florence*

*Alumni parent, TASIS*

.... Then there was Italy to lure me. Just fifteen kilometers over the border there it was, wagging a tantalizing, beckoning finger. After France I bought our first family home away from the school campus, a derelict 12th-century farmhouse, my "retirement" home in the Tuscan hills. I had always loved Florence, but instead of my actually looking for an appropriate school property there, a property came looking for me—a beautiful, old Italian villa, just above the Piazza Michelangelo, with a magnificent terrace looking out over sloping olive groves and a swimming pool surrounded by tall stately cypresses. How could I resist? It had once been used as a finishing school, so sleeping space was adequate, and it had a large garage which I knew instantly would convert into a little theatre.

Of course, I didn't even try to resist, but proceeded to rent the Torre di Gattaia and to re-open there the Fleming College that a Board of Trustees had closed for me in Lugano. I believed, and others agreed, it was a little jewel of a junior college. But not being a branch of a large U.S. college or university it had difficulty attracting enough students to insure its survival. Also, even though Italy is a musical-comedy country that works better without a government than with one, since the government falls every few months, there can still be legal complications and taxes that turn a comedy into a nightmare.

I was forced, for instance, to install a fire security system comprised of long hoses coiled behind glass to be broken in case of fire. We are all naturally in favor of security against fire, but after the huge expense of the installation, the water system of Florence went dry and was totally exhausted for all that summer so that no water came through the hoses! But the fire department gave me the license anyway, for I had installed the required equipment and it did look impressive. God love the Italians!...



The cypress-lined approach to Fleming College Florence



Capitignano, our first family home



Torre di Gattai's magnificent terrace and gardens

## That Rare Combination of Qualities

Both Nancy and I are most pleased to contribute a few words to the commemorative book about that powerful dynamo known as Mary Crist Fleming. I became acquainted with her when I was Consul General in Florence and she was beginning to establish Fleming College there. Our friendship with and respect for Cris and this fine institution broadened and deepened when we attended many functions on the Fleming College campus and, more importantly, when our two daughters became associated with the school—Laura as an employee and Moffie as a student. Nancy and I also recall with pleasure the many informal contacts we had with Cris such as lunch or dinner for three or four at the Consulate or similar occasions at her hide-away home in the Mugello.

Perhaps the most memorable and significant action she undertook which related directly to our interest was when she took on that Jugger-naut of an institution known as the University of California at Berkeley, which had had the

temerity to question the acceptability of certain Fleming College Florence credits which Moffie wanted transferred to Berkeley. By a stroke of luck Cris happened to be in San Francisco at that moment and Moffie called her and asked for some help. Cris dropped everything, sailed across the Bay to Berkeley and soon convinced the University authorities that Fleming College credits were quite acceptable. Once again, Mary Crist Fleming exhibited that rare combination of qualities—energy, enthusiasm, intelligence, and a genuine concern for others—that makes her so memorable.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate in the celebration of Cris's eightieth birthday. Nancy and I send our warmest congratulations.

*Robert C.F. Gordon*

*Washington, D.C.*

*Alumni parent, Fleming College Florence*

EDUCATION IS  
A COMPANION  
WHICH NO MIS-  
FORTUNE CAN  
DEPRESS, NO  
CRIME CAN  
DESTROY, NO  
ENEMY CAN  
ALIENATE, NO  
DESPOTISM CAN  
ENSLAVE. AT HOME  
A FRIEND, ABROAD  
AN INTRODUC-  
TION; IN SOLITUDE  
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*

## She Is Always in Serene Command

We are delighted to have your [Lynn's] letter and to learn that you are attempting to gather some vignettes of your mother's illustrious career and memorable character between the covers of a book. What a delightful eightieth birthday present.

The report below is of a true incident and the personal references are from the heart.

My wife, Janet, and I have known Mary Crist Fleming since the summer of 1964 in Lugano. Our son Nick went to TASIC for one year and our daughter Mary for two years and Mary later taught Italian at Fleming College Florence.

Cris is a tower of strength and an unforgettable character. She exemplifies all of the academic and managerial talents and with it she is stylish, witty and bold. She and I share the same month and year of our births and we also

share a taste for an occasional martini.

One evening in the early seventies, Cris took us to dinner at the Cave di Maiano near Florence. When we agreed on a martini, Cris spoke quickly and with specificity to the waiter in Italian. Minutes later at our table appeared a glass pitcher filled with ice, a fifth of gin, a bottle of vermouth, a long stirring spoon, glasses, and a soup bowl containing a double handful of green olives. I will never forget it.

Whether directing every detail of her academic empire or presiding as a gracious hostess she is always in serene command. Happy birthday, Cris.

*Andy Rose*

*Pebble Beach, California*

*Alumni parent, TASIC*

## Black Chiffon Nightgown

I always looked forward to my all too infrequent meetings with Cris Fleming. They were a stimulating experience, but more than that they were tremendous fun. However, the

vignette I offer concerns her not as a multi-directional dynamo but as a mother.

On one occasion Andy and I were invited to her beautiful "casa colonica"—a lovely retreat

in the heart of Tuscany. In the course of the evening Cris directed me to her own bathroom. It was as handsome as the rest of the house, and there I observed, floating softly from a hook, the most lacy, diaphanous, feminine, black chiffon nightgown one could imagine. I must have mentioned it admiringly to Cris because I well remember the affection and sentimental pride with which she identified it as a gift from her children.

*Janet Rose  
Pebble Beach, California  
Alumni parent, TISIS*



## Caviar

There are two caviar stories: the first is a testimony to MCF's staying power, the second is more a testimony to both her obvious enjoyment of caviar and her ability spontaneously to demonstrate her hospitable nature.

### CAVIAR 1

I was on a recruiting trip down the east coast of the USA in the fall of 1974, when I received one of those "middle of the night" calls. I'm certain that it wasn't the middle of the night, but it was that type of call. MCF says that she wants to open up an office in Teheran, and would like to know if I am interested in running it. Having always found it very difficult to say "no" to MCF, and having nothing planned, I of course said yes.

After I had been in Teheran for a few months, in early spring, MCF decided that it was time for her to visit the outpost. I contacted all the people we knew in the City and between us we put together MCF's social calendar for the ten-day stay. It was fairly simple, we had an event for every luncheon and every dinner for every day with the exception of one dinner, and a few breakfasts and afternoon teas thrown in for good measure. One of the events was a picnic up in the Elburz mountains, with a Scotsman who was the head of the Iranian Oil Service Company. He drove us up into the mountains in a range rover, with a companion and his two children. MCF was dressed for the occasion in a white rain coat and white sneakers. Our host had not emphasized that the temperatures for the picnic would be in the thirties and forties and that there would still be snow on the ground. MCF was totally undaunted, enjoyed

the stark scenery, was entertaining, and cold.

At every lunch and every dinner there was caviar, straight from the nearby Caspian Sea. It was always served the same way. A large bowl was filled with ice and an almost as large bowl was filled with caviar and placed in the ice of the first bowl. It was the best there was, served with plain white toast. Next to the caviar was another bowl of ice with a carafe of vodka placed in it. The social pace was hectic. Even after two weeks of unlimited access to caviar, there was no talk about having had too much.

It was a memorable visit. The Iranian parents were among the most friendly and hospitable people I have ever encountered.

### CAVIAR 2

In the summer of 1975, there were a number of Iranian children and young people attending the TISIS English Language Program and Le Château des Enfants. At the end of the second session there was the usual top-quality show given by the children of CDE. It wasn't so much exceptional talent as tremendous enthusiasm and excellent direction. Many of the Iranian parents came to the show, and with them they brought large cans of caviar. Transporting caviar was a nuisance because it had to be kept on ice, even on the flight. The airlines probably had to increase the size of their refrigerators in order to accommodate the flow of caviar. So it was greatly appreciated that so many parents had gone to all that trouble to give the staff of CDE such delightful gifts. When we examined the booty we found that between us we had received 5, 1 kilo tins of caviar.

Unfortunately, caviar is not the kind of

gourmet specialty you can keep for a long time, so there was considerable debate about how best to enjoy it. I cannot remember how, but MCF found out about the caviar. She had an ample supply of champagne and suitable location so she suggested to the caviar possessors that if they supplied the caviar, she would supply the champagne and we could all have a wonderful party at her place, which is exactly what happened. The counselors, teachers, and various other people all went off to dress up for a delightful evening where the champagne and caviar were excellent and the company was even better.

It was spontaneous, generous, and delightful and an excellent demonstration of the graciousness and hospitality of MCF.

*Ewan Mirylees  
Fairfield, Connecticut  
Former math teacher  
and Representative, TASIS*



## “May I call you Hope, my dear?”

With that simple query you walked into our kitchen and my life. The year was 1975, the place: the kitchen of our Loomis-Chaffee apartment, the excuse: you were looking for a new headmaster for TASIS. We had deliberated, Peter and I, about this occasion because, in fact, Switzerland sounded pretty enticing. Peter had returned from meeting you in New York the previous Thanksgiving full of descriptions and the assurance that you wanted somebody experienced and in his mid-40s. “She’ll never call me,” he stated, “but I wish you could meet her.” After your call, I began to wonder about “the elegant woman in perfect black knits and mink with huge gold bangles on her bracelet” who would take a Trailways bus to Hartford for a two-hour visit. It was a memorable visit: Abby wandered down from her nap without any clothes, Josh alternately wailed and cooed, the dog insisted on licking your bangles, the kids from the dorm kept interrupting, and the phone kept ringing for you. It was In-Program Travel time and some students had abused the rules and were in the process of suspension. Your mission must have been accomplished, nevertheless, because after two hours we wanted to know a lot more (fortunately Ken Blessing was there too—he stayed until 2:00 AM) and a few days later you called back. You

persuaded me to drive you to the seedy Hartford Bus Station so you could interview me (“What do you think, Hope, about a woman who interferes in her husband’s affairs?”) alone. I doubt I’ve ever fielded more double entendres!

You entered our lives permanently—even after eight years away from TASIS we leap for news of you and the school. You left your impression on us—not just Peter and me, but on Abby and Josh as well. One time, while playing Botticelli in the car, Abby was in control. No matter what Peter and I guessed, we could not discover who she was thinking of. Her triumphant smile as she crowed “Mrs. Fleming!” was great indeed. Josh still keeps “doggie” which you gave him for his first birthday, on his closet shelf. Neither child will ever forget the huge chocolate Easter bunnies you sent. You introduced innumerable culinary treats into our household: cappuccino, prosciutto and melone are frequent reminders. I suppose you know that Peter and I refer to you as “Mama” with enormous affection and respect. Indeed, you taught me many things that my mother seems to have missed. Grace under fire, enthusiastic hospitality, a “can do” attitude and style are but four things I particularly treasure. You are one of my favorite role models because you are determined, considerate, gracious, kind,

energetic, and above all, an educator. Again and again I watched you begin your dinners in Lugano formally but end them with your arms around the students, chatting as equals. Do you remember offering Middle Schoolers cigarettes, or Seniors gin and tonics? I bet they do, not because of the illegality of it all, but because you were so engrossed with them you forgot they were kids. They loved it. So did we.

My stories, like those of others, go on and on. I remember actually reassuring ourselves that we needn't worry if the Red Brigade kidnapped you on one of your forays up and down the "autostrada del sole." We were sure that like Red Chief, you'd be ransomed by the Brigade which would pay us to take you back! More recently, I remember your impetuous invitation to entertain eight students from Maumee Valley at Phene Street, or last January, our hour-long phone call at the end of which my roommate asked "Was she your best friend

in England?" rather! I hope this book is filled with many affectionate loving MCF stories. I'll close with thank yous for unending generosity, hospitality, affection and concern, friendships which will last a lifetime, for thousands and thousands of memories which range from Capitignano to Phene Street, from Lugano to Thorpe. We could not have planned seven more wonderful years!

Finally, thank you for being the only person who has made me feel good about going grey: "My God," you gasped, "where do you have that streak done? I've spent thousands and never had such a striking one!" Only you, Mrs. Fleming!

Happy Birthday! and much respect and love,

*Hope Stevens  
Perrysburg, Ohio  
Former history teacher, TASIS*

## You Changed Our Lives

How do I add to Hope's eloquence? How do I write adequately to and about one whom I hold so dear? one who has challenged me so well for so long? one who has been employer, colleague, model, "mother," teacher, inspiration, advocate? I could add thousands of memories to Hope's; I've entertained them all so often. Instead, I'll try two approaches.

First, Mrs. Fleming, you changed our lives. You taught us—forever—the meaning of grace and style and truth and beauty. At leisure or under fire, right or wrong (more often the former, even as minority positions), ecstatic or angry, you simply define style. There is no neutral. No one ever doubts that you are *there* (and often we know you are there even though you are physically off in Italy or Greece or somewhere).

Your wrath is formidable; your affection and love are mighty, too. And you do it all with style and flair that reminds us daily of this world's need for taste, dignity, presence, aura, charisma and leadership. You hold opinions and we hear all of them, and we are reminded, too, that we think, and therefore we are! What a testimonial to life is your life! So should we all be expressive, bold, sharing, open, dedicated, heard, seen, effective!

If some people wondered how these two strong personalities, yours and mine, managed

to get along so well (how many of your ex-headmasters would say as unabashedly as I do that I love you?), perhaps it's really because I recognize greatness and consciously submit myself to its embrace. Sure, I've fought it, too, and I gave my share back now and then, but you were really the power that brought out of me whatever was best. I know that now even more than I did when I worked with you in Lugano and in England. And whatever successes I've had since TASIS in this profession (as you know, I'm about to enter my second headship since England) I enter at least in part on the MCF side of the ledger. And I am grateful.

Peter Stevens is bemused by Mrs. Fleming's comment to Malcolm Muggerridge, while Max Page looks on



Secondly, a few of my favorite MCF-TASIS tales can't bear not to see the light of this birthday of yours, for they are certainly the stuff of legend. How often I recount your clear assertion that The Pill destroyed your early summer program in Lugano! How many times did I hear of your mad dash over the Alps in the sports convertible with the Thanksgiving turkey riding shotgun? I remember your telling me of your own attempts to ski, just as I remember your utter astonishment that any sane human being would try to ski 42 kilometers cross-country as Hope and I and others did in the Engadine Marathon for many years. I remember others' incredulity that we had left the infant Josh Stevens under your care when we first came to visit in Lugano (it seemed so natural!). And I remember your appearing one day in your work-out leotard during that visit (an early example of your continuous treatment of us as "family"). I'll always remember the trembles that would go through Villa De Nobile when the news would come down from Sarah that you were on your way up from Capitignano, and we'd rush to pull in the towels and the underwear off the balconies and Myriam would hustle about and grumble, augmenting her own legends at the same time!

How many times have we chuckled over your entertaining the carabinieri on the autostrada, drinks kit out and open! Or your first words in Greek, "poli pagos" for a lot of ice. You said, "If you can say ice in any language, my dear, you can survive!" Or rambling on and on through the Tuscan hills seeking the precisely right picnic spot; for second best would never do. I remember one excursion that nearly ended them all: the great train ride to Scotland to find a home for the new school! And I pair that with the far more elegant forays into the Geneva hinterland and Divonne-les-Bains on a similar mission.

I learned a lot watching you work the crowds in Stateside reunions. (Few people can hush a crowd so effectively just by entering the room! I know you studied the mug books, but even so, how do you *ever* remember all those names?). I have nocturnal visions of careening around the British roads in the black mini, you

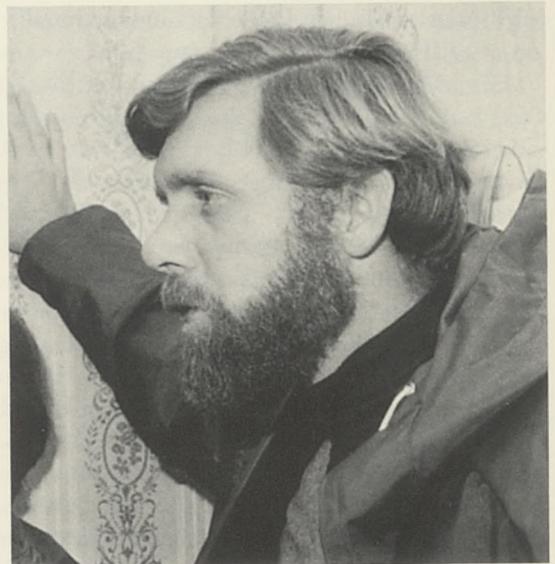
at the wheel, basic black, furs and bangles ("always dress as if you're worth a lot of money when you go asking for something.")

And, of course, I remember meeting you in the Hartford, Connecticut, bus station for our second-ever meeting, you standing imperiously center stage, derelicts with brown bags strewn on the benches, paper cup of coffee in your hand: they gawked, and stared and rubbed their eyes. (No one in Lugano *ever* believed that you'd taken a public bus to Hartford to meet us! That was an apocryphal trip!). Doting on little kids (your grandchildren, ours). Catering to wealthy Iranians (*et al*) because they all represented something for the future of TASIS, but reminding them all the same that *you*, not they, were in charge (hardly easy for them to grasp!)

The legends roll on, and you endure, central to them all, to the lore, the wonder, the success, the force that *is* TASIS. And we are grateful, for you've enriched our lives; we are better because we spent time with you. And I could pay no higher compliment.

I send my love, and thanks, and Birthday wishes.

*Peter Stevens  
Perrysburg, Ohio  
Former Headmaster of TASIS, then  
TASIS England*



"I admit I was skeptical when you spoke of things like nurturing our individual senses of social responsibility and of how TASIS would give us a more complete and responsible world view. I wasn't concerned at the time with the higher purpose of academic excellence that you stressed. Administrative talk of development of strong character and of gaining an appreciation of the 'richness of the past, the fullness of the present, and the potential of the future' too often fell on deaf or cynical ears.

"It is only recently, many years later, as I plan a return to the 'luxury of TESIS' golden hill' (a phrase from your comments in our 1975 yearbook), that I see that the values and commitments that you have been pursuing and engendering in your students for so many years hold true. The fact that you are and have been brave and sincere in fighting the mediocrity, skepticism, and willful ignorance of so much of the world is clear. I admire what you have done, especially in light of the sometimes frustrating fact that in the 'educatin' business, the seeds planted often do not see the light for several years. Not everything about TESIS was, or probably is now, perfect; yet I now understand and respect your efforts."

*Hans Figi*

*TESIS student, 1975*

*(written in 1982)*

"...I'm also surprised that such an excellent yet extravagant College Prep system not only weathered the economic world situation in 1975, but expanded as well! This is no doubt a tribute to some tough decisions by the indomitable Mrs. Fleming, and, in no small measure, to her wisely-retained staff. Congratulations to you all!

"...I have had occasion to recall fondly the people and events which comprised my most rigorous and rewarding education experience.... I can think of no time when there was more of an intellectual demand made of me—and more fulfillment bestowed—than in my years in Montagnola. I was, in fact, *overprepared* for my field, having graduated [from college] with honors with little difficulty. It is a credit to TESIS' boarding school curriculum and the genius of its well-chosen faculty. I sincerely hope to bear that standard in my own teaching career...."

*Mike Brus*

*TESIS student, 1975*

*(written in 1983)*

"The other day I stumbled upon your speech from the senior banquet! The more I think about it the more it impresses me. At this point in time those values pertaining to a clean act, healthy mind and tasteful lifestyle have become the core of my scheme. Any time I find myself slipping, I remember a time at TESIS when Miss Seifert managed the halls and cellars of Villa de Nobili to a night when you the lady of the tower came storming down from your summit in a nervous rage to warn us where our infamous conduct would lead. It must have been one o'clock in the morning; the de Nobili terrace was filled with people droppings. The room was a total mess and your scorn directed to the missing linens on my bed. When I review these things in retrospect I think of you and all you stand for. Don't ever leave Certenago; it is you that keeps TESIS firm and intact. I am convinced of this. I might add, I hope the merit system is temporary; I want TESIS to remain unique like a special garden with its fruits of liberty and seeds of individualism...."

"You will always be the pillar of TESIS, even in your grave."

*Francys Yarbro Distefano*

*TESIS student, 1976*

*(written in 1977)*

"I admire you greatly for your personal strength and perseverance in the many roles you have undertaken as a woman—Lord knows it isn't easy—and I guess something that very much increased my admiration for you was in hearing you speak about your appreciation for all who worked for you and taking time to specifically mention the personnel (Mario, Marina, etc.) and their overall contribution to the school (and they do contribute so much!)...."

*Lucy Coco*

*TESIS student*

*(written in 1980)*



Hans Figi at a TESIS Reunion

.... You win some and you lose some, so I took a look at England next. I loved England too. Actually very few of my colleagues were in favor of going to England because they thought it would be too much competition for the school in Lugano, so the majority vetoed the idea. In order to appease the dissenters, I said I would run a market research on the feasibility of starting a school in England. The market research came up totally negative, it was neither the time nor the place, but I ignored the findings, as I had intended to do, and went ahead anyway. In 1976 we bought a beautiful English property, Thorpe Place, and launched another school. We then bought the property across the street and built quite a few buildings on that campus. We now have over 600 students at TASIS England, most of whom are day students, with 150 boarders. So that was one of the ventures I won, instead of one of the ones I lost.

When I looked for a property in England I knew it had to be fairly near London, that's logical, and fairly near Heathrow Airport. Since we are a boarding school and since we wanted an international group of students, people would be coming in from all over the world. At first I wanted a school in the city, because we had a country school in Switzerland, and I thought to have an urban school from a day-school point of view would make more sense. I rapidly realized that properties were very expensive; not only the purchase, but operating in the city would be much more expensive. Even the purchase of food would be more costly because of transportation into the city, and domestic help for the same reason. Sports facilities would be a problem, and a really good school needs a lot of sports facilities. Then I was lucky enough to find our property 18 miles outside of London, which has turned out to be a beautiful property with 35 acres. We have lots of playing fields and room for buildings and we have received special permits to build more buildings, even though Surrey is a very restricted green-belt area. So England has proved to be a great success....

Thorpe Place, a beautiful English property for a new school  
—TASIS England





Thorpe House, the property across the street, becomes the heart of the TASIC England elementary school

New classrooms are part of several new buildings on the TASIC England campus



## Opportune Time

In the mid-1970s, Cris Fleming decided that it was an opportune time to establish a branch of TASIC in England, despite a decrease in American international students caused by the oil crisis and the resultant relocation of American executives back to the U.S. After selecting an ideal property for the English branch, Cris proceeded with her usual skill, determination and indomitable spirit to organize the program and acquire the property.

Peter Knight, then a young solicitor with our firm, Baker McKenzie, in London, handled the legal details for the acquisition of the real estate,

for which the closing date was set. After execution of the preliminary documents, the young solicitor wanted to discuss the arrangements for bringing the purchase price amount into England through the exchange control system in advance of the closing. One can easily imagine Peter's concern when Cris informed him that she did not have the funds, but first had to raise them before thinking about their transfer to the U.K. Indeed, Peter was so concerned that he questioned me about his continued handling of the transaction which Cris was then obligated—but seemingly unable—to complete. As we all have

observed so many times over the period of our association with her, Cris, of course, secured the funds and began what now is an extremely successful program.

*Roger Quinnan  
Winnetka, Illinois  
Attorney for TASIS since 1960s*

## Care Package

We always look forward to a brief vacation following week-long—and often tedious—annual partnership meetings; in fact, it's what we enjoy most about them. Our 1975 gathering in Spain was a special case in point, as Cris had invited us to spend a few quiet days with her at her recently-restored casa collonica outside Florence. Throughout that meeting, Franco and the Basques had been waging an especially tense political war of nerves all around us, so that we awaited Cris's welcome with particular relish. The plan was to fly from Madrid to Milan's Malpensa and then on to Pisa, where Cris's caretakers would meet us for the scenic drive up through the hills to the enchanting old estate.

The Quinnans had not, however, anticipated the "solidarity" that Italian labor unions would be able to muster when they adopted the Basque struggle as their own cause célèbre. Not only did they effectively halt all air service within and out of Italy for a considerable time, but they managed to disrupt telecommunications as well. As we sat, and sat, and sat, . . . at Malpensa, making frequent, futile attempts to ring up both Cris and the Lugano campus, we became increasingly frustrated (and not a little embarrassed) with our inability to connect, while at the same time we saw our vision of an idyllic visit slipping away.

As we were about to resign ourselves to an airport "overnight," a pilot (undoubtedly just recovered from a strike-induced "blue flu") appeared and headed for the cockpit of the plane that had shared our 12-hour wait. Finally, we were on our way.

Upon arrival at Pisa, not only were we greeted with smiles by the weary caretakers, but a portable bar with our favorite scotch and ice sat clinking in a handsome leather pouch at our feet in the waiting car. Dim-witted or just plain tired, we somehow failed to realize what the latter was or that it was, indeed, intended for us. Much later, after being comfortably settled in for the duration, as we sat, relaxed, by the pool enjoying a drink while beautiful steaks for a very late supper began to sizzle inside, Cris suddenly mused aloud, "And how did you find my little 'care package' in the back seat?"

The discomfort we felt at our inordinately late arrival and at causing this dreadful inconvenience to Cris made us temporarily unmindful of just how gracious, how ingenious, how lavish, and how blessed with equanimity this grand lady is!

*Jean and Roger Quinnan  
Winnetka, Illinois  
Alumni parents, Château des Enfants*

## A Black Sheath Dress and Black High Heels

It is with much gratitude that I write this small contribution to your 80th birthday memory book. One of my first memories of you dates from September 1976, before the opening of TASIS England, when the campus was in the throes of the first of many summer transformations. You were wearing your work garb—a black sheath dress and black high heels—and were carrying a large lamp across the pebbled courtyard to its appropriate resting place. The green VW bus in which you ferried things around was parked nearby outside Tudor House, soon to become my resting place. I

remember still the intimacy of that first candlelit opening faculty banquet, hearing the story of the yellow Sestini moving vans and the four-child 'first family' (three of whom I eventually taught) so enthusiastically received by you and Lynn in the make-shift Tudor House admissions office. The determination, courage and vigor with which you founded this very special school have never wavered and have been an inspiration to us all.

The transformation to the TASIS England of today is quite incredible. Despite the fact that we now number nearly five times as many

students and staff, the spirit and vision with which you have imbued the school remain the same. The greatest legacy which I shall carry with me is the inspiration of your unflagging conviction that "it can be done" (on time!) and the example of your graciousness and kindness. I wish you a very happy 80th birthday—may

you be around for another 80 (it wouldn't surprise me at all!).

*Diana Dearth*  
*TASIS England, Thorpe*  
*Head of Upper School*

## The Most Elegant Mini on the Entire Isle

I spent a lot of my time at TASIS working with abstractions. Whether I was teaching the ESL American History class about the United States Constitution or writing a brochure that would sell TASIS to parents in Dubai, Singapore, and Texas, I was constantly aware that the institution for which I worked put great stock in abstract notions: "the dream of an American education with Europe as a campus"; "the ideal of international understanding." I recall these notions, of course, as being inseparable from the identity of the school's founder and director, who at any formal occasion would pause at some moment in her speech, raise her eyes from the faces in the audience, and, fixing a smile on some spirit in the air, speak of Purpose, Responsibility, Character, and, most broadly, Education.

I continue to be impressed by how, rather than being fluffy rhetoric, those abstractions became things I actively believed in. At the same time, I find equally lasting meaning in the more concrete aspects of my acquaintance with Mrs. Fleming. Anyone can recall dozens of specific details from Mrs. Fleming's life; one in particular that comes to my mind is the black Cooper Mini she kept (and, for all I know, still keeps) in England.

Almost as soon as I arrived at TASIS, I started hearing about Mrs. Fleming's privileged relationship with the internal combustion engine. Stories of the early days of The American School in Switzerland were inextricably linked to legends of trans-European rides in VW buses. The white Volvo I had seen many times, parked in the driveway of Casa Fleming on the Lugano campus: a study in potential energy, a machine that in a moment's notice might zoom away to Florence, its operator (so the myth went) holding a gin and tonic in one hand a dictaphone in the other while Balthasar the German shepherd sat calmly in the passenger seat and the car guided itself.

When Mrs. Fleming started TASIS England, along with deciding who was going to be headmaster and what color the drapes would be in the parlours, she had to pick out a British car. This one needn't be something for the Autostrada; rather, it would need to negotiate London streets easily. The Mini was a practical choice. At the same time, despite its small size, and perhaps in part because of its impeccable black finish, it looked like the most elegant Mini on the entire Isle.

Once, I got to drive it.

It was the summer of 1979, I think, when Claire and I were teaching at the TASIS England Summer School. Mrs. Fleming had rushed off to the Continent, leaving her car at the Thorpe campus and taking a cab to Heathrow; she would return in a couple of days and go from the airport directly to her house in Chelsea, where she would need the car. Someone therefore had to drive the Mini into London.

As soon as I pulled out of the school driveway, I was impressed by the Mini's zip. This was a car that, like its owner, wasted no time. It cruised through the traffic in Staines like a dolphin in a sea of turtles. It hummed northeast toward London as if it were running on a track. And as I drove along, I felt myself drawn gradually to a more private part of Mrs. Fleming's life than the many parts of it that intersected with the lives of the faculty and students. This feeling, logically enough, came from being in a place that Mrs. Fleming most often occupied, not as the center of an animated group, but alone.

In place of my own foot, I imagined on the Mini's gas pedal Mrs. Fleming's shoe; on the steering wheel, the hands that had greeted thousands of students and their parents at receptions and graduation exercises; watching through the windshield, the eyes that could look at an unused, run-down carriage house and see a dormitory where boys or girls from

KING GEORGE VI,  
 1941 NEW YEAR  
 MESSAGE TO THE  
 EMPIRE: I SAID  
 TO THE MAN WHO  
 STOOD AT THE  
 GATE OF THE YEAR  
 —'GIVE ME A  
 LIGHT THAT I MAY  
 TREAD SAFELY  
 INTO THE  
 UNKNOWN.' HE  
 REPLIED, 'GO OUT  
 INTO THE DARK-  
 NESS AND PUT  
 YOUR HAND INTO  
 THE HAND OF  
 GOD. THAT SHALL  
 BE TO YOU BETTER  
 THAN A LIGHT  
 AND SAFER THAN  
 A KNOWN WAY.'

eight different countries would dangle their sneakered feet over the sides of wooden bunks as they read Orwell, listened to Led Zeppelin (hardly her kind of music, but that wasn't the point), and waited until the snack bar would open. As the buildings on either side of the road became taller and the flyovers more frequent, I thought about how, for all her gifts as public speaker, overseer, hostess, and entertainer, Mrs. Fleming must accomplish a great deal during the times when she was by herself, away from company. What value there must be for her in those times when she was not simultaneously speaking to one person, hugging another, and handing a drink to a third; times when she was not meeting with the governing board, negotiating a loan, or reminding the chef that there must be at least 400 petits fours tonight.

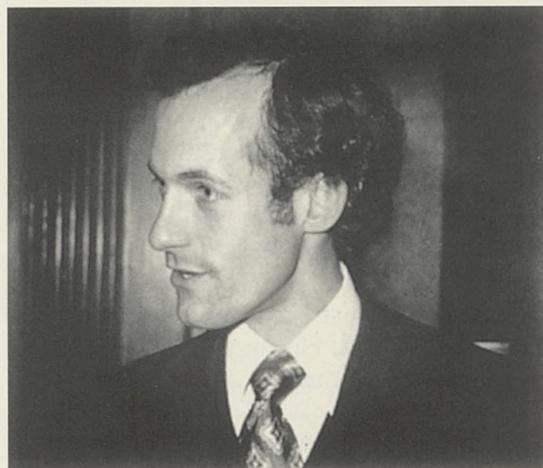
At those times, what did she think of? The school, surely, as always. Someone who works at her pace is bound to use the privacy of an automobile as a time to collect her thoughts and discover new ideas that she will bring up at the next planning session. But perhaps when she was driving, her mind sometimes ran to other things—details of her personal life that were not included in the TESIS folklore, or thoughts about interesting things she did not have time to do (play golf? write poetry?). I don't know about those things. I'm not even sure they were part of her thought processes; if the only thing she thought about was TESIS, she had plenty to think about, and plenty to be happy about. But I like the idea that there is a private Mrs. Fleming as well as the public one.

I had no trouble keeping my eyes and mind on the road. For one thing, I wasn't in a million years going to be responsible for so much as a scratch on this automobile, inside or out. For another, the car handled so well and was so exciting to drive that being in traffic was a pleasure. For another, I had to figure out how to get to a part of London where I had never been before, find the smallish street where Mrs. Fleming's house was, and then park.

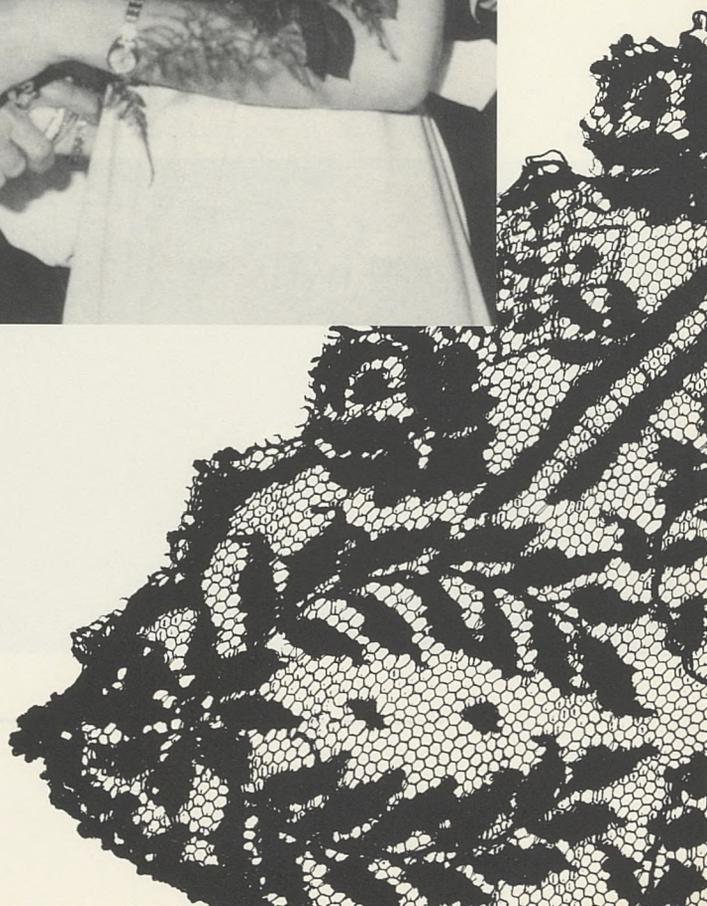
Her neighborhood was lovely, quiet, welcoming. In my memory it seems as though the sun was shining through the leaves of many trees, and all the doorways were painted white. I found the right house, walked up the steps, and slipped the key through the mail slot. In Lugano I had actually worked in an office inside Mrs. Fleming's own house. Here in London, I came no farther into her domicile than I would have if I were the postman. No matter; I could imagine Fleming parties in Chelsea as they were in Certenago (albeit with less of the conversation in Italian). I could imagine Mrs. Fleming enjoying good tea and a few moments of rest before a day of phone calls and meetings. I could imagine the subtle satisfactions of living in a genteel, refined quarter of the greatest city in the Old World.

Before walking up to the main street in search of the nearest Underground station, I glanced at the Mini once more. It sat neatly where I had parked it by the curb, looking as polished as a diplomat's Rolls, only more inviting. More adventurous, too.

*John Stifler*  
*Florence, Massachusetts*  
*Former English teacher and*  
*P.R. writer, TESIS*



NINETEEN - EIGHTIES



.... Then I was persuaded to look East. I didn't particularly want to, but I was persuaded to look in Greece, and that school, TASIC Hellenic International School, is still going strong with almost 400 students, exclusively day. We started out wanting a boarding school there, and in fact, we did have a boarding school there of 175 boarders, TASIC Greece. Then politically Greece became difficult in terms of its stance toward Americans. They were very anti-American because of our bases, so we moved the boarding department to Cyprus, which was another Fleming folly, one of the ones that you might say I lost instead of won! The school was successful but financially it was a loss. The people who were there loved TASIC Cyprus and it was on its way to becoming a good school too, but then the oil market fell in Saudi, and most of our students came from that part of the world. We stayed on in Greece with a day school, but we are again concerned because the school is in a rented property. Do we want to stay in Greece on a long-term basis, and is it worth investing to purchase in a country so politically unstable? That's one of those decisions I am supposed to make tomorrow, or the next day, or the next week. I have had a few setbacks, of course, but I never lose any sleep over them. I just go onto the next project because you can't expect to win them all. One does make mistakes. Sometimes mistakes are made because of other people, when you allow other people to influence you. I trust my own instincts more than I do almost anyone else's. It is usually when I am influenced by others that I get into trouble....

Campus of TASIC  
Hellenic International  
School



TASIC Cyprus



## The Grand Entrance

The secret behind many people's ability to get ahead in life, it has been suggested, is their mastery of the art of *the grand entrance*. If that talent were the sole measure of success then Mary Crist Fleming ought to own 500 schools and not just 5. I am very much a man of first impressions and my response upon seeing Mrs. Fleming for the first time, descending the stair at the Hotel Cecil in Kifissia in February, 1979, coiffed to the nines and clad in her basic black and pearls, high heels clicking loudly on the marble, was "here comes trouble". There was a great deal of hearsay and rumor swirling around the person of Mary Crist Fleming in the international school circles of the late 1970's—how she opened and closed schools as a kind of perverse hobby, how she doted on the company of handsome young men and her flask of martinis, how she ran her empire with the grip of an iron lady to the extent that Mrs. Thatcher took her as a role model. With the knowledge that she had come to Athens to establish yet another international school right across the street from my own was cause for interest, to say the least, if not sheer terror.

As it turned out she was no trouble at all. The charm factor is always immediately present behind her grand entrance and it came remarkably to the fore as we drove to a local taverna for dinner in our old clapped-out VW school bus. It was not her style—neither the taverna nor the VW bus—but she bore up splendidly and regaled us with wonderful stories all the while sizing me and my partner up just as we were trying to make some kind of sense out of her. What she got for her sizing up was that my partner and I, having built up our school from 25 students over the past eight years to 500, were ready to let someone else deal with all the problems that running a school in Greece can engender. We both agreed that Mrs. Fleming could take on the Greeks and walk away smiling. There have been some difficult moments for TASIC in Athens since then, I gather, but ten years after the fact she is looking for property to buy. It looks as if the Greeks are going to have to cope with TASIC and 1992 whether they like it or not.

Cris Fleming and I have kept in touch over the years, usually when we find ourselves in London, and more than once I have been treated to delightful evenings at Phene Street and privileged to be served meals cooked by a

hostess one would think for all her high society life could not put a meal on the table. In fact that is one of the better kept secrets about the lady in question—she can cook and, on occasion, does. I remember one meal of caramelized duck breast in particular. She, of course, claimed she had burnt it, but we who also cook know better. She also knows that no matter what has happened in the kitchen if you provide enough wine to quaff the result down your guests will go away happy—and I for one have never left a Fleming occasion feeling bereft of vino.

A number of people complained to me, especially during the year of transition when our school merged with TASIC in 1979-80, of her single (some said bloody) -mindedness, particularly regarding projects she undertook and people she hired. I have only one experience with the latter when I timidly opined as to how I thought she was making a mistake, to be told years later (after the mistake had been fired) that I was right. Not many people have the grace to admit their mistakes, especially when it has cost them money, but one of the reasons that Mary Crist Fleming is here to celebrate this occasion is that she does have that grace and also even more important, the ability to make relatively few of them. Her single-mindedness may be mellowing, though. When we last had dinner in London in November of 1989, she actually accepted the fact that the French restaurant off the Edgware Road into which we were crammed did not serve Bourbon without demanding why not and sending the terrified waiter scampering into the night to find some. She seemed far more intrigued with my friend, a young (and I suppose it must be admitted, good-looking) English conductor whose early music group had just won the Gramophone "Record of the Year" award. Though the theater has always been Cris Fleming's metier far more than music, conversation never flagged and I was, once again, amazed at her ability to take charge and tread where lesser angels would fear to and emerge triumphant at evening's end. My friend was, unaccustomedly, speechless, and cassettes of the winning record and other samples of the group's wares were on the way to Switzerland for service in her car stereo. So, to the overwhelming entrance factor and the charm to back it up, we have the sheer dogged perseverance to carry things through to the bitter

OPEN A NEW  
WINDOW, OPEN A  
NEW DOOR,  
TRAVEL A NEW  
HIGHWAY YOU'VE  
NEVER TRIED  
BEFORE,  
ENJOY LIFE'S  
BANQUET—RELISH  
THE FEAST—/  
WHETHER YOU'RE  
IN THE WEST,  
SOUTH, NORTH  
OR EAST!  
*Mame*



end, or not so bitter, that explain the Mary Crist Fleming success story. I have enjoyed playing a very minor role in this saga and being somewhat of a voyeur as the saga has played itself out over the past decade. A final bit of insight I proffer is a bit of advice she once gave me early on in our acquaintance and which goes a long way towards explaining why she is where she is today: "Never, Bob,

my dear, phrase a question in such a way that the answer can possibly be no." In her case I suggest it rarely has been.

*Robert Betts  
Cairo, Egypt  
Founder and former Director,  
Hellenic International School*

## MCF, A Very Special Person

From the moment that I first saw Mrs. Fleming driving up in her little Mini to collect me for my interview as a candidate for a position at TESIS HELLENIC International School, I have never ceased to feel like a very special person working for a very special organization.

Her concern for all of us who work for TESIS has been demonstrated in so many caring ways. Images and experiences abound: MCF cooking breakfast for us, a telephone call at home to say, "I love you and think that everyone at HELLENIC is doing a terrific job!" On a recent whirlwind visit to Athens MCF put in fourteen-hour days to support the

work of faculty and staff.

Times are never more exciting than when MCF is in pursuit of a goal and then we see her committed, passionate, tireless, exacting and fun loving.

Dear Mrs. Fleming, HELLENIC is at your side in your never-ending quest for excellence.

Kronia Polla,

*George Salimbene  
Headmaster  
TESIS HELLENIC International School  
Kifissia, Greece*

## For Mary Crist Fleming,

.... Who cannot be four times twenty today. We have known Cris for at least two of these decades; but by a splendid reputation, for a much longer time.

As former President of the Association of International Colleges and Universities (at the same time President of The American College of Greece) it was inevitable that we would meet—meetings that were always stimulating and rich with her insights into life abroad and international education, which were exceptionally rewarding. Whether it was in Lugano, Aix-en-Provence or at her gracious and impressive pied-a-terre in London, we always

had cordial views to exchange.

Cris's reserves of imagination, energy and leadership were inspiring whether in Cyprus, London, France, or here in Athens. We always waited breathlessly to discover where she would open another center or add on her school programs from K-12, to Summer, to University-level programs. We were waiting for her to open the equivalent of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies.

Cris's capacity to attract outstanding staff and work with them for the highest level of performance always excited our admiration. Added to this efficiency is a warm, generous, stimulating, devoted person and friend whose sense of humor always kept us and her audiences fascinated. We always look forward to listening to Cris's stories and advice.

Cris, thank you for your inspiration and your friendship, and for the many years to come.

*Jack and Irene Bailey  
Athens, Greece*



Cris Fleming with John Summerskill on her right and John Dorbis and Jack Bailey on her left

## That Strong Lady in the Black Dress

I first met Cris at the Island of Cyprus in 1983. She came to investigate the feasibility of moving the TASIS Greece Boarding School to Cyprus, and I as the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer attended her initial call on the Ambassador.

Although I had heard of TASIS, I was unprepared for the onslaught I experienced at the hands of Cris and Paul Zazzaro over the next few days. I had not realized that she wanted to open the school *that week!* We drove all over the City of Nicosia, and Cris made side trips to other towns in Cyprus. Just as she was about to give up, one of our party suggested that there was an old hotel nearby that just might fill the bill. Cris took one look at the building—and declared, “it looks like a ship. I’ll take it.” And she did.

We went through that old hotel from keel to bridge, from stem to stern in less than an hour. Cris was already redecorating it in her mind. The hotel was being used to house tour groups from the Soviet Union and other east bloc countries. It was pretty grubby. But Cris could see beyond the dirt. The Cypriots were absolutely riveted. Who was this woman and what in the hell was she doing?

The remaining two years of my tour in Cyprus were filled with extraordinary encounters with “that strong lady in the black dress” as the Cypriots described her. She was something else.

She leased, redesigned, remodeled, built, contracted, supervised, cajoled, cowed, and who knows, maybe even bribed the school into existence. When the lackadaisical Greek Cypriot workmen did not pursue their tasks with suitable diligence, Cris explained that she had a school opening deadline to meet, and that their mother would be ashamed of them if they failed. I couldn’t believe it. She shook her finger under their noses and shamed them into working harder, just as if she were their mother.

Cris knew the importance of positive relations with the local community so she charmed the Minister of Education until he was eating out of her hand, and she hired the mayor as her lawyer. She made peace with all the other private schools on the island or at least let their directors know that they would thwart her only at considerable personal peril.

The stories could go on and on. Cris Fleming has the most powerful, personal will I have ever encountered. Cris made a tremendous impression on me in everything she did to support

the school, but that is only part of the reason that we became friends.

I like to think that the friendship grew out of a similarity in personalities. I have never been satisfied with where I was or with what I had. I have always wanted more responsibility, and I’ve always wanted to see what was around the next corner. Cris could have been my mentor, and she certainly is my role model in everything I do. I’m hoping that I can emulate her energy, decisiveness, dedication, and longevity.

Cris made a visit to Cyprus in the spring of 1984 and decided to visit the Turkish-controlled northern part of the island. I suggested that she might wish to visit St. Hilarion, a crusader castle, situated on a high pinnacle of rock overlooking the sea.

The next morning, Cris came to church with two friends and, of course, made friends with numerous local expatriates. After church, she announced that they were going sightseeing. Cris was wearing her customary black dress and high-heeled black pumps—the other ladies were similarly outfitted. Off they went. That evening we met again for dinner, and I learned first to my dismay, then disbelief, then amusement that they had done it all. Not only had they climbed the thousand or so steps from the parking area up to the castle, but Cris had led her entourage beyond and up the rugged washed-out path to the very top of the mountain—a climb of at least half an hour—so that they could see the “Queen’s apartments” and the most spectacular view in Cyprus. Even the most intrepid tourist hesitated to use this path in good hiking shoes. Cris did it in heels and looked none the worse for wear. Her two companions were still recovering the next day!

Then there was the drive from Lugano to Capitignano. My wife, Mary, and I were in Milano for a conference. We took the train to Lugano, toured the TASIS campus and then set off for Cris’ mountainside estate near Florence. Cris was driving her Volvo Wagon down the Autostrada at high speed when she turned to Mary and asked if she could make a gin and tonic. (Cris is the only person I ever knew who traveled with her own ice.) My wife, assuming that this was a question for the record, responded “certainly.” Cris indicated a small briefcase in the rear seat and said “light on the gin—I’m driving!” That is when I discovered the proper use for the elegant gimbal devices attached to

L'ESSENTIEL EST  
INVISIBLE AUX  
YEUX. ON NE VOIT  
BIEN QU'AVEC LE  
COEUR.

*St. Exuperiy, Le Petit  
Prince*

the dashboard (fascia) of the car. I had assumed that they were designed to hold coffee cups. Wrong! The cocktail glasses in the bag fit perfectly. I so admired this solution to a recurring problem, how to keep beverage containers upright in a moving automobile. Several months later, I received a small package in the mail. Cris had a duplicate set of gimbal cocktail glass holders made for my car. That's Cris.

Mrs. Fleming, as she is known to our children, has become the family hero figure. We're not related, just sort of adopted by extension. Our son, James, who is now a Junior at Boston University, spent his sophomore high school year at TASIC Cyprus. Cris liked to kiss him, but, James, at that point a very shy boy, blushed scarlet. Cris took pity and shook hands instead. Cris visited our home frequently and our two younger daughters came to know Cris well. My wife's sister, Anne Elam, and her soon-to-be-husband, Chris Jaeger, both taught at TASIC. It became a family enterprise with Cris as the godmother. Our youngest daughter, Laurie, said it all one day when she announced "I want to be like Mrs. Fleming." She said that after being queried as to her interest in becoming a doctor, lawyer, or jet pilot. I can't think of a career pattern or role model that I'd rather endorse.

Cris has followed her instincts to overcome any obstacle in her path to achieve her goals and those goals have always revolved around quality. That is not to say that Cris has always had perfect vision. That would have made it too easy. But she has been as magnificent in defeat as in victory and just as undaunted.

TASIC Cyprus went belly-up because of factors completely beyond Cris's control, but

TASIC Greece is roaring along because of Cris's success in a public campaign to get the Papandreaou government to cease and desist in its efforts to harass the school out of existence. The dispute even became the subject of editorials in the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*.

The Geneva project was not realized and, as I write, TASIC France's future is unclear. But TASIC England, TASIC Switzerland, and TASIC Greece are healthy as can be.

Cris has always been up for anything. If she has periods of depression, they must not last more than micro seconds.

Cris is truly at home anywhere. Of course she is very effective at the level of the Embassy cocktail party or the dinner for senior government officials, but she is equally at home at a picnic amidst Greek or Roman ruins.

I had Cris and Adele Wells to lunch at the White House a couple of years ago. We were escorted to the small executive dining room and lunched at the same table used by then Vice President Bush. You would have thought Cris owned the place. The White House Staff appeared to sense that she was a very important person and behaved accordingly. Their unctuousness and deference were all toward her—not me.

I suppose that they all realized how fortunate it was for the President that Cris chose not to follow a career in politics—that she found honest work instead.

*Dan Howard  
Arlington, Virginia  
Alumni parent, TASIC Cyprus*

## Take Control of Events

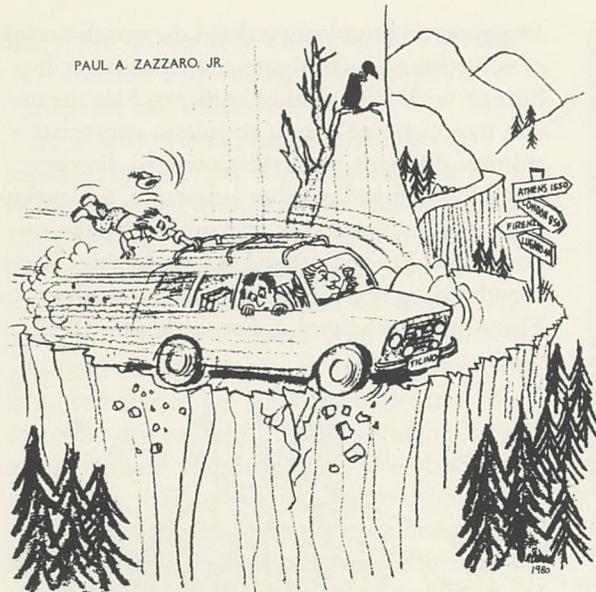
"Now isn't this a lot more fun"



This picture was taken the year (1980) I was deciding whether to allow myself to be lured to TASIC. In the background is Lake Trasimeno, the very same lake on which Hannibal was forced to make some big decisions. Perhaps his success there influenced my mental process. Anyway, I was taken there by Mrs. Fleming on a freezing cold December day, together with Michael, Lynn and Anna. The Volvo wouldn't float so we opted for the dock. "Now isn't this a whole lot more fun than a stodgy old restaurant?" beamed Mrs. Fleming. Through chattering teeth we clicked, "Yes." Michael was sorry only that he had forgotten his gloves.

By 1980, I had already been on many picnics with Mrs. Fleming and on only a few had I caught the flu. But all of them have been memorable because of the indomitable spirit she conveys no matter how unlikely the eventual picnic site may be. However, that is not the great lesson I have learned from these well-orchestrated soup-to-nuts moveable feasts. The great lesson is how to travel, how to turn the chore of getting from one point to another into one of life's pleasures, how to make the time between events an event. In short, to take control of events and not let them control you. And keep your mouth shut about the ants or the icicles.

*Paul Zazzaro*  
TASIS, Montagnola  
Administrative Director



"Go easy on the bitters this round, Paul—by the way—did Georgio finish fixing the roof rack?"

## Mary Crist Fleming: A Lifetime in Education

"Whatever I do with my life, I'll never get involved in education!" When Mary Crist spoke these words as a Radcliffe freshman, she had spent eighteen years living in the Mary Lyon School in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Frances Leavitt and Haldy Miller Crist had opened the school in September 1910, the same month their only child was born. "Cris" had been raised in a dormitory and had gone from kindergarten to her high school graduation with her parents' livelihood surrounding her constantly. She had had enough. She would study French in college, she would travel in Europe, she would have a serious career as an opera singer or actress. But no more schools.

In September 1980, when Mary Crist Fleming celebrated her seventieth birthday, she was toasted by friends and family who have been swept up in the whirlwind she has generated as the founder and director of high schools, summer camps, student travel programs, a junior college, a travelling student repertory theatre, and dozens of other educational ventures. The birthday party guests gathered in Thorpe, Surrey, on the campus of TASIS England, one of the three branches of the American high school in Europe to which she has devoted the richest years of her life. Two days after the party, she was driving her white Volvo across Europe to Lugano, to welcome the faculty at the beginning of another school year at The American School in Switzerland. The day after that, she

was flying to Athens, to speak with seventy teachers at TASIS Greece. The following day she was back in Switzerland to welcome 200 arriving students; twelve hours later she was flying back to England to attend the opening of school in Thorpe. At each of these campuses, the lives of students are being deeply touched by an elegant, enthusiastic, idealistic lady—"a crazy old woman, really," she says of herself—who never ceases to amaze everyone with her charm, her versatility, her good sense, and most of all the tremendous energy which she puts into running excellent schools designed to offer something special.

People who live and work around Cris Fleming assume she is famous. She occupies so many places and is in touch with people on every continent. But to the extent that she is truly famous—"infamous," she declares—it is largely because she arrived in Le Havre in June, 1955, on a steamer from New York, "with four children, half of them mine and half borrowed from friends, seventy-two pieces of luggage, and four cases of peanut butter," packed them all into a new Volkswagen bus, and drove non-stop to southern Switzerland, where she had rented a small villa in Locarno to use as a summer camp.

Three days later, having crossed the Gotthard Pass at midnight, she arrived at the villa, cargo intact at three o'clock in the morning. She got out of the bus, looked at the stars over Lake

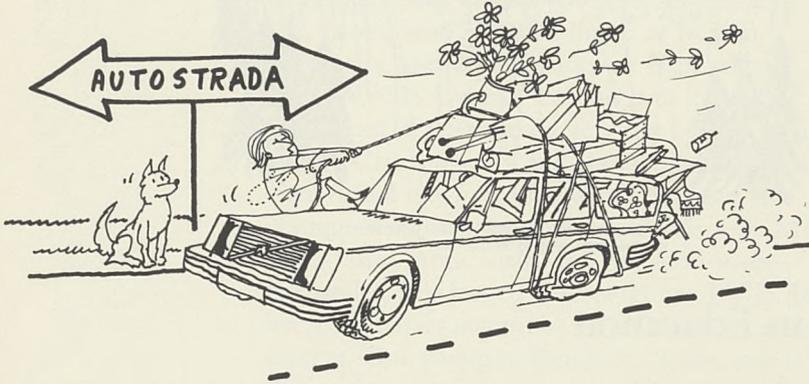


An early graduation at Frog Hollow Country Day School



A recent graduation at TASIS

Maggiore, and suddenly realized she was dreaming of something much bigger than a summer in Europe with a handful of students. Her dream was to encourage young people to appreciate cultures different from their own, to discover the value of learning other languages, to develop their independence. She was excited by the opportunities Europe offered her to do this. Three months later, she welcomed the first students to The American School in Switzerland—TASIS.



The rapidity with which this school came into being reflects Cris Fleming's approach toward doing anything: she acts as fast as she can. The growth of TASIS in the next 25 years from one school to three, during a time when many independent schools have foundered and some have been obliged to merge in order to survive the economic pinch of the last decade, is evidence of her superb business sense and her sheer nerve. And the richness of the education offered by TASIS, TASIS England, and TASIS Greece is a result of her own enthusiasm for adventure, for European life and culture, for travel, for art, and drama; of her interest in young people; and of her talent for infecting her associates with the same enthusiasm.

Her role in education is in some ways a throwback to another era, in some ways that of a pioneer, and in many ways unique. Whereas independent schools normally are non-profit corporations supervised by boards of trustees, Cris Fleming is the owner and proprietor of all the schools she has created. "Mother would never form a board to control the schools," says her daughter Lynn Fleming Aeschliman, Assistant Director of the TASIS schools. "She wants to feel free to act individually—to act immediately to solve problems she sees, and to be able to implement immediately creative ideas." The direction these schools take is intimately linked with her own personality.

Although the days are gone when she personally escorted groups of students "five minutes younger than I was" around Europe, or when she stormed through dormitories delivering tirades on the importance of keeping one's room tidy, her mere presence on one of the TASIS campuses is felt by everyone—students and headmasters, gardeners and chefs. In her way, she is as powerful a force in students' lives as Frank Boyden was when headmaster of Deerfield, except that whereas The Headmaster was visible daily at his desk in the main corridor of the school, La Signora Direttrice leaves the day-to-day running of each school to others, while she works tirelessly on the long range development of TASIS.

In 1983 it will be fifty years since she willingly set aside her vow not to follow in her parents' footsteps. When she graduated from Radcliffe, Mary Lyon School needed her help in order to survive the Depression. Then, as now, she knew how to face immediate practical necessities without letting these necessities make her feel deprived of her dreams. She helped. She lived in a dorm again. On a budget of ten dollars a day she set out to recruit more students. When Mary Lyon survived the Depression, only to find its buildings taken over by the U.S. Navy during the war, she moved the entire school to the Barbizon Plaza Hotel in New York—the first of many hotels in which her schools have found themselves from time to time—and kept classes running as usual. When she paused long enough to reflect that the circumstances had indeed involved her in education after all, she decided to start her own school—or schools.

The first of these was Frog Hollow Country Day School, in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, and its beginnings were auspicious. It was January 1943 when she moved her family into the farm which would become the school. She had a two-year old daughter, her second child was due in less than two weeks, and a blizzard was burying the roads in Lansdale. The movers balked at driving a large truck through the snow. Eight-and-three-quarter months pregnant, she was determined to get settled in the farm before the birth of her son and so she drove the truck herself.

Such blithe determination has characterized her meeting of thousands of "impossible" deadlines ever since. So has her aversion to sitting still. "Sit still? Stand still? There's no such thing," she insists. "You either go forward

WE MUST ADJUST  
TO CHANGING  
TIMES AND  
STILL HOLD TO  
UNCHANGING  
PRINCIPLES.

*Julia Coleman (President  
Carter's H.S. teacher,  
in his inaugural address)*

or go backward." In retrospect the move to Europe seems inevitable. Even so, she moved barely fast enough to keep ahead of the enthusiastic response from American students for a high school in Europe, with travel as part of the curriculum. By June 1957, when the second graduating class received their diplomas, TASIS had grown too big for its campus in Locarno.

She found a larger villa in nearby Lugano, a quiet town with palm trees lining its lakeside walks, funicular railways climbing steep hills on all sides, elegant shops on cobblestone streets that are scrubbed clean every night, and a host of retired Germans and northern Swiss who enjoy the sunshine and the seclusion. In August, however, she realized that this villa was still not big enough—and students were to arrive in two weeks. She bought two pre-fabricated dormitories to be set up on the grounds, moved a statue of a madonna to make room for a boiler, and was relaxed and ready to greet arriving students and their parents. Two years later, when the school grew even larger and had to move again, she packed up the pre-fabricated buildings and moved them, along with the rest of the school's paraphernalia, three miles up the road to the new campus.

Fortune favors the bold, and boldness is a Crist family characteristic refined to its essence in this tall, strong lady with her brown-and-gray hair swept neatly up from her forehead, her eyes flashing, her rich full voice ranging freely from serious tones to hearty laughter with equal ease in French, English, or Italian. "Learn to make decisions!" her father told her. "Make a decision—right or wrong. But learn to make decisions!" Decisiveness and self-assurance have brought her success in an environment which was not immediately ready to accommodate itself to her. The owners of the first villa in Lugano eventually made other plans, and Cris Fleming found herself and her school facing eviction. But not if she could help it. She decided to look for a wealthy supporter, someone who could step in, buy the villa, and then let her continue leasing it.

One such individual appeared in the person of Baron Heinrich Thyssen, steel magnate and owner of the largest private art collection in Europe. The Baron and Mrs. Fleming discussed terms whereby he would buy the villa. Another interested investor came along, however, and proposed terms she liked better, so she wrote to the Baron to decline his offer. The response was a phone call from Thyssen's lawyer, who told

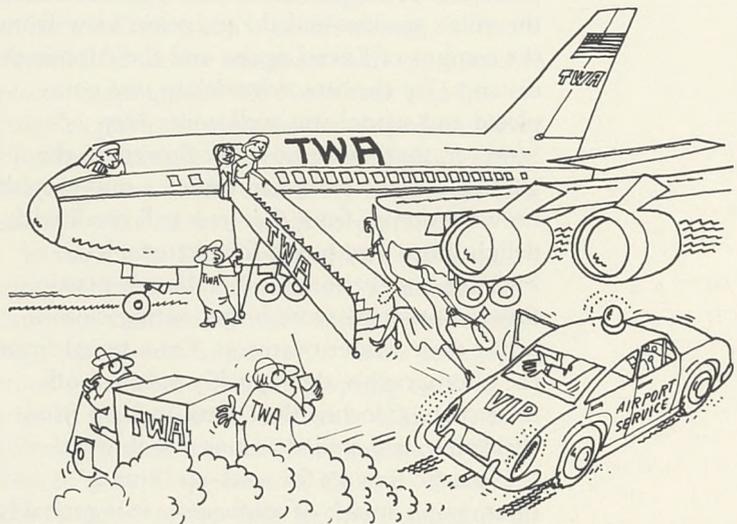
her, "You do not turn down Baron Thyssen." "Of course I do!" she replied promptly. "Someone else offered me more."

Impressed, Thyssen suggested a second meeting, but by now Mrs. Fleming was in Mallorca on vacation with her children. Still, she wanted to hear what the Baron had to say, so she flew back to Switzerland, leaving her son Tom to drive himself and his sisters, Gay and Lynn, back to Lugano. Tom was fourteen years old—and reputedly the only person who had been able to get a VW bus up and down the steep driveway in Locarno. Whether or not it was because Tom had nearly been born at the wheel of a moving van in a Pennsylvania blizzard, his mother had complete confidence in all her children's ability to take care of themselves. While the three of them were on their way home, the Baron was agreeing to her terms.

Cris Fleming has known Switzerland well since the year she spent in Lausanne as a high school student there. Lugano combines the advantages of Swiss stability and Italian culture. On the whole this was an ideal location for her to start a school—unless, perhaps, one considers the problem of her starting any kind of corporation in a country where women did not even vote, much less run businesses. When she began applying for loans, she found herself in the offices of bankers who had never done



"Boldness is a Crist family characteristic refined to its essence in this tall, strong lady"



business with a woman before, and who were unsure how to deal with this woman in particular. For her part, she has always shown the same self-assurance—and the exceptional business acumen—which impressed Heinrich Thyssen, and the bankers in time became similarly impressed.



"She insists on dining by candlelight"



"... but they were Italians and I was a woman, so what could they do?"

One Swiss banker was so impressed, over twenty years ago, that he left the bank and became TASIC's business manager. Walter Winiger's familiarity with the people with whom Mrs. Fleming had to deal was endlessly valuable, from the day he stopped her as she was going downtown, wearing a fur coat and heavy jewelry, to apply for one of many loans. "For heaven's sake," he told her, "leave your furs and bangles at home! You just cannot dress like that if you want to make a serious impression on the Swiss bankers."

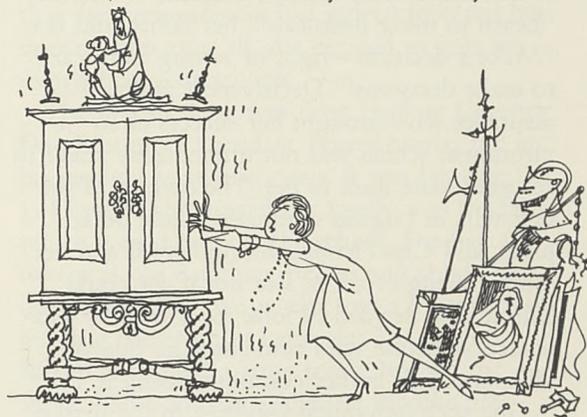
Actually, she looks good in furs and bangles. Her style is classically elegant, not showy. She likes black dresses. She wears a bracelet of gold coins—"as many as I have mortgages," she laughs. She insists on dining by candlelight, with fresh flowers on the table, and TASIC students have candles and flowers at dinner. Her preferences keep TASIC from taking on an institutional appearance; furniture in the salons of the three schools includes many antique pieces. "In the early years, second-hand furniture was all I could afford, and I didn't like modern furniture anyway. The things that have survived the wear and tear of the school have increased in value."

Her way of getting problems solved quickly impresses students too. The move to Lugano called for a new school catalog, complete with color photos which would show the charm of the villa's gardens and the gorgeous view from the campus of Lake Lugano and the Alps in the distance. By the time remodeling was completed and school was well under way, however, there were no more flowers in the garden, and the grass had turned a dull grayish brown. Alumni from that year still recall with delight how they posed for pictures. Mrs. Fleming bought some sod and some plastic flowers. Students wore bright spring clothes under their winter overcoats. On a signal from the photographer they quickly stripped off their coats, clenched their teeth to keep from chattering, and smiled among the flowers.

If plastic flowers for a set-up "spring" photograph smack of artificiality, it is probably fair to say that there is a healthy measure of theatre—some of it rehearsed, most of it improvised—in Mrs. Fleming's life. Her real love of theatre is very deep to begin with, and she gives a sense of drama to the events that surround her. She commands a meeting-table or the podium at an all-school gathering as she might command a stage. She is not a show-off,

and she does not take the spotlight away from anyone else. Rather, she cares passionately about the success of the schools; she devotes her energy and drive to this goal, and she makes full use of her talents and all the energy and initiative possessed by everyone who works for TASIC. Behind all her efforts there is an old-fashioned sense of responsibility. "Power is trust," she says. She is comfortable with the fact that she personally controls these schools. If a dramatic style of self-expression sometimes serves as the most effective way for her to project to others her sense of responsibility and her sense of what the schools ought to be, then she will make use of any dramatic skills she possesses. The message she delivers is real.

One of the most popular traditions at The American School in Switzerland grew out of another of MCF's moments of inspiration in the face of a problem. In 1959, when the school outgrew its first Lugano villa, she moved it to Montagnola, a village which overlooks Lugano from the Collina d'Oro, the "Hill of Gold," covered with chestnut forests and punctuated with small clusters of stucco buildings, among them the 17th-Century Villa De Nobili, now the main building on the TASIC campus. In typical form, she moved the school into the villa with a speed that took her helpers' breath away. "The plumbers and carpenters insisted that the building couldn't be ready in time for the opening of school," she says, smiling bemusedly, "but they were Italians and I was a woman, so what could they do?" Her eyes



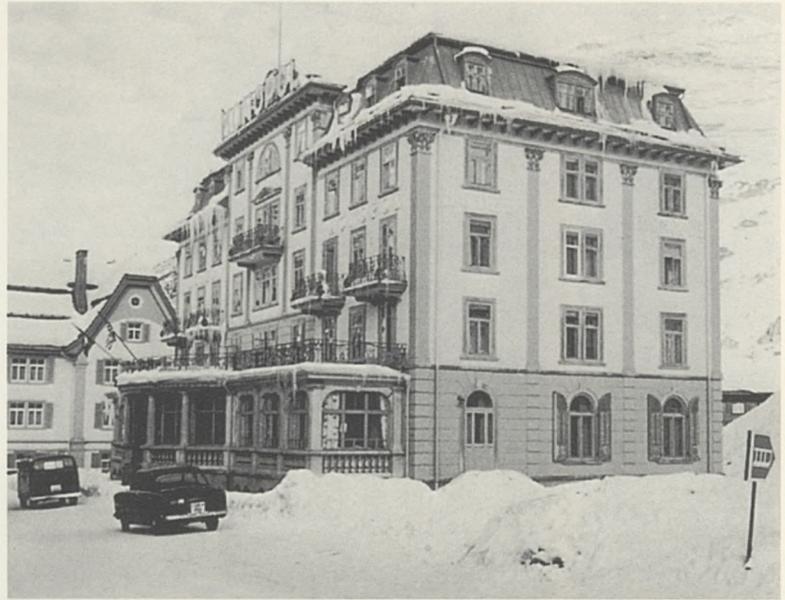
twinkle coyly when she says things like this. She acts as if it is her femininity, sometimes, which enables her to get what she wants, but in reality what impresses people—male or female, Italian or Swiss or British or Greek or American—are her warmth and her strength.

Still, the villa had no central heat, and installation would require three months during

which time the building could not be occupied. Reasoning that no one's education in Switzerland is complete without knowledge of the Alps, she moved TASIS to a hotel in Andermatt for the winter months. One morning breakfast was served as usual in the villa dining room. During the day, desks, mattresses, library books, blackboards, maps, and the pots and pans from the kitchen, not to mention the chef himself, were moved high up into the Alps. By evening the entire school was in Andermatt, dining off its own china, candles and flowers included. Classes met as usual, except that the sports program was modified in the predictable way: everyone took ski lessons. Every year since then, even with the heating system long since put to work, all TASIS students and teachers spend two weeks in the Alps—St. Moritz, now—in January. Classes meet in the early morning and early evening, with the rest of the day for skiing and for discovering a very different part of Switzerland.

Picture-postcard views of the Swiss-Italian lakes, skiing in St. Moritz, twice-yearly trips to Florence, Paris, Vienna, Rome,—these images might well be the main excuse for having such a school as TASIS. In fact, however, TASIS is no jet-setter's play school. First of all, it is an excellent school academically; second, it has developed over the years a diversified student body: a few basically prep-school-oriented students; many students from other countries; and many American students who would be going to public schools back in the U.S., except for the fact that their families live overseas.

The European setting and the boarding school intensity attract faculty members with imagination, and the vitality of TASIS depends on their initiative and their energy. Typically they are liberal arts college graduates, well-prepared in their academic fields. They teach high-powered advanced placement courses, solid English and math, arts... and they are constantly called upon to be versatile: drive a vanful of students to the opera in Milan, lead a hike up an Alpine valley, organize a bicycle trip in southern France, think up ideas for parties, show students the museums of Florence. In short, they do the things Cris Fleming did herself when TASIS was smaller and when she personally chaperoned students around Europe. This versatility and desire to get as much as possible from such opportunities is communicated to students. In the classroom they are challenged to think, and to handle substan-



Early ski semesters at the Hotel Monopol in Andermatt were the triumph of ingenuity over necessity

tial assignments. Like many other college prep schools, TASIS boasts of seniors' acceptances by prestigious colleges and of its ability to "teach students to mature with confidence and competence in a changing world." Fortunately, behind the rhetoric of the school's impressive-looking catalogues, there are people at work who know the difference between a fancy appearance and the nitty-gritty of a real school. Just as a Swiss banker's willingness to work as Mrs. Fleming's business manager is a testimony to her credibility as a businesswoman, so the devotion of faculty members with experience in places ranging from the New York and Los Angeles public schools, to the striped-tie New England boarding schools, to the Peace Corps, is a testimony to her credibility as director of schools which deliver what they promise.

In the 1960s TASIS grew. More buildings, more students. More programs: a summer camp for children of many nationalities, a post high school year in Europe, a junior college, travel everywhere, including spring vacation trips to the Soviet Union and to China. Mrs. Fleming herself traveled more and more. She flew to New York, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles to interview teachers, attend alumni reunions, promote the school. She flew so much that TWA created a full-page ad around her, featuring a picture of her striding briskly across a runway. And she drove back and forth across Europe in her Volvo, German Shepherd beside her, dictaphone on the dashboard. Secretaries typing from her dictation heard occasional clinking sounds on the tape; she

"She flew so much that TWA created a full-page ad around her"



## "BOOK ME ON TWA WHEREVER AND WHENEVER POSSIBLE"

Mary Crist Fleming is an American educator directing four programmes in Europe, for students from fifteen different countries. She travels often, and to the far corners of the globe.

Her travel agent quotes Mrs. Fleming as saying "Book me on TWA wherever and whenever possible, even if it isn't the most direct route."

Naturally, Mrs. Fleming chooses her favourite airline for her students too. Each Fall a group of 50 young people fly TWA from New York to Milan to attend The American School in Switzerland. In the summer, children from six to twelve years of age are entrusted, unaccompanied, to TWA.

Mrs. Fleming explains that the highly personalized service she receives in every airport from TWA ground service agents encourages her to entrust her young charges to TWA too.

"It's as though I put one of my own staff on board to care for the children."

Mrs. Fleming goes on to say "I have the impression that every TWA employee is instilled with the spirit of service from the outset of his training, for like any important activity in a competitive world the only thing that finally puts the stamp of quality on the product is service."

"Whether it is our college in Florence, our High School in Lugano, or our two summer programmes, we at The American School in Switzerland know that the quality that parents and students alike are seeking is personal interest and care."

"My experience of nearly twenty years of flying with them proves to me that TWA, like The American School in Switzerland, and its branches, insist foremost on personal concern and quality of service. That is why I always fly TWA."

We have found that many experienced travellers agree with Mrs. Fleming.

Ask your Travel Agent to book you on TWA next time, and you'll understand why.

### TWA'S AMBASSADOR SERVICE TO:

NEW YORK	BOMBAY
BOSTON	BANGKOK
PHILADELPHIA	HONG KONG
WASHINGTON	TAIPEI
CHICAGO	OKINAWA
LOS ANGELES	GUAM
SAN FRANCISCO	HONOLULU

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always has a portable bar with her when she travels, and once, at a planning meeting, she quipped, "I'll never start a school in a country where I can't say 'ice' in the local language." (She is known for mixing strong drinks, but she is actually very temperate, holding the same drink in her hand for an hour while she attends to her guests—or her dictaphone.)

In the 1970s, the dollar's decline relative to the Swiss Franc raised the effective cost of sending a student to TASIS to nearly double the tuition at Andover or Foxcroft. Yet, during the same period TASIS grew from being an exciting European adventure, mostly for students from traditionally private-school-oriented families who wanted some experience of Europe before going to college, to a well-established trio of international high schools for a remarkably diversified student body. This diversity is to a degree the product of Cris Fleming's business sense, her ability to find new "markets" for her schools; and it is also a result of the most international of her many dreams.

For many American families, a school like TASIS is not a luxury but practically a necessity. In Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, American employees of internationally based companies live with their families in communities where there are no American schools beyond the eighth or ninth grade. MCF saw ten years ago that TASIS could serve these

families by offering the relative convenience of a school less far away than its stateside counterpart...and offering American children the chance to see some of Europe while their families are living in Jeddah or Tripoli. She sends headmasters and admissions representatives to these areas, to tell families about TASIS, to convince American companies to recommend the school to their employees.

She has also broadened the international flavor of TASIS by attracting students of many other nationalities, and by providing courses in English as a second language. Another good business move, this; but the businesswoman has made business serve her more idealistic purposes. Here she has brought Italian, Arab, Japanese, Swiss, German, Sudanese, Kuwaiti, and American students closer together in her schools. "TASIS believes that the opportunity to learn from one another greatly strengthens each student's appreciation for his own background and enhances his perspective on his place in the modern world," reads the TASIS catalogue in an echo of her own words. In theory this is a prime example of education fostering international understanding. In fact the schools meet the challenge creditably; and many of TASIS' non-American graduates have chosen to go to college in the United States.

During the recession of the '70s Mrs. Fleming decided that if TASIS was really a viable educa-

tional alternative overseas, then it would not merely stay afloat; it would expand. Sensing the demand for an American boarding school in Great Britain, she bought an estate eighteen miles outside of London and founded TASIS England in 1976. Wary of Britain's own perilous economic state, a few disinterested spectators thought the new enterprise was poorly timed, but questions were silenced quickly by the success of the new school. Opening its doors to 135 students the first September, it grew in four years to 375 students in twelve grades, establishing itself as both a first-rate college-preparatory school and, simply, a beautiful place: a campus of broad green lawns and perfectly trimmed rose bushes that evoke the flavor of older academic institutions in England.

Cris Fleming was 66 years old when TASIS England opened, but neither her strength nor her love of new projects was declining. Besides, bull tactics were working in what was supposed to be a bear market. More companies were recommending TASIS to their employees. With a budget nevertheless lean, the schools were continuing to maintain high standards. In fact, the most-heard complaint about TASIS recently has been that its standards might be too high. Conceived to build the already well-prepared student's cultural foundation while preparing him or her for college, TASIS has also sought applications from families who often are not college-oriented, whose children have attended schools which have put little pressure on them. Suddenly here they are, required to take three years of a foreign language and two of lab science in order to get a diploma, and being graded stiffly. By the beginning of 1979, parents and corporation personnel officers began saying, "We like your school, we like the opportunities, we like the way the kids get to experience Europe, but we want a curriculum that gives them a good basic reading-and-math education they can handle. What can you do about it?"

What else but start another school. The question 'when?' wasn't even asked; Mrs. Fleming would start a new school that fall. Where? Walter Winiger suggested Athens, a major city closer to the area most of these students would come from. How? Start small and hope to build.

Mrs. Fleming got a Greek dictionary and looked up the word for "ice." She drove to Brindisi, took a boat to Piraeus, made arrangements for TASIS to occupy a hotel in Kifissia, a suburb of Athens, and set about planning a trimmed-down curriculum and

budget for a school that might have 80 students its first year.

A modest plan. But in twenty-three years of shaping TASIS, Mrs. Fleming has made the school's reputation too good for things to stay simple. In the fall of 1979, TASIS Greece opened with nearly 80 boarding students...and five hundred day students. As soon as it had become known that TASIS was coming to Athens, the well-established Hellenic International School had proposed an affiliation. The growth of TASIS England had been rapid, but the growth of TASIS Greece was fantastic. Today, this school prepares students for either American or European universities, since it offers not only American college-prep courses but also the International Baccalaureate and the British G.C.E.; at the same time, it accomplishes its original purpose of providing solid grounding in basic subjects.

Cris Fleming sits still less than ever. One week she is supervising a remodeling project in Surrey, the next she is in Greece...or at an alumni reunion in Denver. With luck she may have a weekend in between to relax at her house in Tuscany. But there is always more to do, and other people find themselves hard-pressed to keep up with her. Once when she could not delay any longer before setting off from Lugano for her house in Tuscany, she looked for a moment at the pile of paperwork on her desk—work she had no time to finish now but also could not hope to fit into her briefcase to take along with her. She strode to the closet, pulled out a plastic garbage-pail liner, swept everything from her desk into the bag, threw the bag into the car along with her suitcase, and drove off.

Her seventieth birthday was planned for weeks. The guests gathered in Thorpe, on the campus of TASIS England. A delicious buffet, many toasts, a cruise on the Thames. Songs



"... a weekend in between to relax at her home in Tuscany"



"... her interest and enthusiasm for young people"

with original lyrics to the melodies from "My Fair Lady." A warm gathering of family and friends, many of them also her associates. To surprise her, every guest came in disguise, wearing a mask which was supposed to contain a clue to that guest's identity. In characteristic Alexandrian fashion, Cris would not sit still and guess identities; she scurried around the room, trying to peek under the masks. "Who's that? Kate? Oh wonderful!" Eager to know everything immediately, she was vivacious as a child on Christmas.

And the next day she was driving to Lugano.

In two years she will celebrate five full decades in education. And then what? Perhaps she will slow down, just a little. With her daughter Lynn's involvement in TASIS, Cris Fleming could retire, but her old-fashioned view of work seems opposed to the idea.

Speaking again of her mother's decision not to make TASIS a non-profit institution, Lynn points out that Mrs. Fleming has turned all the school's profits back into the school's growth and improvement, saving little or nothing for her old age. But when she speaks of this to her mother, the answer comes back, "What old age?"

One of Mrs. Fleming's favorite anecdotes concerns an old New England lady who refused to die until she had finished shelling her peas. Ask Cris Fleming whether she has more peas to shell; will she start another school soon? A glint comes into her eye, and she smiles. "Maybe France. Mm. Maybe China..."

*John Stifler*

*Florence, Massachusetts*

*Former English teacher, TASIS*

*(written in 1981 for the TASIS Alumni Magazine)*

Betty Cranmer, Mary Hart, Forrest Cranmer, Joan and Ted Calnan, Phyllis and Jac Rothschild, Max Page, and Peter Stevens await the arrival of the birthday lady



Phyllis Rothschild, Forrest Cranmer, Anne van Brussel, Nicla Mambretti, Nigel Blackwell, and Betsy Newell enjoy Mrs. Fleming's 70th birthday party



Cris Fleming with U.S. Secretary of Education T.H. Bell



# A Proclamation

*Presented to*  
**Mary Crist Fleming**

*For her significant efforts and tremendous contributions toward the furtherance of education at the international level.*

*And, whereas her unselfish acts have served to foster the dynamic idea of an educational moral vocation as the highest quality of life!*

*And, more specifically...*

*Whereas her extraordinary capacities, dedication and endless resourcefulness in the education process endures!*

*Whereas all of her initiatives and major undertakings continue to bear fruit of the highest educational and moral virtue in private education communities resulting in her considerable international reputation!*

*Whereas she has introduced thousands of Americans to European cultures and civilization and in turn introduced in great numbers Europeans and Asians to much of the best that America has to offer in its education, culture and opportunities!*

*Whereas with her extraordinary enthusiasm, grace, charm, self-reliance and linguistic ability, she has personified much of the generosity, optimism and industriousness that are among our finest qualities and ideals as a people!*

*And, whereas she remains an enthusiastic educational traditionalist and an unrepentant American patriot while being both obstinate and eloquent in the defense of her unwavering tradition, conviction, verve and ideals!*

*And finally, whereas she has made her very personal, indelible mark on the world of education!*

*Whomsoever shall witness also shall evince an overwhelming sense of gratitude and unsurpassed appreciation given by my hand, this Sixteenth day of December, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty Three.*



**U.S. Secretary of Education**

## She Had a Dream

ALL THAT IS  
NECESSARY FOR  
EVIL TO TRIUMPH  
IS FOR GOOD MEN  
TO DO NOTHING.

Edmund Burke

Cris Fleming—a unique and an outstanding American. Yes, she has many abilities and virtues that enhance her charm and personality. But, she is definitely different. She had a dream—a dream to undertake an accomplishment that was much beyond the ability of normal mankind. But, she did it—and most successfully. How she did it—I don't know. I do know she did it. She built a superb American school of higher education in Europe. For many years [pre-1950s] Americans working in Europe, either on a tem-

porary or permanent basis, were without an American school in Europe. (I know from my own personal experience what it means for an American speaking English only, to attend a French university.) The President of the United States was certainly right in awarding Cris [one of] the nation's highest honors!

Addison Brown

Náples, Florida

"...I want you to know what TASIS meant to me and always will.

"It was the opportunity to meet new people, and live with them. I never knew it was possible to become so close with students and teachers alike; and I thrived in the warm atmosphere.

"It was the opportunity to hike a Swiss Alpine trail, and be able to look down upon the wondrous beauty of the country.

"...With the encouragement of teachers and students I became more confident in myself and my beliefs....I learned about living with and really getting to know people.

"...I don't think I ever took it for granted....We were very lucky people.

"I think the faculty and staff of the school can be very proud of themselves for what they have accomplished, and most of all, yourself, for making dreams come true in more ways than can be described....

"There are no words which can express my thanks for what you have given me."

Nicole Leuderitz  
TASIS student, 1983  
(written in 1984)

### Radcliffe College

#### Alumnae Recognition Award

### Mary Crist Fleming

*Visionary leader in international education, you established American schools and cultural programs in Europe that have inculcated in countless numbers of children from the United States, and other countries an understanding and appreciation of American and European cultures. Your enthusiasm and humor have made devoted disciples of all those who have been privileged to work with you. For your indefatigable energy in fostering education and culture on both sides of the Atlantic, the Radcliffe College-Alumnae Association is proud to present you with its Alumnae Recognition Award.*

June 1984

## Your Gumption

... There are literally thousands of persons—students, faculty, parents and friends—who are thankful for your many accomplishments. I am personally indebted to you for influencing the course of my life; interests from art to foreign affairs were sharpened due to opportunities you gave me. Your notion of standards and education grounded in the humanities are more per-

minent than ever. Perhaps most of all I admire your gumption—many have dreams but few persevere to see them through as you have....

*Hendrik Woods*  
Former history teacher, TESIS  
(From a letter written in 1984)

## Presides Par Excellence

Barbara and I had flown into Heathrow from Cologne where a group of my former students in the Carl Duisberg program had organized a twenty-fifth reunion party. Cris Fleming, with characteristic, really overwhelming, generosity, had invited us to spend a few days thereafter with her in London, and we were eager to see her.

Because on that day Cris was presiding at the commencement ceremonies of her school at Thorpe, we were to meet there, have lunch with the dignitaries assembled for the occasion, and then motor into London with her for our visit. Our plane had been a little late in landing. Saturday morning traffic in the towns and villages between Heathrow and Thorpe was both dense and intransigent. By the time our taxi expelled us and our luggage at the entrance gate, commencement had commenced.

We left our bags in the reception office and walked down a path which led to the lawn upon which the graduation party had assembled. The scene which greeted us could not have been equalled by Cecil Beaton, not even with a Steven Spielberg budget. June sunshine bathed rhododendrons in all the brilliant colors of that showy species. Under a large tent, blue and white striped if memory serves me properly, proud parents and relatives sat in folding chairs listening to the commencement speaker, a respected American historian whose textbook on American diplomacy had once been required reading for my students. The graduates sat facing the audience dutifully awaiting their diplomas and honors awards and trying hard to conceal their anticipation of summer holidays and the promise of exciting university experiences which lay ahead for them. And everyone except Ringo Starr, whose stepdaughter was the valedictorian, was handsomely attired for the occasion. Center stage and certainly the center of attention sat

Mrs. Fleming, beaming on her students, listening to the speaker with that rapt concentration which is her hallmark, her irresistible magnetism compelling the audience to savor as she was every drop of drama in the ceremony.

Now I consider myself something of an authority on commencement exercises, having presided over twenty years' worth of them as a university president, not to mention a good many others I had tolerated as a faculty member. I can tell you Cris Fleming presides par excellence. She takes charge, yet her audiences are relaxed and absorbed. She moves the agenda to its finale with the skill of an Olympic ice skater, yet she takes time along the way to insert gracious asides and personal observations. She is the essence of feminine charm. She was the star of the show.

Since all seats were occupied, Barbara and I strolled around the tent's perimeter enjoying all the wonders our eyes and ears could engage. I mused on some of our previous times with Cris Fleming and reflected upon her extraordinary talent and the guileless generosity which she unfailingly bestowed on us and our friends wherever in the world we would meet; in Lugano or the Loire Valley, in Italy or Indiana. I thought of her great zest for life and of her inimitable style. I marveled at her intense interest in nearly everyone she met, her discipline in learning their names and the salient facts of their lives.

After the last diploma had been handed out and after an elegant luncheon had been served and after a flurry of last minute instructions had been communicated to members of her staff, Cris told Barbara and me she was ready to take us to her house in Phene Street. But just as our driver turned on the ignition, a scene took place which revealed the heart and mind of Cris Fleming to me as nothing before ever had.

FAMOUS  
HISTORIAN  
CHARLES BEARD  
WAS ASKED BY  
YOUNGER  
HISTORIAN OF  
COLUMBIA, WHILE  
DRIVING ALONG  
IN MODEL T FORD,  
HOW LONG IT  
WOULD TAKE HIM  
TO SUMMARIZE  
ALL HE KNEW  
ABOUT HISTORY—  
A PAUSE OF TWO  
HOURS—'THE  
MILLS OF THE  
GODS GRIND  
SLOWLY BUT THEY  
GRIND EXCEEDING  
FINE'—SILENCE,  
ONE-HALF HOUR—  
'THOSE WHOM  
THE GODS WOULD  
DESTROY THEY  
FIRST MAKE MAD'—  
LONG SILENCE—  
'THE BEE FERTI-  
LIZES THE FLOWER  
THAT IT ROBS'—  
SILENCE—JUST  
WHEN THE NIGHT  
GETS DARKEST THE  
STARS COME OUT.'

GOOD TIMBER  
DOES NOT GROW  
IN EASE. THE  
STRONGER  
THE WIND  
THE TOUGHER  
THE TREES.

Three girls came running around the corner of the reception center calling Mrs. Fleming's name. The driver shut off the engine. Cris popped out onto the driveway to be embraced by these graduating seniors. It was a heavily emotional encounter. The girls were crying and telling Mrs. Fleming how much their educations were appreciated, how much they were going to miss TASIS, and how very much they loved her and treasured her friendship and support as they were growing up.

From within the car Barbara and I caught snatches of this scene, and we were deeply touched. We had been with Cris, surrounded by the great and near great among her friends. We had seen her royally entertain our trustees. We had learned to admire her courage and deter-

mination as she built her schools in strategic places throughout Europe. She had all the stuff which makes ambassadors and captains of industry. She could, we knew, do almost anything.

Yet huddled with these girls in Thorpe's courtyard we suddenly understood that Cris Fleming most of all was a devoted teacher, a superb role model for adolescent boys and girls, a woman who wanted more than anything else to make the world better through the lives of her students. Those girls knew that and on that sunny Saturday afternoon all at once we knew that too.

*Barbara and Wallace Graves  
Evansville, Indiana*

## Whirling with Mrs. Fleming

We have agonized and puzzled over this invitation to bear witness to the incomparable Mrs. Fleming. How could we possibly do justice? How could we alight on a single occasion that would capture what Mrs. Fleming means to us? Should we catalogue her in all her various guises? Should we recall the inimitable hostess, the tireless traveler, the dedicated educator and the witty story-teller? Would we be able to capture her devotion, her attention to detail, her love of beauty, her extraordinary ability to engage the mind and heart of anyone at any time?

Alas, too grand a task for us mere mortals. Always present is the fear that instead of capturing her, we would reduce her to mere words. Is it possible, after all, to capture Mrs. Fleming?

So. It is with some trepidation that we offer the following:

In a play currently staged in London, *Shirley Valentine*, the title character stands alone on stage. The audience comes with some suspicion, some apprehension. A one-character play? How could this character possibly keep our attention for two hours? But quickly, astoundingly quickly, Shirley Valentine lures us into her world, and for the next two hours we are tossed and caressed and led through Shirley Valentine's realm. We sigh a fair amount; we laugh a great deal. We emerge, restored, thinking, "Ah! Ah *life!*"

Shirley is trying to recapture a time in her life—and a part of herself—which she has lost of late. The former self, the Shirley Valentine

self, was capricious and daring and sensitive and in all senses *alive*. She cannot fathom how this former self has been lost and replaced by a shy, fearful, dull woman. Midway through the play, she experiences an epiphany in which she says (referring to her present, hollow life) something to the effect of: "It seems a crime against God to be living such a *little* life. Wouldn't He want us to live a much *larger* life?" She recovers the former Shirley Valentine—the vivacious and alive one. She had not disappeared forever; she merely has been wandering around, lost, in all the un-used portion of her recent life.

Admittedly, most of us could probably identify with being guilty, from time to time, of living too small a life. But Shirley Valentine had the same effect on us that Mrs. Fleming has: she reminds us of this necessity to live the larger life—always, every single day.

It is difficult to select an isolated example of this phenomenon. One thinks of Mrs. Fleming's effect rather like that of a collage: it is this and that and some of this over here, all pulled together. But we will try to illustrate:

Eight years ago we attended our first Development Board meeting at Capitignano. The Board was nodding farewell to the departing Stevens family, welcoming the new Riggs aboard, and conducting what we would come to realize was its 'usual' and unique form of 'business' during three days in this idyllic mountain retreat. Other 'guests' included the families of Windie and De Fleming, Lynn and Michael Aeschliman, and Kate and Fernando Gonzalez.

After we had been housed and wined and dined like visiting royalty during the first two days, a picnic was announced. It is this picnic which we would like to proffer as an example of what it is like to be with Mrs. Fleming.

Surely the picnic would take place on the lovely grounds of Capitignano? Surely there was no need to go further afield.

Ah. No. Mrs. Fleming had chosen another site. It was the *only* place this picnic could take place. The group comprised a three-car caravan, with Mrs. Fleming driving the lead car. We were riding in the second car, and spent the next two hours straining our necks for sight of the elusive white volvo as it sped along the narrow, twisting roads. Down valleys, up mountains, over streams, whizzing along through the Tuscan countryside.

"Anyone see the Volvo?"

"Isn't this a little *dangerous*?"

"Where are we *going*?"

"Does she always drive this *fast*?"

Midway through this journey, mercifully, we caught sight of the Volvo, halted at a train crossing.

"Oh good, we can *rest* for a few minutes."

"Why is Mrs. Fleming getting out of her car?"

"Where is she *going*?"

"Who is she talking to?"

"The railway crossing attendant—?"

"Why is she talking to *him*?"

What is she *doing*?"

Wait a minute—

"Don't tell me—"

"He's lifting the barrier—"

"—For Mrs. Fleming."

Well, of course.

On we went. Round curves, down valleys, up mounts. *Et cetera*.

We arrived at the castle. It *was* a magnificent setting, worthy of our journey. But alas, the gates were locked. Mrs. Fleming stepped out of her Volvo and walked off, toward a side lane.

"Where is Mrs. Fleming *going*?"

"Mrs. Fleming? Mrs. Fleming?"

"She seems to be going up that cobbled lane—"

"In her high heels—"

"What on earth—?"

"She's knocking on the door of that house—"

"Who is she *talking* to?"

"What is that man *giving* her?"

Mrs. Fleming returned with a set of keys dangling from a large iron ring. She opened the gate.

We had expected to sit on some bare stone,

to balance our paper plates delicately, to nibble cold-cuts with our fingers. Ah. But this was a Mrs. Fleming picnic.

From the back of the Volvo poured blankets to spread across the grass, crystal goblets from which to drink our chilled wine, china plates and silverware with which to eat our hot (especially packed in an insulated container) veal marsala, our fresh rolls, and our tossed-at-the-site salad.

We sprawled out comfortably after this repast, and in the center sat Mrs. Fleming in her white dress and her high heels, regaling us all with those stories which never cease to surprise and entertain: stories of drink kits on the autostrada ("You never know when you will need this sort of thing"), of Michael climbing up to Lynn's window (!), of a fourteen-year-old son driving a bus through Europe ("He was an excellent driver"), of a car of young women driving through Yugoslavia amidst flapping ducks, on and on, demurely deferring ("Oh you don't want to hear about *that*!") as we, entranced, begged for more ("But we do, we do...").

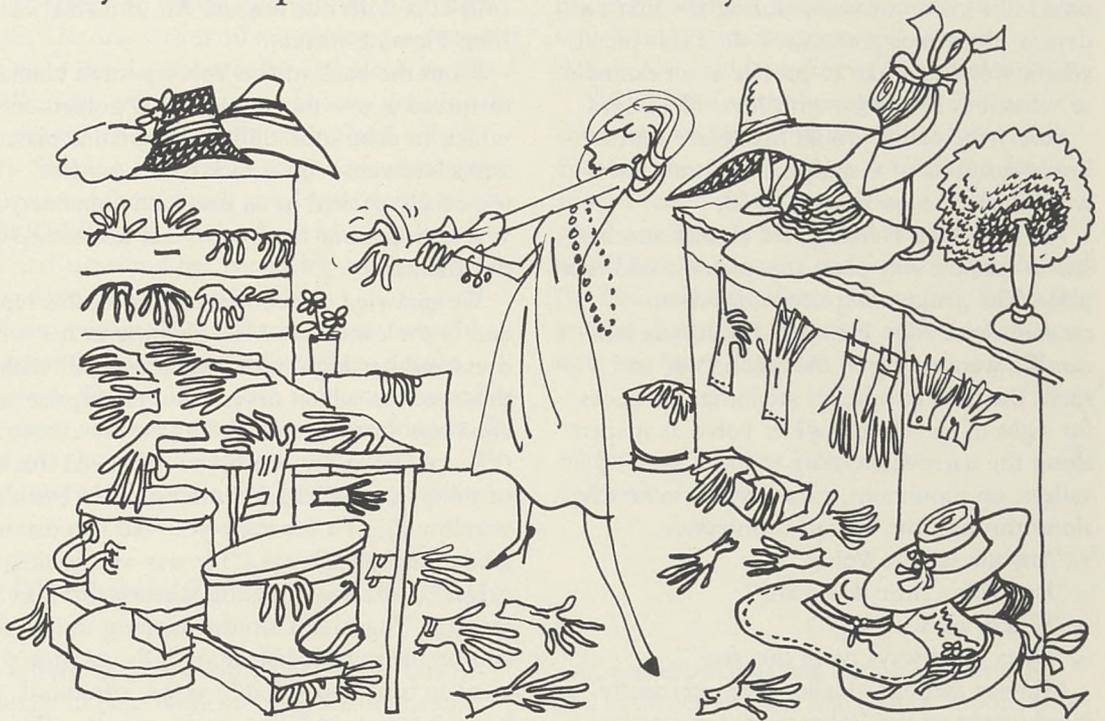
A photograph was taken sometime in the midst of all this lolling about, and, although many such photographs are unable to capture the essence of such scenes, this one, we think, managed better than most. In the background one sees the natural beauty of the place, and connects this with Mrs. Fleming and her love of such natural beauty. In the foreground are the picnickers, comfortably grouped. There is a look on the faces of these picnickers that says it all. It is a look that is difficult now to describe in words, and the closest we can come to rendering it is to compare it to the looks on the faces of the audience leaving *Shirley Valentine*. The look is one of pleasure and appreciation mixed with awe. It is a look which says "Ah! Ah *life!*"

Mrs. Fleming has never lost her Shirley Valentine. She knows that you should grab at each day and whirl it around and leap through it, and at the close of the day, you wring it out for a few last drops. She infects you with her leaping and whirling. Like the audience in the above play, you come away from your contact with Mrs. Fleming shaking your head in amazement, grateful for this glimpse of a 'larger life.'

*Lyle and Sharon Rigg  
Headmaster and English teacher  
TASIS England, Thorpe*

HOW SMALL OF  
ALL THAT HUMAN  
HEARTS ENDURE,  
THAT PART WHICH  
LAWS OR KINGS  
CAN CAUSE OR  
CURE./  
STILL TO OUR-  
SELVES IN EVERY  
PLACE CONSIGNED/  
OUR OWN FELICITY  
WE MAKE OR FIND.  
*Samuel Johnson*

## A Lady Who Operates with Flair and Style



All who know her will agree that is an apt description. By way of illustration, consider how she has handled the matter of security in her house in London. What she would have preferred would have been another handsome Alsatian like her beloved Saxon, but with so much international travel that ideal solution was not possible. Of course she has a burglar alarm, one which seems to be somewhat sensitive and temperamental, as some of us in London and at Thorpe can testify. But she tends not to turn it on when she is in the house. Something more was required to give her that comfortable feeling of security we all like to have.

It so happens she has an attractive so-called

“granny flat” in her basement with its own entrance. An ideal place to keep someone in residence who would tend to discourage possible intruders. So to augment the defenses of the premises she—logically—turned to Her Majesty’s Department of Defense, just a couple of miles down Old Brompton Road from Phene Street.

And what did she obtain from the D.O.D.? To occupy the flat and generally keep an eye on the property she installed an active member of the armed forces assigned to the local headquarters. Some might have thought a sergeant-at-arms or perhaps a chief bos’un’s mate would do. But not our Cris; she has a habit of going to the top. A captain of the Royal Navy, a senior officer of the Senior Service, that is who she has in residence down below the main deck, and that is why she has that nice feeling of security. He is quiet, keeps his quarters ship-shape, and pays the rent on time. Also, he is there in case of need, such as when an attractive man is required to round out a dinner party. Is there a hostess who would not be envious?

We submit this as an example of how Cris does things—with *Flair and Style!*

*Betty and Forrest Cranmer  
London*



Cris greets Sir Basil Blackwell with Betty and Forrest Cranmer



Christmas in Cape Town with the Cranmers

## What Might Have Been the Setting for Strauss's *Capriccio*



At my age, I find that I have total recall of happy events that took place in the Twenties, Thirties, Forties and even Fifties, but more recent happenings become more hazy. One still “Cristal” clear is that totally blissful time at the Chateau Beauchamps three summers ago. There’s never been a mini-festival and seminar quite like that one. Not only was the music-making by the Brodsky’s, Prometheus, Yitkin Seow, et al, unforgettable, but so, too, was all that went with it: a fortnight of gracious living in what might have been the setting for Strauss’s *Capriccio*, only, more appropriately, the music was French, and as elegant and delicious

as the food and wine we enjoyed daily. John Amis had convened a musical team that was immediately integrated with the audience, but, presiding over all, and ultimately responsible for our physical and spiritual well-being during that life-enhancing experience at the Chateau Beauchamps was our hostess, the indefatigable and wholly remarkable Mrs. Fleming.

Greetings on your birthday, dear Cris, and do let’s have a repeat performance somewhere, sometime.

*Felix Aprahamian*  
*Music critic, London*

## Ruth Goes to the Bootblack’s Room...or the Ritz!

Mrs. Fleming, mistress of the Chateau, intrepid stalwart and veteran of arrivals, is poised at the staircase to welcome the group. These are students of an age, students from America who came to enjoy the “Vie de Chateau”!

Chateau Beauchamps is in the farm country of the Sarthe, somewhere nearer Le Mans than Chartres. Not Chateau des Enfants but Chateau des Anciens. Ages 55 to 75 and glad to be alive; however, sufficient spryness to carry your own luggage is a prerequisite for admissions.

Some are TASHIS alums or parents; most are Interhostel tourists armed with good will, ready to feast eyes and palates on France in her 200th birthday.

The problem started when “une dame d’un certain age” raised a fuss about her room. “You people advertise the Vie de Chateau and I’m put in the Bootblack’s Room!” A shudder tinged with smiles passed among those of us on the staff. Protestations were delivered urging her to see reason: “But you have a room on the

THE LINE OF  
LEAST RESISTANCE  
MAKES RIVERS  
AND MEN  
CROOKED.

*Abraham Lincoln*

ground floor! no steps to climb,” “only a short walk to the Chateau for relaxation and drinks in the salon!” No use. She is adamant she’s been sold a pig in a poke. Her mind is set to make a row. She raises her voice. The other 39 folks whisper. Some attempt is made to still the discouraging words. Alas, “unacceptable,” “outrageous,” “speak to the manager” are heard echoing across the Chateau lawn. She’s threatening to spoil the day!

Apprised of the malcontent’s distress, Mrs. Fleming is waiting as our disgruntled “connoisseur” makes her unhappy way to the main house for the Arrival Banquet. “How nice to meet you Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ (name withheld). You

are welcome to the Vie to Chateau!” But the friendliness and outstretched hand are spurned. “Don’t touch me!”

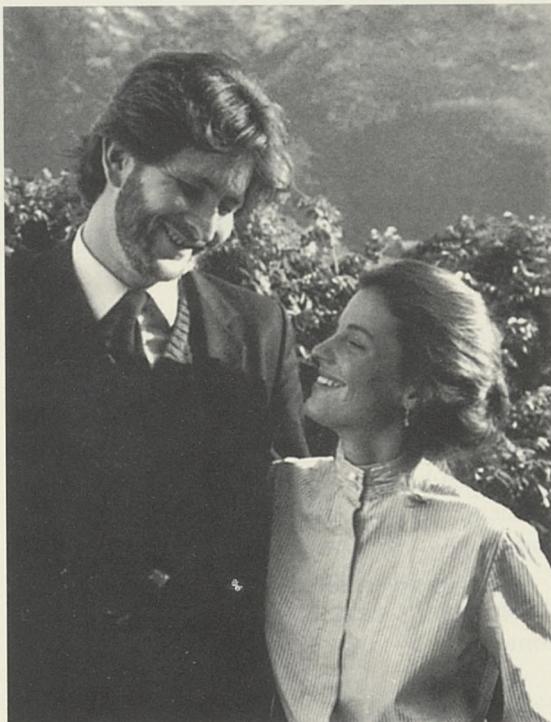
As the evening proceeds the Doctor (we never did manage to ascertain where she’d earned her *three* Phds) was seen and heard among groups of guests in the salon doing her best to darken spirits. Something had to be done. By this time she has no intention of leaving. The darkness fades. It’s replaced by Gemütlichkeit and congeniality. Her happiness increases. Her stay is assured.

In the meantime the occasional volley is heard lobbed across the salon as her humour shifts and the vision of her room returns.

A pleasanter conversation ensues, one in which Mrs. Fleming diplomatically double checks that previous biliousness has abated. The “Doctor” protests: “my stay will cramp my style but, alas, seems inevitable.” At this point Mrs. Fleming rejoined with her definitive response, “Look Ruth, either you hush and start enjoying yourself or I’m driving you to the Ritz in Paris myself!”

Need I say that Ruth reigned in her choler? While she continued erupting from time to time with an outrageous remark—a kind of color commentary on the proceedings—she was on the whole pacified. Such mutterings as there were became muffled by the satisfied sounds of the group. Mrs. Fleming’s threat of expulsion to the Ritz had won the day. Ruth was content for the duration of her Vie de Chateau in the “Bootblack’s Room.”

*Mark Aeschliman*  
*TASIS, Montagnola*  
*Art history teacher and*  
*Director of the Post Graduate Program*



Mark and his lovely  
wife Simone Aeschliman

“...Mrs. Fleming was marvelous; not only has she educated, inspired, and guided her students, but she has the gift of youth. As an adult I find myself still inspired by her; I left the reunion refreshed with a renewed outlook on my past and a positive attitude on the future.”

*Kje Wynkoop*  
*TASIS student, 1969*  
*(written in 1989)*

“As a mother of four young ladies (plus two granddaughters), I wish to express my personal admiration for what you really mean: support, strength of character and above all love!!! We hope you can continue to impart those qualities to all the people around you.”

*Hilda Sanchez*  
*Alumni parent, TASIS England*  
*(written in 1990)*

....As TASIS grew, I have obviously had to take on more people and delegate a lot of responsibility. I have usually been very fortunate in having very good people as associates, people that I like and enjoy working with. I hope it is mutual because many have been with me quite a few years, which would seem to prove that it is mutual. In certain departments I've had to trust the person in charge implicitly—the Business Office for instance, and then the Development and Public Relations office, all of which I used to do myself. Obviously, as the school grew it was impossible for me to do everything and I had to trust people with certain departments. There again, you win some and you lose some, so I have had a few unfortunate experiences. But by and large I am very, very lucky with the colleagues with whom I am the most closely associated and who carry the most important aspects of the school. I think now the schools would run very well without me, but I don't want them to discover that too soon, otherwise they might insist upon my retirement!



Cris Fleming's close associates, still smiling after a Development Board meeting in 1987: (l. to r.) Lyle Rigg, Paul Zazzaro, Fernando Gonzalez, Chris Frost, John Larner, and George Salimbene.

Of course, one of my real problems and one of the most important and difficult ones now is how to perpetuate the schools after my death. Supposedly the only way you can perpetuate a school is to put it into either a Foundation, or a non-profit corporation, with a Board of Trustees, because the only perpetual group would be a Board of Trustees that would be changed one by one as members retire, withdraw, and are replaced. But I have had one very unfortunate experience with that, when I had Fleming College in Lugano. Instead of remaining proprietary, I created a non-profit corporation which meant I lost control, happily not of the physical property, but of the College itself.

The timing was very bad because it was during the period of the revolution on college campuses in America and France, with the "Printemps" in Paris of '68. It was the time when many students were in revolt, and I had given our college the tool by which they could gain control. I resigned irrevocably. A faculty and student faction wanted to run the show and their standards were not the same as mine. They thought I would be a figurehead and a fund raiser, but that was not my idea of my role. I had strong beliefs then, as I do now, and certain standards educationally, socially, morally, and spiritually, and they did not agree with mine, which is why I resigned. I evicted them from my property at the end of that year and they established another institution. But once burned twice shy.

I have come to realize that maintaining control is absolutely vital, maybe for my character; maybe I have been spoiled, because over all the years that is the way I have operated. The only alternative to a Board of Trustees is, of course, to have one's family continue a family operation. My two older children are not, and never were interested in the school, even though they are both very capable young people and very successful in their own fields. My youngest child is extremely interested in the school. In fact she and her husband have promised to continue the school even though they would probably have a different style of operation. Right now my son-in-law is in education, and is a superb college teacher. And for now I'm not willing to retire. I'm not the retiring

SCIENCE SANS  
CONSCIENCE, CE  
N'EST RIEN QUE LA  
MORT DE L'AME.  
Rabelais

NEVER RESENT  
GROWING OLD.  
THINK OF THOSE  
TO WHOM THE  
PLEASURE IS  
DENIED.

Einstein

*sort. What would I do if I retired? And yet it's foolish of me to think that I can go on indefinitely. What I really want to do right now is start another school, but nobody wants me to do it!*

*Education in America has become deplorable. That's one reason why I feel even more intensely that we have to do a strong job over here to try to counteract some of the poor education in the States. Our young people are not going to be able to compete in the exciting modern world that is developing right now because so many of them are not trained. Many American schools have not been strong enough, discipline has been lacking, they have down-graded the curriculum so that it has become more and more soft and less and less of a real education. Many Americans have become more or less illiterate; they can't even write good English. Our public-school system is totally inadequate. I feel even more committed to making our schools very strong schools academically, which we have been successful in doing. In many ways we have much more freedom to be demanding in our curriculum by virtue of being a proprietary school.*

*We require 18 credits to graduate. Students are required to take three years of science, three years of math, three years of history, four years of English, and three years of foreign languages. They don't have room for more than one or two elective courses and one of them has to be Humanities—Humanities, the story of Western Civilization—to teach our students the values of our remarkable heritage and the need to preserve and defend it. Music, art and theatre we have classified under electives because that is part of being a well-rounded person, but essentially those are extra-curricular activities which one offers in a boarding school.*

*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 all 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!*

*I have been very blessed and have had an extremely happy life, as well as the fortune of good health. I often feel I am the richest woman in the world with my own three very special children, and to live daily in the world of hundreds of wonderful young people, to be surrounded by them and responsible for them. I love my work, which is why I will never retire. People are lucky to be able to work, to have health and interest to do so. And it is a foolproof formula for how to grow old!*

*Creating something worthwhile is exciting, challenging, and rewarding. I am sure my daughter, Lynn, who will succeed me, will be like her old mother, aware of the challenges and needs in this world and committed to making this planet a better place to live in, not only for us, but for future generations.*

My daughter Lynn,  
son-in-law Michael, and  
my two grandchildren,  
Anna and Adrien



TRIBUTES



# Familiar Faces of Friends from Many Places

With Richard Blackwell † of Oxford and Michael Aeschliman on a dog walk in Tuscany



With Richard Adamany †, Dean of Fleming College Florence, at Lynn's wedding

Strolling in elegance with Richard in Tuscany



With Pres Tolman on a fishing trip

Myriam Guscetti and Gai load the mini for MCF at Torre di Gattaia



With Gertrude Burns † (Burnsie) in Haiti



With Van Cliburn before a concert in Lugano

... and Guy Tolman and Gai on a picnic



With Peter and Michael Newell at Ascot



With Pasquale Trisorio from Naples



Victory smiles with Alex Korach of Zurich



With Giovanni Flores of Florence and Betsy Newell at Capitignano



TASIS troopers, Bertha Seifert and Robert Wilson of Lugano, in Williamsburg



Giorgio, Piero, Paolo, Maria Cerbai of Capitignano



Twenty years later, guardian angels Giorgio, Paolo, Maria, Piero Cerbai with Adrien and Anna at Capitignano



With Robert Morley and Malcolm Muggeridge at TASIS England

## Sui Generis

It is quite a long time since I first set eyes upon other people—seventy-six years in fact. During that time, in politics, in international diplomacy and in a private life thoroughly enjoyed in many countries, I have had to do with at least as many men and women as most of us, and perhaps more. Yet now that I think about it in the privacy of my study, I cannot recall anybody like Cris. In fact I cannot remember anybody who even remotely resembled her. It is not that she is unique—we are all of us unique in a greater or lesser degree. She is what those who like Latin quotes call “sui generis,” a species all to herself.

Cris confounds the observation of the late Lord Ponsonby—or was it Maurice Baring?—when he wrote about our troubled race:—

If all the good were clever,  
And all the clever were good,  
The world would be so much better,  
Than we thought it possibly could:  
But—the good are so *harsh* to the clever:  
And the clever so *rude* to the good.

Sadly, here lies a grain of truth. But all her friends know that Cris is good, yet I cannot recall that she was ever harsh to anybody. And she must certainly be clever—just look at her achievement: the Hilton of Educational Establishments.



Yet I cannot recall that she was ever rude to anybody, either, and nor I imagine can you.

Our world needs a little help just now: more than a little. If one day it should turn out to be even slightly better than we thought it possibly could, then let it be remembered that Cris was there.

Sir Peter Smithers  
Vico Morcote, Switzerland

## Little Mother

Here we are—God willing—to rejoice at one more famous milestone, at one more thunderous decade, marked as usual with a barrage of

sickening reverses and yet rounded off with a full complement of even greater accomplishments.

I must have been shamefully drunk at the also famous 70th birthday party to have presumed to steal the first waltz with our hostess. No one could do her a more painful or less exhilarating honour and I promise not to do it again this year. I shall stand at the back, maybe behind the orchestra, with tears of happiness and gratitude in my eyes just to have known the woman who has always been, to me, “Little Mother”.

It is true that she is inexhaustible, that she is the most generous of friends, that she is most deserving of our admiration and our love in equal measure, and that I thank my stars that I never worked for her. But what I cherish most in her is that she has carried into the end of this century (and into the lives of all her friends and the countless young who have been privileged

Christopher threatening  
to do the unpardonable  
—splash water on  
MCF's hair



to be her larger family) a living, enduring example of a standard of behaviour which is tirelessly unselfish, which takes truth for granted, which is orderly, disciplined, which imposes a love of beauty on a sometimes ugly world, which unflinchingly accepts its responsibility. It is possible to see this accumulation of virtue as American, somewhat as a Puritan legacy. Nevertheless it is apt that we dance (or sing or hide behind the string section) in her honour in Europe. America is now only her market. Europe

is her proper playground and the scene of all her recent triumphs. So... a million happy birthday wishes and only one regret: that I could not write this message in my own illegible hand since there are so many things that need, cry out to be said which should remain illegible.

From the more legible and equally adoring Koukla and the ever-adoring Christopher.

*Christopher MacLehose*  
*Publisher, London*



Christopher MacLehose stealing affection from MCF's true love—Saxon

## Beauty and Duty

As I have known Mrs. Fleming well for nearly twenty years, during which time a lot of my own life has been lived in her presence, ambience, or immediate environs, it would be impossible—or impossibly lengthy—to call to mind or put on paper any adequate sense of the passionate tissue or, better, the blood and the bone, of life that we have shared. It has encompassed joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, gaiety and gloom.

But mostly joy.

Although I teach literature, I find most modern novels pallid, somehow “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought” and lacking vitality, but also lacking nobility. Part of the reason for this reaction is, I think, the influence on me of two larger-than-life individuals: my father and my mother-in-law. However great their differences, their lives have some common qualities and characteristics. Both were great travellers and fine linguists, both deeply cultured, both Europeans and Americans at the same time. Compared to their energetic exertions and extraordinary odysseys, many modern lives—and many modern novels—seem precious, introverted, neurotic, and ignoble affairs.

Although the phrase “*joie de vivre*” is French, I have never felt much of it in the French; but I always felt it in my father, and I have always felt it in Mrs. Fleming. And in neither case was it the product of a willed “desperate gaiety” in the face of an allegedly absurd world, against which “living well is the best revenge.” However much credit Mrs. Fleming deserves—and it is a lot—for her own joyfulness and delightful effect on so many people’s lives, I suspect she owes some of it to her own father, by all accounts a noble and remarkable man, who obviously passed on to her, at the least, some very energetic genes.

But it is not a biological but a cultural inheritance that I am getting at here. From her father and mother I think Mrs. Fleming inherited what are sometimes called “Victorian” values—earnestness, hard work, *noblesse oblige*, unostentatious piety—without the humorlessness that sometimes vitiated them. I believe W.H. Auden pointed out that “beauty” and “duty” comprise an important rhyme in Gilbert and Sullivan’s operettas; if true, this is very Victorian (in the sense of pre-modern and even anti-modern) and *very* MCF. There may be “beauty” of various kinds in Yeats, Joyce, Pound and Hemingway, but “duty” is dead or ironic. Not so for MCF, who is a living soul in a moral universe, not a dead soul in an absurd one.

Which is not to say that she is heavy or humorless, or any more virtuous than she has to be. Despite her own claim, she is no virgin, and sainthood is probably a bit much to hope for even when a generously non-sectarian meaning of that status is conceived. But her well-spring is some organic rapport between beauty and duty, between joy and work, between happiness and virtue. “Forgive what you do not approve,” Blake wrote of himself, “and commend me for the energetic exertion of my talent.” Mrs. Fleming likewise. She has not hidden her talent under a bushel, nor buried it in a field, nor been parsimonious in sharing it and its fruits.

Just as it would be churlishly inappropriate to criticize her in this reminiscence, so would it be dishonest to suggest that I have always agreed—or do now agree—with all of her beliefs and valuations. But that she has a nobility at least partly Christian—earnest, humorous, and generous in her own inimitable way—is, I think, indisputable.

The way that it has always most touched and

Michael visiting Cluny  
with Mrs. Fleming  
and Gai



impressed me over the two decades of our intimate familial rapport is in her treatment of 'staff' or 'help.' A natural as well as a cultural aristocrat, Mrs. Fleming has always *lived noblesse oblige*. With occasional and inevitable aberrations, she is no snob, but has always, to my knowledge, treated every person *as* a person, not an object, as an end, not merely a means, as a soul, not merely a body. She has the most generous and beautiful manners of anyone,

## Wisdom and Energy

Akbar with his son, Tom



other than her own two daughters and Paul Zazzaro, whom I have ever met. There is an apposite passage in one of the profoundest modern books I have ever read, the great Cambridge historian Sir Herbert Butterfield's *Christianity and History*, written in 1949. "The truth is," Butterfield wrote, "that if men were good enough neither the ancient city-state, nor the medieval order of things nor modern nationalism would collapse. Neither humanism, nor liberalism nor democracy would be faced with intellectual bankruptcy."

The French Revolution came about, said Carlyle, following Burke, "because too many men ceased doing their duty." In our age many people no longer even believe the word 'duty' has stable content. But Mrs. Fleming's parents, and Basil and Richard Blackwell, and Dana Cotton, and my father, and Mrs. Fleming herself, all held fast to the idea of 'duty' as the soul's proper form, as its homage, however mysterious, to its Creator. I hope she will cling to it still, *usque ad finem*.

Yet what has always made her dutifulness so engaging is her humor, her emotional generosity. No snob, no aesthete, no fastidious or self-dramatizing egotist, she has had too much humanity and too much of the milk of human kindness in her to leave any one out of the bundle of the living, to leave any one out in the cold. Life being "the vale of soul-making," she has voyaged far into this valley, beyond the sight of mere mortals to chart, or ultimately to judge.

Michael D. Aeschliman  
Free Union, Virginia  
Former English teacher, TISIS

"—fight the areas of our world that are 'capovoltato-ed,' never stoop to be a 'menefreghista,' and charge yourself with a personal responsibility to bring about a 'rinascimento' of the human spirit wherever your presence can contribute to its rebirth."

These words mean a lot more to me than they may to a casual reader, because I know that the author lives by them. Mrs. Fleming has influenced hundreds if not thousands of people and I am sure will continue to do so. During the past twenty-two years I have admired and adored her as an educator and as a

caring human being. She is simply great.

One aspect of her personality that has impressed me most is her energy. Defying entropy, her energy has constantly increased as the years have gone by. There is no need to search for the fountain of eternal youth. Who wants to remain young forever when one can age in Mrs. Fleming's style, with all the

wisdom in the world and all the energy to brighten the life of anyone who comes within her sphere of influence.

Akbar A. Khan  
TASIS England, Thorpe  
Head of Math Department  
Director of TASIS Summer Language Program

## The Pleasures of Table

When word gets out that Mrs. Fleming's coming to town, or when a coveted invitation to Capitignano arrives, my heart gives a leap. Diets are joyously abandoned, whole grain loaves wantonly cast aside: all is in readiness. For I shall always associate Mrs. Fleming with the pleasures of table, no less of conversation than of the palate. She has presided at the most memorable gatherings in my experience, and I am one of the many who will be always grateful to her for an introduction to the delights of winter picnics.

The generous hospitality of the lady is well-known on several continents, and in fact, if she has a failing (a point yet to be verified empirically one way or the other), it is that she likes to tempt the weak to an increase in girth. This is, however, but a small price to pay for the pleasure of her company, and anyway, none from among the legions of her guests has ever, to my knowledge, actually *burst*.



Grand banquet from the early days—still in style

Mrs. Fleming dines with "Henry VIII"



Mrs. Fleming with Melissa (in front and still slim) and (from front to back) Mark Aeschliman, Maria Clara Zazzaro, Adrien, Simone, and Anna Aeschliman, and Paul Zazzaro



SONNET FROM THE DINNER TABLE

How does she feed me? Let me count the ways.  
 She feeds me to the depth and breadth and height  
 My plate can hold; till, feeling not quite right,  
 I must needs leave my chair, and loose my stays.  
 She feeds me to the level of everyday's  
 Most glutt'nous lust, by sun and candlelight.  
 In Tuscan hills or Phene Street, the selfsame fight  
 Against the scales, against the siren calories.  
 She plies me with the pasta *she* can use  
 —Famed metabolic fleetness: for her 'tis fine—  
 With salmon, sweetmeats, dainty tiramisus,  
 ice cream, fois gras, cocktails, bourbon, wine:  
 The grandest hours of all my life!—and pounds to lose  
 or no, I do profess: There is on earth no better way  
 to dine!

*Elizabeth Barrette Browning and  
 Melissa Maier (Zazzaro)  
 Magliaso, Switzerland  
 Former ESL teacher, TESIS*

MAGNANIMITY

*for Mrs. Fleming*

Aristotle recommends magnanimity, being  
 great-souled,  
 The generosity of intention and effect to which  
 we should aspire,  
 And some Romans tell us that manners are  
 minor morals,

An idea more honored in breach than in  
 observance,  
 A vision more believed in than truly seen  
 in action—  
 With few exceptions, and this lady is one:  
 her manners

Generous, always directed to the end that  
 people should  
 Touch and greet, that social distance should  
 diminish, not increase;  
 Hers never the manner pretentious, cool and  
 self-enamored,  
 The haughty word, the unkind eyebrow raised  
 or accent spoken;  
 Her manners are never a knife to distance,  
 a sword to divide.  
 She revives the standard and polishes anew the  
 tarnished type,

And it was this exalted sense that the  
 Apostle meant  
 When he said, "give proof to all of  
 your courtesy."  
 This the lady always has done, and always  
 will do:  
 Her manner and grace do charity always renew.

*Michael D. Aeschliman  
 Free Union, Virginia  
 (written in 1980)*

## To Cris: You Have Made a DIFFERENCE

Dana and all the Cottons and Christoffersens wish you a spectacular Birthday!

We are so proud to know you, and we know that you in turn have ample reason for being proud of what you have created in international education. You have dreamed dreams that others did not, and you have managed through your abundant creativity, perseverance and energy to make your dreams come true. TASIS is a magnificent testimony to these dreams and to their realization.

All three Christoffersen boys: Erik, Nils, and Leif, have been lucky to experience the fruits of your creation at TASIS England, and all of them have come back richer in ideas, knowledge and respect for other cultures and for other people.

On this special day we salute you not only as

a friend but for all your meaningful achievements for young people over half a century. You have made a DIFFERENCE.

Dana would love to be able to participate in this celebration. As you know, he loves a good party! He greatly admires you and always has a sparkle in his eye when he describes the numerous occasions when he worked with you and when he and Gerry played with you. He has great respect and love for the fine human being that you are. So do all of us!

Much, much love from us all,

*Becky Cotton Christoffersen  
 Alexandria, Virginia  
 Alumni parent, TASIS England Summer School*



Becky and Cris in Oslo



Father Leif and son Nils Christoffersen host a reunion with Cris Fleming



Old friends Chandler Bigelow, Gerry Cotton, Madeline Chapman, and Dana Cotton

A TOAST TO OUR GIRL CRIS

I sincerely believe that each honest calling  
 Each walk of life has its own elite  
 Its own aristocracy  
 Based upon excellence  
 of performance.



Cris, you are an aristocrat  
 You are a dear friend  
 commanding our respect  
 and our love.

To Cris -  
 WHAT A WOMAN!

Dana Cotton, Evanston, Illinois (written in 1980)



Dana Cotton (center), guest speaker at Graduation in Villa Negroni in early 1960

Maggie Cotton enjoys one of Dana's many wonderful jokes at Capitignano



Another of My Mother's Signatures,

... Besides her ice bucket, is her famous black beauty case. It is her travelling home; it is never unpacked and travels with her everywhere. As she says, like her enormous black handbags, she can crawl in and out and bring out treatment for anything that ails you, including snake bites! Helena Rubenstein, her close friend for over 60 years, over-sized theatrical jewelry, antique crystal bottles and silver boxes also all magically fit into this case that's no larger than a shoe box. And

woe to the person who has to travel with her if it ever gets stolen, as I did once across America after it was surreptitiously removed from her feet at Heathrow Airport. What a surprise and haul for the thief and what a treasure trove its replacement is for a granddaughter.

Lynn Fleming Aeschliman  
 Free Union, Virginia

A Visit from Nonna

Nonna came to visit us  
 Which was so nice of her  
 I'm glad she brought her makeup kit

Cause I like looking into it  
 She brought me lots of beautiful books  
 Because I like reading in nice snug nooks.

We rode in a jeepney to lake Taal  
 I'm glad we didn't even fall.  
 She slept late while we woke early  
 But that wasn't anything  
 We had fun in the tricycles  
 But we didn't ride any bicycles.

There was a blackout  
 But we didn't pout  
 She bought me crayons and paints and  
 I drew her a picture.  
 Nonna is very kind  
 I love you Nonna

*Daniella Case*  
*Metro Manila, Philippines*



Daniella Case and  
 mama Gai in the  
 Philippines

## Another Granddaughter's View

### LEARNING HOW TO MIX BOURBON OLD FASHIONEDS AT THE AGE OF SEVEN....

Nonna (while getting ready for dinner): Anna,  
 could you make a bourbon old fashioned?  
 Anna: But Nonna, I don't know how to.  
 Nonna: All right, put the ice in, a lot please.  
 Then put in a teaspoon of sugar, a few drops of  
 bitters to melt it down, then pour some bour-  
 bon, enough to fill the glass a third of the way  
 full. Fill the rest of the glass up with water, last  
 but not least, put a slice of orange in.  
 Anna: Okay.  
 A few minutes later.  
 Anna: Is this all right, Nonna?  
 Nonna: Let me taste. (Smacks lips.) Just perfect.  
 Thank you, dear.

### GOING TO BORGO WITH NONNA

Whenever the Queen goes "downtown" she  
 has to dress up and look her best.

"May I go with you, Nonna?"

"Sure. Have you brushed your hair? Wear a  
 nice dress. We must always look our best."

Going on a drive with Nonna is like riding in  
 a plane with the feeling you are in the air. She  
 drives through Borgo like a hurricane and beeps  
 at anyone who's moving slowly! In the U.S. she  
 would be known as "The Reckless Educator."  
 We hurried through our errands so fast I was  
 back home in the pool before I knew it.

Nonna has to have her hair done at least  
 once a week. I like to go with her because you  
 can see her with three different hairstyles. She

normally asks me if I want a haircut, hairwash,  
 or once even a perm. It normally takes a whole  
 morning to get her hair done.

[Editor's Note. Credit should be given where  
 credit is due. "Nonna" could not live without  
 Elena in Sagginale, rustic farmers' wives' hair  
 salon setting that it is, and Mariucia in Lugano,  
 who comes to La Signora's bedroom at any  
 hour, day or night. Let's keep our priorities  
 straight. One of the times when "Nonna"  
 broke her wrist, she insisted on getting her hair  
 done before going to the local vet in Borgo to  
 have the wrist set. Needless to say it had to be  
 broken and reset later.]

Grandchildren  
 Daniella, Adrien and  
 Anna wondering what  
 Nonna is up to next





Grandma with grandson Alec Fleming



... and with Adrien and Anna Aeschliman



Anna in Nonna's arms

BREAKFAST IN BED

"Hi, Nonna. Has Maria made breakfast?"

"No."

"Okay! I'll make it then. Do you want raisin bread or soya bread?"

"Raisin, please."

Things that MUST be on her large white tray are her silver saccharine bottle and silver tea pot. She always has a grapefruit, but eats it last so "the toast doesn't get cold." The phone rings. She answers it and speaks to three different people in three different languages. We have fun looking at magazines and chatting, snuggled up in bed together. It's always exciting to eat breakfast in bed with Nonna. Why don't you try it?

After breakfast we always do "exercises." It's always fun because it's not very strenuous. Whatever you do with *the* educator, mother, reckless driver, or grandmother, it's an experience!

I love you Nonna. You're  
WONDERFUL—80 or 180.

*Anna Crist Aeschliman*  
Free Union, Virginia

Remarkable Mother that She Is

People are usually perplexed when they ask my mother how many children she has and her answer is "thousands."

I know what she means, and the questioner quickly comes to realize it too, since I know the amazing commitment she has and the tremendous responsibility she feels towards all the young people who come to TESIS. And yet I never felt short-changed as her daughter. As much as we chuckled when dear friend Dana Cotton once said, "Cris, I want your undivided attention" and she quipped, "Dana dear, I never give any one my undivided attention," she is

amazingly focused and attentive to all—to the one, twenty or hundreds in her presence.

As one of her three children, I can look back and say she was always there and *very much* there as mother *and* father. Being a parent now myself, blessed with a wonderful, supportive husband, I can imagine the real challenges and difficulties of a single parent, and yet my mother gave us so much more than two or even four parents could give. I am grateful for her yanking us out of the Philadelphia "Main Line" country-club milieu, for her daring to do something different with her family. She supported us in a remarkable way, always surrounding us with beauty, whether our home was a converted garage, a green house or a tool shed, and she worked hard to do this, yet always seemed to enjoy it.

Along with the discipline and high expectations placed on us, she always brought humour and fun. My memory is filled with happy "spots of time," wonderful family holidays and trips, endless picnics in memorable settings, or "getting away from it all" in the early days of the school by heading into the middle of Lake Lugano surrounded by the beautiful mountains,

On a wonderful holiday in Greece with mother and Tom



cutting off the engine of our little motor boat and just sitting there, mother and I, quietly reading or basking in the sun. Mother has practiced what she believes: "It's not what you do for your children, but *with* your children that matters."

Along with the tremendous opportunities she gave us as we were growing up, she also always trusted us with responsibilities from very early on. She expected, we delivered. Many of her "other" children were stretched and grew in this same way. I am grateful.

As an adult with the challenges and delights of parenthood and adulthood and an ever-increasing awareness and distress at the envioning mediocrity, I am ever more grateful to my mother for the high standards she has always fought for and lived by, for the extraordinary upbringing she gave us, and for the remarkable mother that she is.

*Her daughter, Lynn  
Free Union, Virginia*



Endless delightful picnics—here with Gai, mother, and Michael



Always dining "al fresco"—here with family in France



Baptism of Adrien Aeschliman, in my arms in grandma's baptismal gown, with Michael and Anna, mother, Gai, Mark and Daniella Case



Mother and daughter, Lynn

## To My Dear Mother,



One of those many kisses

You read the reminiscences of relatives and friends in this book. The accounts are amusing, serious, poignant, bringing to remembrance situations long forgotten.

Your eldest daughter has forgotten more than she remembers of her early life, perhaps some lapse of memory has been intentional. Certainly many circumstances and events do not deserve being recalled, as they would edify no one.

These present comments are more heart reflections than specific reminiscences, glimpses of heart remembrances and reflections on the hope for the time ahead of you.

Except for the interlude at the Catholic school in Aix-en-Provence, I never recall your being too far away when I needed you. You were always, and still are, available to me. Your care and nurture shone then and shines still. I am grateful to you.

As I grew older and sought my social independence, you had the wisdom to permit me enough rein to allow me to mature, but not so much that I would fall into folly. I am grateful to you.

You encouraged me as I worked for TESIS,

even if someone else may have been a better representative. I am grateful to you.

After leaving New York City, my life changed significantly for the better. You are supportive of my marriage to Mark and that new horizon that opened for my future. I am grateful to you.

Almost a decade ago I yielded my heart and my life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It was my decision to take myself off the throne of my life and to invite Jesus to take His rightful place there. My hope and prayer is that you will also invite Jesus to become Lord of your life.

It is He, through the Holy Spirit, who provides the nurture of our spiritual being, gives us the wisdom to make Godly decisions along life's path and encourages us in faith and truth. When we meet life's adversities, Jesus carries us through as we rely on His strength and power. He loves you without any condition. I love you, too, and am thankful to share this eightieth birthday celebration with you.

*Your daughter, Gai  
Kamarin, Metro Manila  
Philippines*

Mother shares congratulations with daughter Gai



... and shares some moments of relaxation after the party

With husband Mark





Proud mother and daughter



Mother ventures out to the Philippines for a visit

## In Conclusion

Josephine Baker's step-son once said about her, "She was like the sun. We need the sun for the flowers to grow, for the birds to sing, but if you come too close, you can get burned...." I can well sympathize with this reaction, since my mother is also an energizer and a devourer. She could not be the personality she is and have accomplished what she has without being a forceful dynamo and a dominating presence in one's life, one that can devour if one does not have enough sense to keep a healthy and respectful distance. The breadth of the Atlantic Ocean and time apart allowed me a helpful perspective on my mother, which in turn freed me to work on this book about her life.

When I set out to try to capture in words the character that is my mother, the project seemed rather daunting, and as I got into it even more so, but "fools rush in" and one of the many things my mother has taught me is to take on challenges and see them through to the end: "always finish what you start." So there was no turning back once I had embarked on this project. And yet I found the challenge of trying to put my mother, Mary Crist Fleming, between two covers, even if fleetingly, was well worth the struggle, time, and effort. I also realized we couldn't hold her here for long.

Since I have known her (44 years), she has always made time live, whether it is a daily meal, a picnic, a birthday, a holiday, a wedding, a baptism, a trip—short or long, time together, small or large event; she has made moments of time occasions, the passage of time memorable. I hope the gift of this book and the festivities planned make the eightieth birthday of an extraordinary lady memorable.

Good photographs are a delight to the eye and they often succeed in catching "spots of time," precious moments in life that are so fleeting, and different aspects and moods of people. And yet, similar to the way that, even

with all their advances, science and technology cannot finally get a handle on life in its totality and on the essence of being, such as the most important aspects of existence for each of us, photographs stop and catch an instant in time, but do not give the complete picture or the feeling of life, the vitality, the personality of a human being.

When such a personality as my mother approaches her ninth decade I felt compelled to try to catch in one volume the essence of Mary Crist Fleming and what her life has meant to so many, to pay her tribute by collecting different aspects of her life and personality from her many friends and associates. Of course nothing absolutely or completely catches the miracle of being that is a person, by the very nature of selection and available material, but my hope is that the words here contained have come closer to making up as complete a picture as possible—at capturing the essence of being that is MCF. I hope I, with the wonderful help of all the contributors, have succeeded in this mission. Just as a crystal is many sided and reflects back different light and colors, so too is a personality such as MCF multi-faceted. None of us are only one thing to all people, but each of us presents so many different facets to our fellow travellers in this life. Not least of all Mary Crist Fleming has been so many different things to so many different people—daughter, wife, lover, mother, comforter, mentor, inspirer, dreamer, and through it all educator. In all these roles she has been tremendously committed and enthusiastic, giving of her best. To all she undertakes and meets she brings a zest for life, a *joie de vivre*, that is a real inspiration. May God continue to bless her always.

*With love and devotion,  
Lynn*

NOTHING GREAT  
IS ACCOMPLISHED  
WITHOUT PASSION.  
WE OWE EVERY-  
THING TO ENTHU-  
SIASTIC PEOPLE.

*Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy  
(A quotation that someone  
thought quite descriptive  
of M.C.F.)*

### *Frances Leavitt Crist's Prayer*

---

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 Frances Leavitt Crist at the Mary Lyon School, and then by her daughter, Mary Crist Fleming, at TASIS and TASIS England.]*

### *And now, brethren,*

---

... all that rings true, all that commands reverence, and all that makes for right; all that is pure, all that is lovely, all that is gracious in the telling; virtue and merit, wherever virtue and merit are found—let this be the argument of your thoughts.

*St. Paul, Philippians 4:8*  
*(Ronald Knox, tr.)*

## ADDENDUM 2000

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N I N E T I E S

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# The Party of Parties – Mrs. Fleming's 80<sup>th</sup>

Chateauneuf-en-Auxois  
Burgundian Fête August 25, 1990



Suitors Gerhard Schwarzacher, Christopher MacLehose, John Amis, and Peter Newell



Proud Nonna Fleming with daughter Gai, granddaughters Anna and Daniella, son-in-law Michael, grandson Adrien, and daughter Lynn



Headmasters George Salimbene and Lyle Rigg, with Master Teachers Akbar Khan and Max Page serenade Mrs. Fleming



## Doctor of Humane Letters, *Honoris Causa*

### *Citation*

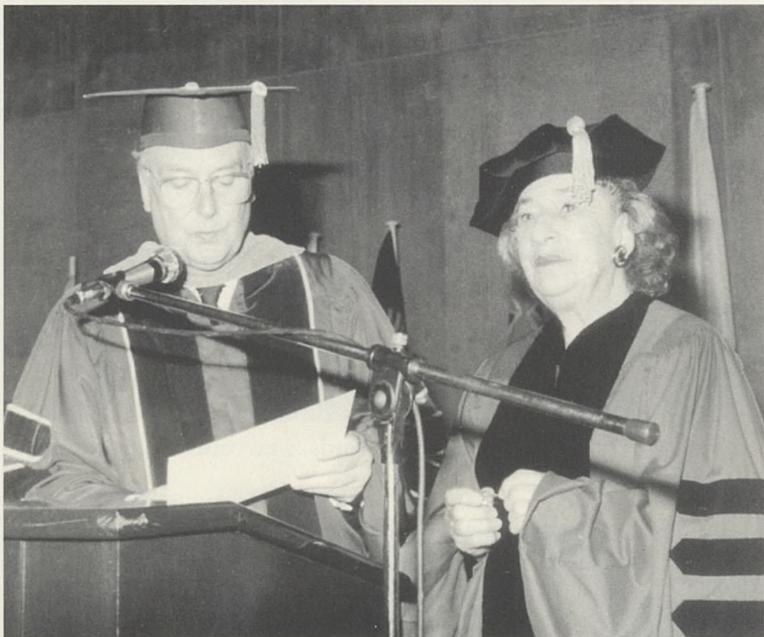
MARY CRIST FLEMING, as the proud bearer of a family tradition in education extending over most of the past century, you have not only made a valuable contribution to your own country but have also distinguished yourself as a leading figure in international education in various parts of Europe, not least of which is Greece.

Your long career in education began in 1933, when upon graduation from Radcliffe College you assumed the post of Assistant Director at the Mary Lyon School, founded by your parents at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

Eleven years later, you took a step in a new direction when you founded your own school in Landsdale, Pennsylvania, an institution which you continued to direct until 1955.

Important though this work was in the development of your career, it had become increasingly clear that the stage which it provided was much too limited for the full expression of your real talents and vision as an educator. Your greatest contribution was yet to come, and it was to be in the field of international education.

It was thus that in 1955 you founded the first of a number of schools and programs in Europe which were to bear the imprint of your clear insight into the character and nature of the overseas international school. This, of course, was The American School in Switzerland, later to become known as TASIS. Its remarkable success led in due course to the founding of, among others, TASIS England American School in



Mrs. Fleming listens as President Bailey reads the Citation

1976, TASIS Hellenic International School in 1979, and TASIS Cyprus International School in 1983.

Through these schools you have served students from a wide variety of backgrounds. One of your greatest contributions, however, has been the provision of a rich and valuable educational experience for the children of American families living and working overseas.

From your life's work, to which you have shown such dedication, it is manifest that central to your educational philosophy lies a faith in the value of intercultural exchanges and in the power of education to foster international understanding. Moreover, such has been the strength of your convictions and the power of your example that you have to a remarkable degree imbued those about you with the same high sense of mission that has informed your work.

And so, MARY CRIST FLEMING, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Trustees of The American College of Greece, I confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *Honoris Causa*, admitting you to all the rights, privileges, dignities and immunities pertaining hereunto. In witness thereof, I invest you with this hood and present you with this diploma.

John S. Bailey, President  
The American College of Athens  
Athens, Greece, June 22, 1990



Cris Fleming  
celebrating her 80<sup>th</sup>  
with Jack Bailey

## What 'TASIS' Really Means

Many schools have acronyms as names, but none of them sound quite as harmonious as 'TASIS'. When I first came to this school four years ago, it took me about the first two months to figure out what the word 'TASIS' stands for. There are all kinds of things I thought of. For instance, 'Talented And Sagaciously Inclined Students'. After all, TASIS does host a variety of talented students in the arts, music, drama, academic studies, and the most diverse things. I also thought of 'Transcendingly Anticlinical Souls Internationally Sesquipedalian'. TASIS actually is made up of individuals that are very anticlinal, or leaning in different directions, who sometimes use long words. The community at this

school is so diverse in every way that people tend to lean in different directions; toward art or travel or social life. It is the spirit of the school that encourages individuality. As for the long words, we use them just to confuse people.

On the other hand, TASIS could just mean 'Travel And Ski In Switzerland'. Of course, we don't only travel in Switzerland, but all over Europe and beyond. Through travel, we discover new horizons and explore new places and ideas. Ski term in Crans-Montana is one thing that unites all us Tasites. Even though some of us ski, some snowboard, and others break their bones, we're all after common pleasures like drinking hot chocolate, eating a crepe, or having a snowball fight. I hope new students look forward to joining this experience.

Finally, a crowd of 'TASIS' acronyms started invading my brain, and towering above them all was: 'This All Sounds Incredibly Silly'.

But at least now I know what 'TASIS' really means: 'Truly A Sensationally Intense School'. TASIS is intense. It is intense with people, faces, voices, laughter. It is intense with unmatched experience, with discovery, with joy of living. But most of all, it is intense with the spirit that Mrs. Fleming breathed into it when she first created it. Thank you, Mrs. Fleming, for this unique experience, and may it continue for years to come.

*Olivia Rasini, 1996,  
Montagnola, Switzerland*



Austin Kennedy  
and Olivia Rasini,  
TASIS '99,  
two artistic souls  
intentionally silly

## Mrs. Fleming Addresses Her Alumni at the Washington Reunion

What a wonderful room full of people, of very special people. I don't think Ambassador and Mrs. Defago suspected when they issued such a generous and gracious invitation to the Embassy that I was such a prolific old lady or that many of my students would come to the reception because they couldn't believe I was still alive! Or to see if I was stuffed with straw like El Cid, tied to a horse and sent into battle!

Be that as it may, I want to extend very hearty thanks to the Ambassador of the country that has so warmly hosted TASIS for the 45 years of its existence. Certainly the beauty of our command post above the Lake of Lugano has entered into the souls and has even changed the lives of hundreds of young people. May I take this occasion to express our deep gratitude to Switzerland through you, Ambassador and Mrs. Defago.

When you're living a long life you collect things that you like, even love. Some women have collected charms for their bracelets, reminiscent of events in their lives, others stock options, cats – one lovely old lady I know has five! – stamps – old coins.

I have collected villas, châteaux, English manor houses, and therefore mortgages. I've probably collected more mortgages than any woman you know. These, of course, because I had to have a place to house my most favorite collection - young people, young people from all over the world.

From 12 students in 1956, today 2,400 young people come through the gates of TASIS every year, representing fifty nations of the world. An old lady's dream come true!

One of the most rewarding aspects is to have my own three children – all here today – share my passion for education. Gai, through 10 years of missionary service in the Philippines and Indonesia, Tom as head of our Washington Office, and Lynn as Executive Director in Lugano, my successor in all the myriad activities involved in the daily running of a good school.

They too believe TASIS to be unique. Strong academic preparation for US colleges is an obvious goal, but not the real mission of TASIS. We



Mrs. Fleming delivers her speech at the TASIS Washington Reunion in March, 2000

dare to hope that a TASIS experience means broadened horizons, an understanding of other cultures, friendship with many different human beings, and a commitment to make the world a better place for all of us to live in.

We have a common battle – and that is that as Americans we have it too good. We have a superiority complex. Yet we live in an almost decadent society – a hard one for parents and schools to fight. Stalin once said, “We’ll never have to fight America – all we need to do is destroy their young!” And way back to the Roman poet Juvenal, who warned us, “Affluence is more ruthless than war.”



l. to r. Kate Gonzalez, Alumni Director, Lynn Fleming Aeschliman, Executive Director, Mrs. Fleming, Founder and Director Emerita, Swiss Ambassador Alfred Defago



Mrs. Fleming  
surrounded by TASIS  
alumni at the  
Washington Reunion

As I look with great fondness into the sea of faces I see here this evening, I'm thrilled to see some that go back 35 to 40 years! Linda Avery '75. Thanks Linda for arranging this fine event! Fort Barrett, '73, TASIS summer '59 and '64, the Burkerts, '69 and '72, Ned Lynch, '66, who turned down a black tie dinner at Franklin to be here tonight. Petra Pringle, '69, John Pritzlaff '72, Alan Robinson '71 and '75, Martin de Bruin '70, Cari Wolk, all the way from California! And even some of our old and fine faculty: Jay Devine, Mac Ross, Bob Winer and most important of all, the new Headmaster of TASIS England, Dennis Manning, - a splendid headmaster he is and TASIS so fortunate to have him. Chris Frost, headmaster of Lugano, is sea kayaking with 8 students in Sardinia during In-Pro Travel!

Now you are parents of this generation and as concerned as we are at TASIS about drugs, promiscuity, Aids, and boredom - a generation of young people with nothing to struggle against - only poverty, religious massacres, starvation, civil wars, but all too far away to touch us!!

Boredom - "Entertain us!" as Kurt Cobain said! When there's so much that needs to be done in the world. TASIS last year's Salutatorian, Austin Kennedy, put it so clearly, "We, as a generation, lack motivation and conviction - we have it so easy. We haven't lived through apocalyptic wars. Weapons of mass destruction and genocide were born before us

and thus do not shock us - we've had space within our reach and disease held at a safe distance. We were born into democracy and it seems to be working fine. We are safe, comfortable and bored!"

And now our Salutatorian pays me, that is TASIS, the greatest compliment I have ever received. "In entrusting your children to Mrs. Fleming, you have given them into an environment which nurtures, in every case that I have seen, the process of self-discovery and finding what it is that one loves. If I resembled a Kurt Cobain when I arrived here, I am coming away with a newfound sense of beauty, a passion for life, and an awareness of the amazing value of every individual person and I thank you for that. To the Class of 1999: Here's to finding your love."

That is the finest tribute I have ever received and is an inspiration and a challenge for all of us to make TASIS, your alma mater, an even stronger training ground for our young, training them to be capable of true leadership, of defending and preserving the finest in our western civilization.

Thank you, very dear alumni, for being here today and for your ongoing support and devotion to TASIS and its goals.

*Delivered at the Swiss Embassy in Washington, D.C., on March 4th, 2000.*

## What Is Success?

The other day, while sitting next to Mrs. Fleming by the fire at her house after the play, I realized, and confessed, how much I have changed at TESIS. I think my changes aren't directly due to the program or the rules, but more to the people I have met in these three years and to the values they have transmitted. To illustrate these changes, I would like to use an Emerson quotation I came across in one of my classes this year.

What is success?

To laugh often and much;

To win the respect of intelligent people and affection of children;

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty;

To find the best in others;

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden

patch, or a redeemed social condition;

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived;

This is to have succeeded.

*Ralph W. Emerson\**

If you didn't know me three years ago, there are a few things you have to know in order to understand my point. I was lazy, pessimistic, aggressive, and narrow minded. Despite the fact that I have changed, I am still not a saint, but if a teacher had handed me this quotation two years ago on a quiz I would have thought he was a freak trying to make class interesting. I would have just looked at it and wondered who this teacher thought he was! He must want us to lose time. He must want us to get a bad grade. Who is this Emerson anyway, and who does he think he is? Was he some kind of prophet or genius? He doesn't know anything about success. He probably doesn't even know what success is. At the time, Al Pacino defined success for me with his line from the movie *Scarface*: "If you have the money, you have the power. If you have the power, you have the women." Now that's success!

Or at least that's what I thought success was. In life, sometimes people are just not ready for certain concepts. But when I got this quotation

this year, I had developed a new perspective: "This Emerson may know what he's saying. He may be right about success." I realized through this passage that success is a lot more than getting into the best college, getting the best job, and making the most money. I realized that simple things are what give us the biggest boosts in life. It can either be a smile, a beautiful sunset or an honest thanks, but that's what keeps us all going. Looking at this quotation today, I feel successful and it should make everyone in this room feel successful.

As Mrs. Fleming told us, she is the richest person in the world because of us. And that's because she fully understands Emerson's concept of success and tries to transmit it to us every day of her life. And tonight I want to make clear that we are the richest students thanks to her and to this wonderful international experience that we have lived.

*Corrado Agusta  
TASIS 2000  
Senior Banquet*

\*Editor's note: This is one of Mrs. Fleming's favorite quotations.



Senior Corrado  
with Mrs. Fleming

## I Have Attended Many Schools in My Life

I have attended many schools in my life, in Los Angeles, Connecticut, England, France, and, of course, Switzerland. Most people find their years at college to be their most memorable. For me there is no question that I learned more and grew more at TESIS than at any other institution.

At TESIS I discovered the classical guitar and classical music in general. This led to a Ph.D. in music history and a career as a university professor. At TESIS I discovered the joy of travel. At TESIS I discovered the joy of speaking foreign languages and exploring foreign cultures. At TESIS I discovered the great outdoors and the joy of hiking. At TESIS I discovered the joy of learning. But most importantly,

at TESIS I discovered the joy of close friendships.

Thank you, Mrs. Fleming, for having the courage to start this incredible school, as well as the other institutions with TESIS in their names. It is amazing to think how many lives you've changed in such a positive way.

So here's to your ninetieth birthday and thank you for making my life so much more complete.

Most sincerely yours,

*Richard d'Arcambal Jensen, TESIS '73*

## The TESIS Family of the Decade Salute Mrs. Fleming

Dear Mrs. Fleming,

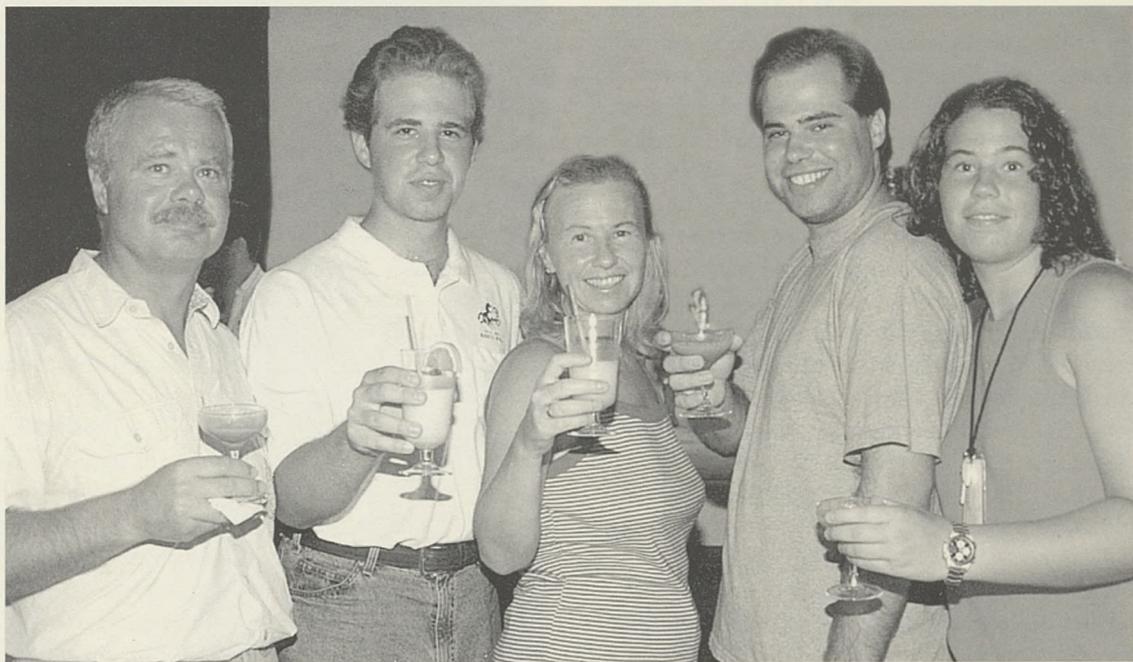
Thank you very much for making the TESIS experience possible for us. You have enriched our lives with your belief in the importance of beauty in a person's youth. You have taught us so much through your visions and dreams. We

take this occasion to express our deepest gratitude to you, and to wish you all the best.

Happy Birthday!

*Mathias, Veronika, Tobias, and family Mühlhofer*

Father Ferdinand,  
Tobias, TESIS '98-  
Yale, Mother Irma,  
Mathias, TESIS '95-  
University of Vienna,  
Veronika, TESIS '97-  
Stanford



## Champion of Beauty

TASIS has always had a reputation for “stretching” people, but I’d like to thank you on your 90th birthday for what you have done to make my job easier as a classical architect:

**Location, location, location:** from the beginning you have always sought out the most beautiful sites for your schools.

**History:** those beautiful sites always came with noble old buildings, which you lovingly cared for, restored and gave new life.

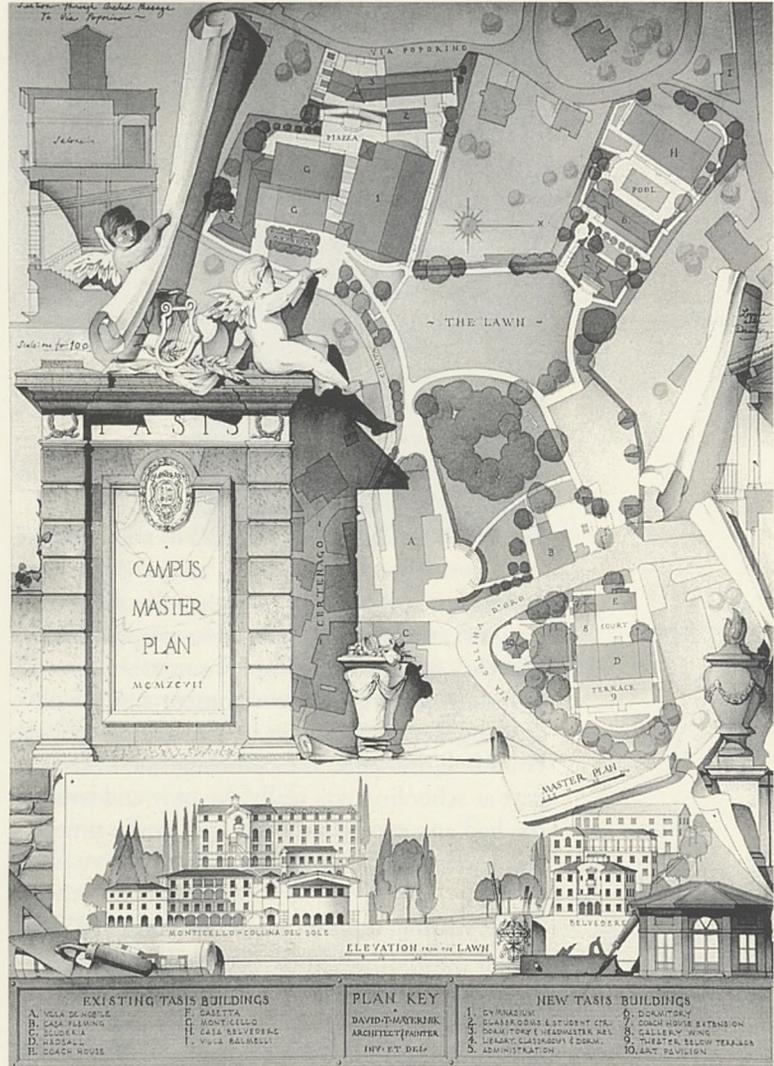
**Beauty:** your bylaws for TASIS actually require the schools to be in places of beauty, as a vital part of the students’ formation.

So, Mrs. Fleming, thanks for your courageous championing of beauty, which has enriched the souls of generations of students, and given one architect all the tools he could ever want.

With fondest regards,

*David Mayernik  
Rome, Italy*

*TASIS Master Planner, Architect and Painter*



## Her Sense of Humor

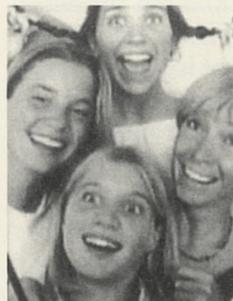
No one I’ve ever known embodies her ideal with such clarity and, best of all, such sense of humor. She made me laugh so many times; she truly surprises me with something “outrageous” and unexpected almost every time I see her.

What better way to educate children AND adults: the unexpected moulds your curiosity and mental flexibility, makes you wide-eyed so that fewer things will escape your attention.

Her sense of humor is what allows her to communicate her ideal to young people so well. She’s able to suggest to them ways to participate in life that they might never touch on otherwise. I know they’ll all carry this in their

hearts and in due time they’ll tap it to live better. An authentic guru, so easy to love....

*Marina Rasini  
Montagnola, Switzerland  
Mother of TASIS students Thea '02, Sophie '99,  
Olivia '99*



The four vivacious Rasini ladies

## The Grit of the Entrepreneur



Mother and Son

It takes the perspective of twenty-five years of business and banking experience to appreciate Mother's quite exceptional accomplishment in founding, leading the development and, finally, assuring the perpetuation of The TASIS Schools. Founding the school was probably the easiest part as schooling was really the only endeavor she had any experience with and, at the time, she wanted to live in Europe.

Every young business hits some bumps in the road if not the occasional stone wall as my years in banking taught me. It is the ability to get over these hurdles that separates the successful businesses from the failures and that truly puts to the test the determination and grit of the entrepreneur. I well remember a brief visit from mother

while I was in boarding school in the late '50s when she had returned to the U.S. to somehow come up with \$20,000 that was critically necessary to avoid shutting the school down. While I didn't fully understand the absolute dictates of cash flow at that time, I sure got a good sense of how critical that \$20,000 was. With the help of some friends to loan her the money she was able to survive that crisis. There were numerous other crises during those early years, many of which I never knew about, but all of which required the same unrelenting determination to overcome.

Today, The TASIS Schools are the most recognized international secondary schools operating in multiple countries in Europe. While it took a bit of luck to get there, what it really took was Mother's undeviating determination to make it happen. With the creation of the TASIS Foundation and the donation of the schools and all the properties to the Foundation, Mother has done her best to assure the perpetuation of the schools.

*Her son, Tom Fleming  
Director, TASIS US Office  
Washington, D.C.*



Tom the Navy Man

## MCF's Completely Divided Attention

I'll never forget visiting Mrs. Fleming on the campus of Le Château de Beauchamps in the spring before we opened TASIS France. I had flown up from Cyprus for a weekend and Mrs. Fleming was arriving from Switzerland the same day by car. We first met on the highway when I spotted the white Volvo pulled off the road as I passed by in my rental. It was early evening, the sun was low, a balmy breeze, in short: time to break out the drinking kit. She rolled down her window to greet me: "What will it be, Bill, an old fashioned or gin and tonic?" Thus began a working weekend at the Château Beauchamps.

With only months to go before greeting a fully enrolled summer program, the place was bustling with activity. The sheep had just moved out of the dependance, which had to be completely restored to house 40 boys. The place was swarming with workmen. There were still teachers to hire, cooks and maids to hire, furniture to order; exactly the kind of work MCF loves. A huge project, that challenges the odds, that has her orchestrating the efforts and talents of so many people.

At the end of a busy day, I went to fetch Mrs. Fleming for dinner. She had taken one of the bed-

rooms in the girls' dorm as her headquarters while all this work was going on. It was 7:00 pm, and she was still working when I entered. Her desk was set up to face the window that commanded a view of the whole campus - she had to keep an eye on everything. She was on the phone to the furniture maker in Verona, I recall. This is the man who made the beautiful double-sided desks for the student rooms, which can still be seen on the Lugano campus. Once again, no doubt, Mrs. Fleming was changing the specifications for these desks. Standing in front of her was Pascal - he was the grounds keeper, and he was making his report on the day's progress and tak-



Bill and Melissa Eichner in the early years

ing orders for the next morning. I recall her pointing out the window, asking Pascal why the workmen were on their way home so early!

These two simultaneous conversations, one in French, the other in Italian, did not prevent her from querying me about our dinner plans, now in English. Also at her side, attentive and calm, was Saxon, one of the first in that great line of beautiful German Shepherds which have always kept her company. Saxon shared a knowing glance with the rest of us men in the room, as we each stood and waited for the completely divided attention of MCF.

*William E. Eichner  
Director of Admissions  
TASIS Lugano*

Mrs. Fleming,  
the Châtelaine of  
Beauchamp

## She was Dynamite... Effective and Strong

### GREETINGS FROM CYPRUS!

How Mrs. Fleming found this remote sunny island in the eastern Mediterranean to set up school, is anyone's guess, but it certainly was my good fortune. I had, in fact, just moved to Cyprus myself, having married a charming Greek civil engineer, when I was offered the opportunity to work at the newly established TASIS CYPRUS. The following five years would be my most memorable in Cyprus. Not only did I get to work with a wonderful group of people, but I also got to know MCF. She was dynamite - effective and strong. Yet when she flew in to Cyprus from either Lugano or

England she was like summer rain - unexpected, cooling and most pleasant. Always smart and chic in her black outfits, she embodied every young woman's dream of having it all - a successful and satisfying career without losing the charm and elegance of being a beautiful woman. Cyprus had never seen anyone quite like Mrs. Fleming. She charmed mayors, ministers, and even the police commander. Her students loved her and the local staff adored her. She was the mysterious lady who would pop in to Cyprus now and then and leave everyone in awe of her grace, humor and vision.

I had the great pleasure of working with her



TASIS Cyprus

but also of sharing a beautiful summer recess with her at the villa outside Florence. What a treat it was to spend time with such a legacy! Sharing stories from her past and drinking gin and tonics, she could keep going when all the rest of us had already passed out. My husband

still fondly recalls the hair-raising drive from Pisa airport to the villa, when MCF picked us up with a cooler full of gin, tonic, and ice and never once let the speedometer drop below 100km! She could drink and drive and when my nervous husband tried to water down her gin with extra tonic, she would shout out for a proper refill!

Great ladies like Mary Crist Fleming are few and far between. We feel honored and privileged to know and to have worked with her. Cyprus sends sincere best wishes on this special occasion. May TASIS go from success to success and may the vision of MCF always continue through its alumni, faculty, and staff.

*With fondest regards to all,  
Marianna and Saverios Vrahimi  
Nicosia, Cyprus  
Former TASIS Cyprus Administrator*

## Mrs. Fleming, Always the Educator, Speaks to the Last TASIS Class of the 20th Century

Good evening and a warm welcome to you dear parents, our fine faculty, and to our beloved students of the class of 1999!

Class of 1999... "99" ...the very words have a sound of tolling like the ancient bells in a cathedral tower. Ninety nine – ninety nine - you can almost see and feel the swinging of the bell – you're waiting in full suspense, for it to hit 2000 – the millennium! The date on which all the computers and the whole world are supposed to crash!

Even awaiting the millennium, when you're as old as I am, 110 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 is enough food in the fridge to carry the family through the next few days in case you're away. You want to be sure that the world is going to be all right. You hope that the very dichotomy, the reality of the war going on today, is really a miracle, for the people who are dropping the bombs from

30,000 feet above are the same people who are moving in truck loads of food, tents, blankets and medicine! Is this a precursor of the real millennium? Where the true spirit of man triumphs over evil and the world undergoes a dramatic reversal from evil to good. What a glorious millennium that would be!

Paul Johnson, the well-known British historian, wrote that we have lived through the worst century in history. More evil has been perpetrated, has been compressed into the 20th than all the other centuries combined. One can thank God it has almost passed!

The world's last nine decades began with the horrors of World War I, followed by the miseries of its devastation, the Great Depression, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the Berlin War and all it signified, and possibly the most terrifying of all – the creation and expansion of Communism - crushing, torturing, destroying millions of lives, obliterating many of the remarkable works of art created by man, devastating great stretches of the richest farmland, enduring for 70 long years.

I look back on my nine decades of 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. And my life started with two decades containing the prosperity of the '20s, to switch harshly into the '30s, the years of the Great Depression, when life in my parents' school was suddenly jolted by a drop from 250 students to 60 or 70 and I was pulled out of college and sent on the road in a desperate attempt to recruit any possible student at any discount on tuition in an attempt not to be forced to close the school. I traveled on \$10 a day in a 2-seater Ford convertible – one dollar a night for bed and breakfast, and \$9 for gas, food, and telephone calls! How many times, in starting schools in Europe, have I been grateful for the humbling experience of living through the Great Depression!

Then the intimations of the War to come, the shock of Pearl Harbor – the entrance of the U.S. into the Second World War with radio news of the daily tragedies, the Battle of Britain, and the final miraculous victory 50 years ago over the evils of Nazism, then Hiroshima, the surrender of Japan, the Cold War, the gaining of independence of so many third-world countries, only to collapse tragically into dictatorships, poverty, and civil wars. And today? Have we transformed the world into a beautiful place to live?

While history was going on I was starting to fight back! I started a school! I committed myself to education – the only hope the world has. Education in values! And for the next fifty years – 5 decades – I committed many follies in an effort to create as many schools as possible, opening and closing several schools – Cyprus, France, - dangerously near starting ones in Spain, Turkey, and lastly Budapest, as the center of a new Eastern Europe. Wisely, I was stopped at the brink!

There is no doubt that along with the horrors of this century, man, with his indomitable spirit, his deep sense of humanity and its needs, his inventiveness, has made incredible contributions to our world. Running concurrently with Johnson's century of horrors, man has produced majestic ocean liners, the telephone, the automobile, the 757 and the airbus, space shuttles, the walk on the moon, miracles in medicine and life-saving devices – and, of course, dubious contributions – television and the computer! You'll have to drag me out of the 18th century to convince me that these last two have led to a betterment of mankind! To err is human, to

create a really big mess, you have to have a computer!

The only thing that has not progressed, has not matured, with the exception, thank God, of many individuals, is man. He still is a barbarian at heart, witness all the current conflicts. He is the only animal who kills for the sheer joy of killing!

History is made up of the constant conflict we are reminded of in Hercules' choice between vice and virtue, of good against evil – literature, the theatre, poetry, painting, all depict man's long struggle against evil. Unfortunately, evil can win without seemingly violent means – it can insidiously creep into our civilization and destroy us from within like the Trojan horse destroyed Troy! The abolition of moral values, the loss of heroes and heroic deeds, the constant

FORGIVE WHAT YOU  
DO NOT APPROVE,  
AND COMMEND ME  
FOR THE ENERGETIC  
EXERTION OF MY  
TALENT.

*William Blake*



search for pleasures and no thought of personal sacrifice to defend society and the precious privilege of freedom. With the loss of these, one wonders whether we are already like the Roman Empire, on our way to decline and fall! Even civilizations are mortal!

You graduates of tomorrow are becoming, in fact already are, part of history and you become part of this struggle against evil that has gone on over the centuries. Times will always change but values don't, and true education is not the knowledge of facts, but of values. You are becoming part of history at an especially critical and brutal period of history.

As our American General Omar Bradley said at the end of the war: "This is our 20<sup>th</sup>-century claim to distinction and progress: our knowledge of science has already outstripped our capacity to control it, we have many man of science but few men of God. Man is struggling through spiritual darkness while toying with precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. We know more about war than we know about peace – more about killing than living!"

And Russell Kirk, a man of letters, a philosopher, a man of great spiritual strength stated, "If we are to rescue the modern mind we must do it very soon. The struggle will be decided in the minds of the rising generation!"

That "rising generation" is, of course, you! Your parents, we your surrogate parents, have many fears about releasing you in another rite of passage, your graduation tomorrow, to total freedom – total freedom of choice. America is in a state of agonizing turmoil, as are many other countries, because they have not held on to values. You will be facing drugs, crime, gangs, and the incredible stupidity of "Political Correctness."

I beseech you to start now as you leave the beauty, the protection, the sense of security of TESIS, 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 most importantly a compassion for other and 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.

Don't look only at four years of university and a job, for there may not be one. Think and plan boldly and creatively. Think of what the world most desperately needs and do something about it! Think, create, and do it with passion! And you will succeed. Remember you are the rising generation, the generation upon whom the survival of our civilization depends. Remember too, that an individual can make a difference and that individual can be you!

Tomorrow morning at your graduation we pay tribute to such an individual. Our speaker Dr. Sommaruga is President of the International Red Cross. But the individual who saw the desperate need and at great personal sacrifice had the courage to create and establish the Red Cross 136 years ago in 1863 was a Swiss, Henri Dunant.

Unless I have an urgent curtain call, the millennium seems the most highly appropriate moment of history for an old lady to pass the torch, leaving the world to her remarkable daughter, Lynn Aeschliman, and to you, remarkable young people that you are!

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

My warmest and most affectionate good wishes travel with you, the TESIS Class of Ninety Nine!

## Authority is something you take... Nobody can give it to you.

If it were possible to rephrase the famous Beatle song, Mrs. Fleming, I would sing to you:

*"... Now that I'm older, lost all my hair,  
Many years from then,  
Will you still read me? Will you still know  
me?  
When I'm sixty four?"*

Well, I am 64 today and soon it will be your birthday. Bravo! For your 67 years in education!

Thanks to you, I feel like a kid today. In fact, you have always kept me young and going because you have always been a never ending source of energy, the force that Bergson calls, "la création continue". An ageless force of dynamic joy and creativity, a permanent revival like the blossoming of the magnolia tree in front of my classroom window. You are, in the field of education, what Le Nôtre was to the garden of Versailles. I joined you many moons ago, long before the harvest. You had just a few seeds in

HE WHO DOES NOT  
REMEMBER HISTORY  
IS BOUND TO LIVE  
THROUGH IT AGAIN.  
*Written on the walls of  
Auschwitz*

your hand, three of your own children were helping you to take care of a tiny orchard.

At the time, I worked night shifts at the Zurich train station, fell asleep in a wagon, woke up in Lugano, got off the train looking for a job; you put me in the driver's seat in Loreto. Your daughter, Gai, a charming and highly efficient adolescent, asked me to follow a blue mini-bus driven by her brother Tom, an elegant young man. We raced back to Zurich, I tried to follow Tom in "my" mini-bus, smashed into a concrete wall in a turn over a bridge, had no time to stop, the bus was still running, the engine was in the rear. No doubt Tom was teaching me a lesson, but then we had fancy racing gloves and had

amount of time. After driving your young Ambassadors from the Mesquita de Cordoba to see "Nefretiti" in the Dahlem museum in Berlin or listening to "La Tosca" at La Scala or the "Rosenkavalier" at the Vienna Opera House, strolling with them through the Uffizi, the Accademia, Florence, Tuscany, the Vatican, ancient Rome, the Bridge of Sighs, San Marco, the Duomo, Venice, posing for a photo with Tina Uihlein on the ancient Mostar bridge, a world-famous monument rendered infamous since the most recent Balkan war has blown it to bits. Sailing in Greece, sunset at Cap Sunion behind the temple cradle of our civilization, camping in the fields, cooking out, far away from camp grounds, swimming in rivers or the



Marco with the three Fleming women Lynn, Mrs. Fleming, and Gai

gone to "Le Mans" to "study" car races. In Zurich we picked up children from the United States of America. I was promoted from driver to counselor, from the Zurich airport we drove back to Lugano over the Alps, no tunnel yet, we went over the Gotthard pass and down the steep winding Tremola road...a road my father had walked up and down for years. If he could only see me, proudly driving a bus full of singing, shouting, screaming kids.....

Dear Mrs. Fleming, I often wondered why you are so dear to my heart, because of all the employers I had in my life, you may well be the one I have been associated with the minimal

sea, showers from our water tank built on top of the mini-bus or simply under waterfalls. Driving on the old Roman roads or the Route Napoleon because most of Europe was far from beginning to build its toll-ways, rolling on cobble stones, dirt roads or simply red or white dusty tracks in desert landscapes, from Notre Dame of Paris to the Blue Mosque in Istanbul and beyond. Your way to educate youngsters was more inspiring than any high-flying conference under the guidance of a board of directors, all of whom could boast PhDs from the best universities. Your method, Mrs. Fleming, was more lively than the internet which had yet to be invented, less boring than classrooms or library books. For you we

took kids from the Pacific coast, across the Atlantic, to the shores of Tripoli to Alexandria, Cairo, the Pyramids, up the Nile, Luxor, riding camels, horses or donkeys, visiting the Valley of the Queens and the Kings, up to the Aswan Mausoleum. Films were made, articles written, and Swiss Holiday expanded over the school year into a Post Graduate Program. One day a teacher was ill and you appointed me "replacement teacher". Thanks to you I could now drive a mini-bus, cook spaghetti for hungry kids, set up tents, drive winter and summer all over Europe, film students, write articles, and teach French and German, sail in Greece, and teach skiing at the Hotel Monopol in Andermatt. Better yet, you hired my girlfriend, Mara, who taught Spanish and Italian. We married in Montagnola. We flew to California. Our daughter, Lisa, was born in Santa Monica. She is now a lawyer in Geneva, her husband runs a high-tech computer business, and Mara and I take turns babysitting their two boys. You may think: "What does all that have to do with my birthday?"

As I said before, I still wonder why we are still corresponding. Perhaps simply because I have never ceased to admire you, perhaps because one remembers the first human being who crossed the Atlantic, the first who climbed Everest, the one who claimed that the earth was not flat but round, one remembers Madame Curie, not all the others who followed. You gave me the kick off, you put me in the driver's seat, you told me: "Authority is something you take. Nobody can give it to you."

I never had believed I had any authority. I had only dreams, dreams of glory like most kids have. I believed in great achievements that allowed me to get little things done. What you gave me was faith, confidence, and trust. A question still puzzling me is: "How could you do it, Mrs. Fleming?"

How could you pick a wild dreamer off the road, name him a counselor, fill his bus with the most valuable passengers, children, one of whom was a thin, pretty and determined adolescent, your own daughter by the name of Lynn, and send us off for weeks into Franco's Spain, long before portable phones or even phones that worked, were invented. This faith you had in others gave each one of us strength and confidence, the rest was done by your lucky star. In my youth I was foolish enough to believe that I was a good driver. Now I know that your daughter Lynn and your young ambassadors had a foolishly lucky driver. You made me a counselor,

you made me a teacher. How could you do it, Mrs. Fleming? Any drop-out kid was more qualified than I. All my student years I hated school. To me teachers were like weird Martians. One of them once told me: "Only bad students should become teachers, they can relate to drop outs, excellent students don't need teachers." Was that the reason why you had hired me, Mrs. Fleming?

Look what you have done: since Loreto I have never taken a sabbatical, never even a holiday. Until today I have taught school, non-stop. During the school holidays I have been a counselor, teaching sailing or skiing, just as I had done for you in Montagnola, Greece, or Andermatt. Later, when the roads became too crowded, I taught school during the school year, joined the Club Med in St. Moritz to teach skiing during 5 weeks of winter holidays and taught sailing for 2 months summer holidays all around the world for the past 33 years.

The more years are passing by, the more Loreto shines in the past. Then we rushed to climb the highest mountain, westward bound following the sun. I can't remember when the mountain began going down and the sun rose at our back. May I thank you yet again for pushing me in the right direction. It is good to know that you are here so that I can tell you what I can no longer tell my parents. They gave me all the love of their hearts, you gave me a job. Sorry to say I failed to climb the ladder of "success". I never wanted to go out of the classroom to avoid the "silly kids" and teach teachers how to teach, go from meeting to conference, write reports, attend committees and divide into sub-committees reporting to the main committee, printing booklets for the bottom of empty drawers never to be re-opened. You had given me a practical view of education, one of joy and enthusiasm, close to the kids, sharing their emotions, understanding them. One might call it a mission as my daughter does, but to me it's just an enjoyable job. There is only one more year before they make me retire. Fun is in the classroom, stress comes in the staff room. I'll stay with kids in class ever since one of my "star" students displayed his T-shirt. Printed on it was: "How can I soar with eagles, when I work with turkeys." Candide had great illusions when he said: "Il faut cultiver son jardin." Not everybody can be Le Nôtre. There will only be one Mrs. Fleming.

Since my daughter believes that I always need a mission, she is training me for intensive baby-sitting. That includes shopping during rush hour in a crowded super-market with one 4-year old boy

I THINK HE KNEW  
AS I DID NOT,  
THAT THE WORLD  
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NOT FLAT, SO THAT  
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THE ROAD.  
*Isak Dinesen*

and one 9-month old boy. The 4-year old runs all over the place and grabs whatsoever he likes off the shelves, meanwhile his little brother is screaming his head off, busy customers waiting in line stare at Grandpa the "mean old man" who made the baby cry. As I go over the shopping list, check what's in the caddy, hold on to the baby, drop the change on the floor, look for the elder brother, I become aware that most of the Swiss government is composed of "male chauvinist pigs" with no idea of what a mother has to endure. "Authority ... you take it Marco, no one can give it to you."

You see, Mrs. Fleming, over 40 years later, in tiny everyday situations you are with me. Just one more question. You had three children, not just 2 like me in the supermarket, and you started a small empire. How did you do it? Let me know ten years from now. Happy Birthday!

Yours, Marco

*Marco Hauert  
Geneva, Switzerland  
Former Swiss Holiday Counselor*

## Leading By Example

Entering my thirteenth year at TASIS since 1976, I have many rich memories of adventures with the incomparable Mrs. Fleming: Old Fashions on the autostrada, crossing the Adriatic in search of a hotel near Athens to house TASIS Greece, the ride of my life in her Mini from TASIS England to Phene Street at night in a downpour to turn off her burglar alarm, predicting the exact moment of the sunset from poolside at Capitignano, to mention a few. She has taught me through her example so many of the most important things I now know about teaching, working with people, and life in general. She tutored me in the power and the joy of focusing intensely on each person I meet, of caring about them, of trying to understand what is important to them, of doing what I can to help them feel at ease, showing them respect for their basic dignity as human beings. I learned this by watching her in action at class dinners at Casa Fleming, Board meetings at Capitignano, whenever she gave a speech on Opening Day, Parents Weekend, or Senior Banquet, and in her every conversation. Most of all, I learned this through her treatment of me.

Arriving at TASIS very wet behind the ears as the new English Department Chair stepping into the very large shoes of the legendary Max Page, I was immediately put at ease and charmed by her many kindnesses in those early days of our adjustment to a new school and a new country. Her uncanny memory for and interest in the personal details of everyone she meets, her sincere awareness that each faculty member and student and parent is a key player in the important work of making her dream a reality, and her infectious joy of life and gratitude for its bounties won my

heart and devotion from the beginning. Her confidence in me gave me confidence in myself as I became Academic Dean, Director of TASIS England Summer Program, and Headmaster Elect of TASIS Greece in quick succession before spending five years in the US expanding our family while working at Deerfield Academy.

Returning as Headmaster in 1984 for three years and again in 1994, I have had the privilege of working with her to increase the permanence of TASIS through strengthening programs and replacing temporary structures - Prato, Lago, Giardino dorms and the Bubble - with Monticello, the Palestra, and Villa del Sole. Over these years I have been humbled and inspired by the power she has to change lives by broadening horizons and opening hearts through her own modeling of dedication, faith, and deepest caring and love.

Mrs. Fleming promises to keep an eye on us from "on high" when the time comes. We will be looking for her guidance in the many lessons she has taught us and in the habits she has instilled in us. She has instilled in each of the thousands of students and educators she has influenced a sense of responsibility to improve our world by setting high standards for both ourselves and others, by nurturing and preserving what is good and beautiful, and especially by being ever mindful of the dignity and importance of each human being. May we make her proud of what she has created in us and of her own work and example, which will continue through us.

*J. Christopher Frost  
Headmaster, TASIS Lugano*



Anne and Chris Frost with Mrs. Fleming at Capitignano in the early years



Anne and Chris celebrating their 30th anniversary at the Personale's Christmas dinner in De Nobili

## Your Thread Has Encircled the Globe

I thought about suggesting you move your 90th birthday back a year or two. For a woman with your history, that seems a small and unchallenging task. Anyone who has moved libraries in hours, dormitories overnight, and whole campuses across international frontiers in a day or two, could easily alter the calendar a bit. More simply, I hope our paths will cross sometime in the next year or two, and you will favor me with a few hours of quieter celebration.

In each of our lives, we spin a slender thread which we weave into the fabric of the universe. Some of us struggle to keep the thread from unraveling or getting tied in knots. Not you. Your thread has encircled the globe, been woven into the flags of many nations, and has educated and enriched the lives and touched the hearts of thousands.



Ken Blessing  
as our youngest  
Headmaster

Warmest regards,

*Ken Blessing  
Moretown, Vermont  
Former TASIS Headmaster,  
Lugano 1971-75 and  
England 1976-78*

## Great Good Fortune



Sharon and Lyle Rigg  
with Mrs. Fleming at  
Lyle's farewell dinner

After almost two decades with Mrs. Fleming in Europe, Sharon and I returned home to America in the summer of 1998. Now that almost two years have passed and we have settled in to life at The Pennington School in New Jersey, we have had many occasions to reflect on our years with TASIS and with Mrs. Fleming. Although both Sharon and I could write about any number of remembrances, two that remain vivid in my mind took place at Lux II, a Chinese restaurant in Virginia Water.

Throughout our 17 years in England, some of the most enjoyable evenings that Sharon and I spent with Mrs. Fleming were at Lux II. Although we often went there with colleagues, there also were many occasions when Sharon and I went there alone with Mrs. Fleming. And our menu selections rarely varied – chicken/corn soup to start (Mrs. Fleming's favorite), spring rolls, fried seaweed (Sharon's favorite), crispy duck (everyone's favorite), shredded beef, egg fried rice, ice cream and, of course, fortune cookies. (We all used to take as many fortune cookies as required to obtain a fortune that appealed to us!)

Given the hectic pace of life at TASIS England, Lux II became an island of calm – a place not only to talk about TASIS, but also about so many other things. In short, Lux II is the place where Sharon and I felt we really had an opportunity to get to know Mrs. Fleming – a place where our admiration for her work and for her grew and grew.

Not surprisingly, it was at Lux II that Sharon and I enjoyed our last meal with Mrs. Fleming in England before returning to the U.S. In early June, 1998, the three of us enjoyed a farewell Chinese meal together – just prior to Sharon's

departure for the U.S. (Sharon's return preceded my return by a couple of weeks.)

Two weeks later, on one of my last nights in England, Mrs. Fleming insisted on taking me to Lux II for one last time – just the two of us. Since I had already sold my car, Mrs. Fleming drove in her Mini. What an evening we had together! We feasted on our special menu, we talked, we laughed, we reminisced, and we devoured a suitable number of fortune cookies. Unfortunately, no matter how much we ate, drank and talked, the time eventually arrived for us to return to Thorpe. As we were leaving Lux II, Mrs. Fleming and I hugged several times before climbing into her Mini for the drive back to Thorpe. When we arrived at Walnut Tree Cottage, I think that we both realized simultaneously that we couldn't really say another goodbye. Mrs. Fleming dropped me off and I knew that I had to walk straight for the door of Walnut Tree Cottage without saying anything and without looking back at Mrs.

Fleming sitting in her Mini. I think that we both wanted our farewell dinner at Lux II to be the final memory of our time working together in England.

Although Sharon and I are happy to be home in America (it was the right decision for us), we have not found a Lux II with crispy duck and fried seaweed, and we certainly haven't found another Mrs. Fleming! As for fortune cookies, who needs them? When I left America for England and TASIS in the fall of 1979, I could never have dreamed of having the great good fortune of meeting two women who would change my life forever. One would have to eat a mountain of fortune cookies to be blessed with a fortune as special as having Sharon and Mrs. Fleming as part of your life!

*Lyle Rigg*

*Pennington, New Jersey*

*Former TASIS England Headmaster, 1979-1998*

## The Best Teacher We Have Ever Had

To think it all started over a few "Old-fashioned" in Runnymede—were we honoring the Magna Carta or talking about the future of TASIS? From that first meeting you charmed and inspired Beth and me and made us want to join your family—TASIS—and to share our lives with you and your school in England, and we have lived each day celebrating that commitment.

You have entered our world as no one else has or could, showing us the richness, the potential, and the grace each person possesses. Your life and how you live it and lead it are the greatest education you have given Beth, Will, Mary Heath, and me, and we will always be indebted to you for being the best teacher we have ever had. To have been honored by bringing in the millennium with you was perhaps the most special of many special times we have been blessed to share with you. I still want to know what kind of divinity you were invoking on that special occasion—only you could have somehow known Saxon, in a moment of primal, canine instinct, would snare a pig for our millennium dinner! To turn upset—even the potentially tragic—into something meaningful and almost redemptive puts you in the company of the Greeks! (I can hear you saying now, "Of course, I grew up with Zeus!")



Dennis with  
Mrs. Fleming

You are a true Olympian, and your deeds are grandly Greek in scale and effect. As we celebrate your 90th birthday, we honor those 90 years of giving unflinchingly to others, of inspiring all of us by your example of selflessness and love of others. Thank you for sharing the past two years with us and for shaping our lives as indelibly as you have shaped so many before us. With all of our love and fondest wishes for the grandest 90th birthday celebration on record, we are

Most lovingly yours,

*Dennis Manning, Headmaster, TASIS England  
and Beth, Will, and Mary Heath*

## When Style Becomes Class

After 27 years which started off as a one-year leave of absence from Design School, how do I describe what Mrs. Fleming has meant to me and others she has touched during her lifetime? I am a product of her vision, her love of life, and most importantly her incredible ability to inspire and light the world of those who are fortunate enough to know this remarkable woman.

On a recent trip, I was reading the International Herald Tribune when I came across a Swissair ad that summed up my image of Mrs. Fleming perfectly. It also reminded me of a much earlier TWA ad of a younger Mrs. Fleming striding confidently down the tarmac at an airport dressed in her usual elegant style. The Swissair text read:

*I wonder when style becomes class?*

*Style comes and goes  
But when it comes and stays, it's class.  
Either way, it begins with care  
And runs through everything we do.  
Swissair – We care.*



Fernando receiving  
one of many embraces  
from Mrs. Fleming

If we replace Swissair with TASIS, it would become the ideal TASIS ad. As I reflect on what has made TASIS such a special school for so many students and faculty, it is the imprint of Mrs. Fleming's style and convictions. Whether it be historic architecture and beautiful settings, silver and chandeliers, dress code and discipline, manners and civility, graciousness and hospitality, leadership and service, honor and integrity, pride and respect, community and individuality, tradition and innovation, pomp and circumstance, the TASIS image is Mrs. Fleming and vice-versa. Rarely does an institution reflect the beliefs of the founder so clearly and completely as does TASIS. And MCF's style is in a class of its own.

But above all it is the word "care" that best describes the TASIS experience and Mrs. Fleming. I am privileged to have been part of her world for most of my adult life and to have shared it with my children. The influence she has had on my family is all encompassing, as is TASIS.

The opportunities and challenges have enriched and stretched my life in ways I could never have imagined when I first arrived in 1972. Whether it be starting a Fine Arts department in Lugano, restoring a hamlet in the south of France, travelling throughout the world to recruit students, designing master plans for our campuses, or working to improve and expand TASIS programs throughout Europe, my myriad of experiences have become more a way of life than a job. My world expanded to fill Mrs. Fleming's dreams.

So how does style become class? By sustaining one's core beliefs, remaining steadfast to people one can trust and to ideas that have stood the test of time. And above all by caring. This is the most important ingredient of all and Mrs. Fleming has been the ultimate educator and role model in what matters most – to care. Real leadership is about moving the heart, and Mrs. Fleming has moved more hearts than anyone I will ever know.

*Fernando Gonzalez  
TASIS Administrative Director  
Thorpe, England*

## Has Anything Changed in the Last Ten Years?

I have known Mrs Fleming virtually all my life. We met when she was 33 and I was 3. Ten years ago for her eightieth Birthday I wrote in this book about my childhood recollections of her and the tremendous impact she has had on me throughout my life. How can I say any more about my love and admiration for her now than I did then? Could anything be different ten years on? Anything new?

If you were to ask my husband Peter or my 23-year-old-son Ronald, they would say that Mrs Fleming has changed very little in the last ten years. She continues to breathe energy into their lives, and her generosity towards them and concern for them are profound and touching. I see in Ronald's eyes the same utter delight and wonderment that I felt about her at his age. A trip to London to have dinner with Mrs Fleming causes excitement and is an event to anticipate.

But to me something has changed. Ten years ago, although I was 50, I still felt like a child in Mrs Fleming's family, and she at 80 was ageless, still that indomitable force, the "adult" in my life. In a most naive way I took her exceptional abilities and energy for granted because our relationship had really not changed since I was a child. She was the same Mrs Fleming I had always known, who continued to achieve remarkable things, yet still had time to stand by me and support me.

In the decade between my 50th and 60th birthdays I am the one who has changed. My understanding of the aging process has changed. My contemporaries are grandparents now, downsizing their lives, retiring, shedding responsibilities, and falling victim to cancer and heart disease. We complain about forgetfulness, wrinkles, aches and pains, and many of us are beginning to disengage from the activities that have occupied our lives. Society accepts this as the last, great "passage" of one's life.

**NOT MRS FLEMING!** At 60 she was just getting started. I cannot imagine where the energy came from to start schools in Florence, Athens, Cyprus, and at age 67, at Thorpe in England, not to mention the numerous summer school programs. She had to find the properties, negotiate with bankers, renovate the buildings, interview headmasters, produce the literature to attract the children, and that is just the tip of the iceberg. When she wasn't burning up the highway, she



Mrs. Fleming with Betsy and brother Wally, both Frog Hollow alumni

seemed to live on an aeroplane, and jet lag never slowed her down. She always looked immaculate, her clothes, her hair stylish and perfect. That extraordinary spirit and determination seemed to defy the aging process in a way that I am just becoming able to appreciate.

And what of the last decade? Today she looks the same as she did ten years ago, as she did thirty years ago. She continues to roar around in her little black mini, and is a celebrity at numerous airports around the world. Her memory is EXTRAODINARY. Her brain does not miss a trick. She has withdrawn from the day-to-day running of the schools and has been able to do this because her daughter Lynn is so able and committed to TISIS. But she is not resting on

Betsy with Mrs. Fleming, Anna, Lynn, Adrien, the Cerbais and Piera Galli



her laurels and still follows the key issues, both large and small, with passionate interest. But this has given her more time to spend with students and with us, her extended family, for she is exceptionally thoughtful and caring, and she continues to sustain so many of us.

In Lugano, she has all the students in small groups to dinner at Casa Fleming, and she loves it when some stay on chatting with her far into the night. Her impact on several generations of younger people continues to this day. She has never lost her interest and enthusiasm for the

young and she remembers exactly what they say to her on these late-night occasions. She makes them feel valued and good about themselves, just as she has done for me over nearly 60 years. This ability to make one feel special, her profound interest in people, sustained by her undiminished intelligence and humanity, has surely kept her young, and is for us all significant and inspiring.

*Betsy Newell*  
*Oxford, England*  
*Director, TASIS' Le Château des Enfants*

## A Fateful Meeting or A Friendship to Cherish



Judy and David Kovacs, with Lynn and children Ellen Kovacs, Adrien and Anna Aeschliman, and Mark Kovacs in Free Union, Virginia

We first met Mary Crist Fleming in Free Union, Va., where Lynn and Michael had moved in 1984. Little did we know what a fateful meeting this would prove to be and what a wonderful string of delightful occasions it was ushering in. Over the years we have seen Cris the captivating hostess, Cris the charming guest and raconteuse, Cris the adventurer of flamboyance and panache, and the teeniest bit of Cris the builder of school empires. We realized early on that there was behind these, Cris the friend, who cared deeply for the people she came across. We have valued all of these personae over the years, but none more than the last. We bring here a few memories in honor of (but surely someone has the math wrong?) her ninetieth birthday.

We think of Cris driving us in her Mini around London on the way to the National Theatre. Make way, you Brits, for the lady with the no-nonsense manner and the propensity to correct minor faults in the local driving rules! See how she angles the car brilliantly into a space no bigger than a large suitcase! Cris was our hostess that evening and had paid for our tickets,

so naturally she felt free to note the shortcomings in the production even at this venue the Brits seem to regard so reverentially. (We agreed with her: Ben Jonson had been rendered well nigh unintelligible by tinkering.) Then off to a late supper at an excellent restaurant, accompanied by animated conversation. The play was, clearly, the least interesting thing about the evening!

We think of Cris organizing a picnic outing in the Italian countryside from Capitignano. Excellent food neatly packed up in wicker baskets, a carefree holiday mood, and, when the proper picnic spot unaccountably failed to show up, the delightful knack for jollying everyone into good humor as we sat in the hot sun among the stubble of a farmer's vineyard. Then there was the Christmas we were snowbound in Capitignano. What fun that was, coping with the weather! And thanks to Cris's prudent management, there was plenty of Jack Daniel's on hand.

Then there was the time we took her to dine at high table in the great Hall of Christ Church, Oxford, built by Henry VIII, where we had a connection that semester. She was impressed, of course, by her surroundings, as who would not be? But she was certainly not overawed, and she gave as good as she got to the (somewhat intimidating) Oxford dons she sat next to at dinner in Hall and at dessert in the Common Room. Dinner can be a bit of a competitive indoor sport, especially with foreigners present, and we felt that evening that the Yanks had done well in the contest!

Then there was the time that one of us was invited to address the graduation ceremonies at

TASIS England. What an impressive outfit that was, how articulate, funny, and well-mannered the graduates were! The ceremony was done in the high Fleming style, as was dinner the night before and the reception afterwards: dignified and cheerful demeanor in young and old alike, remarks brimming with heartfelt appreciation from the students, and apt words, delivered exquisitely, from the Director herself, followed by delicious food, stylishly presented. There was no mistaking, whose hand was at work here. There was also no mistaking, even without the explicit comments to that effect, the great respect and affection with which the students regard her. Here, we thought, was a school anyone would be proud to be connected with.

And what can we say of Cris the friend? When we first met her, Cris was living (as she

still lives) a highly complicated life, with enormous demands on her time. We were good friends with Lynn and Michael, and we thought to begin with that Cris's warm manner to us was merely the gracious hostess doing what one does to the friends of one's daughter and son-in-law. But it rapidly became apparent that she had taken us, in our own right, to her heart. This is a friendship to cherish and one that means more to us than we can easily put into words.

*David and Judith Kovacs  
Charlottesville, Virginia  
Professors,  
University of Virginia*



David celebrating  
New Years 1996  
with MCF

## What Blessings She Has Poured Upon Their Lives

Everyone who knows her, every one of her thousands of children and friends, gratefully knows what blessings she has poured upon their lives. The extent of this largesse is well documented. Partly, of course, because although we were not her children, she has always been for us and for our own children not just that model of dignity, of grace, of ambassadorial rank in everything but name, not just Mrs. Fleming, but "Little Mother", the origin of which (surely) affectionate sobriquet is lost – as so much mercifully else – in the mists of time or Tuscany. Unforgettable will always be what inspires the affection. In her public life she has handed to generations of headmasters and teachers the freedom to educate, to bring on into the world all those fortunate children, many of them Americans; to bring them up in beautiful places and to share with them many other beautiful places; to change their lives by giving them Switzerland, Italy, France, Europe; by showing them what is good and what is beautiful.

So it is in that hallowed polyptych of her less public life, many lovely places given over tirelessly to the enjoyment of dogs and family and friends: the Torre di Gattaio, Capitignano, Montagnola and its blossoming campus, 3 Phene Street in Chelsea, and who knows how many exquisite haunts besides. A less selfishly secured existence is hard to picture.



Christopher, ever  
attentive to Little  
Mother and his lovely  
wife Koukla

Inexhaustible courage and matchless curiosity about other people's lives, these are two of the elements of Little Mother's nature. The loyalty and the generosity are legendary, the delight in the happiness of others, the joy to be at the theatre, every sort of theatre, the will to communicate with people of all tempers and languages, the least American American, in whom nothing changes over the years save a general tendency away from gin in favor of bourbon, in whom no grain of her own great beauty fades: the love of our lives.

*Christopher MacLehose  
London, England  
Publisher and Chairman, Harvill Press*

## My Most Serious Competitor



Koukla and Little Mother on the Duomo steps in Cremona

The first time I came to London to meet Christopher's family, the first visit was to this enchanting very un-American lady named by Christopher, "Little Mother". There was nothing "little" about her, and the immense affection there was between those two made me think that a few years younger, the "Mother" would have been my most serious competitor! But that affection was immediately extended to me, and "Little Mother" she became to me and our family for the rest of our lives.

I will keep the vision of the famous legs proudly shown on the steps of Capitignano, or the ones of Cremona's Duomo; the photo was taken a few minutes before savoring Little Mother's favorite ice cream! She is part of us as we know we are part of her. Rendez-vous in ten years!

*Koukla MacLehose  
London  
International Literary Agent*



## My Legs Are Still Good Looking, But They Don't Function Anymore!

I went to see Avvocato/Lawyer Rusca the other day and after the business part we had a chat about various things. We talked about TASIS and naturally Mrs. Fleming soon was the topic. Avvocato Rusca said: "I saw her a few days ago and I told her that she seemed to be in remarkable shape". She answered, throwing up her skirt - "My legs are still good looking, but they don't function anymore"!

Mrs. Fleming, thank you for your humor at all times, your kindness and especially your tremendous generosity in sharing your living space with others. I have learnt a great deal from you. Two thousand good wishes for your health and the years to come.

*Lotti Turner  
Montagnola, Switzerland  
Former TASIS Director of Admissions*



Lotti with Mrs. Fleming

## The Lady Who Changed My Life Is Also Only Human

March 1967: Thanks to a careless gravel-truck driver outside Magnolia, Arkansas, our beautiful bottle green Ford Mustang 3500 convertible was wiped out on a bridge embankment and in it my precious violin and my poor head. With one eye and a lot of help from the local sheriff and a great plastic surgeon I was able to move on – not on my predetermined schedule, not very presentable – a man from TASIC looking like the result of a pub-brawl!

Mrs. Fleming very considerably suggested a recuperation period at a beautifully located villa in Sea Island, Georgia.

Wonderful... Nothing was expected of me except to get better and let my face heal. We wined and dined out most evenings and we became integrated in the local social scene – the MCF formula to conquer her surroundings! My admiration for this extraordinary lady, my female boss, grew even more to see her out of Lugano, La Boissiere, out of Europe. A stroll in the adjacent garden was dramatically interrupted by an almost inarticulate shriek of a woman. I

rushed back to the house under moss-behung ancient trees and what did I see? My never fearful idol in absolute horror, dancing from one foot to the other accompanied by screams. The reason for this ordeal? A little innocent snake at the feet of my beloved heroine. A quick, masculine, strong and decisive action eliminated the source of despair.

The moral of the story? I was delighted to see and feel that the lady, who changed my life, is also only human and can be caught off-guard when confronted with the charm of the jungle.

I must say that I have admired her even more, ever since!

*Gerhard Schwarzacher*  
St. Anton, Austria  
Former TASIC Representative



Mary and Gerhard Schwarzacher with Mrs. Fleming

## That Formidable Machine

It is now more than thirty years since we first met “Mrs. Fleming” at the school which she had founded in a beautiful villa in Lugano. We had never encountered an institution like it or a person even remotely like her. Of course, every person is unique, and many are dedicated to a cause, but some are more unique and dedicated than others. Mary Crist Fleming attains the maximum in both respects. Some years later, and knowing her as we had come to do, entering the bar of the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong and finding her in earnest conversation with a man unknown to us, we took it for granted that there would now be an American School in Hong Kong. If we were mistaken, the loss is certainly that of Hong Kong.

Some dedicated people come on rather too strong for comfort, but this gentle and unassuming person radiating friendliness and modesty gives no hint of the power of the dynamo within. That formidable machine has been dedicated to a life work in education which has changed and



Lady Cris with Lady Dojean



With good friend Sir Peter

enriched the lives of many people throughout the world. No other person that we can think of has done more to propagate on foreign soil in the most practical way all that is valuable in the American heritage. But for those of us who are just her friends, even to think of her brings a warm glow of pleasure.

*Sir Peter and Lady Dojean Smithers*  
Vico Morcote, Switzerland

## The Two Great Hugs of My Life

Mrs. Fleming's hugs and embraces are sincere, strong, meaningful, memorable, and they leave lipstick on your cheek!

The first time I met her, we shook hands.

It started in London, in the Swinging Sixties. Mary Hart and I were sharing a "Residence for Young Ladies" opposite the British Museum. I was working for a publisher. One evening, during dinner with American friends of my parents, the conversation turned to their daughter Wendy's boarding school in Switzerland. I must have mentioned something about what fun it would be to work in Switzerland, because they suggested that I write to Mrs. M. Crist Fleming, Founder and Director of The American School in Switzerland, to see whether there might be a possible future secretarial vacancy. "Mrs. Fleming likes British secretaries, as they are well trained, accurate, and dependable," the American friends told me. I wrote, and I was offered the job as her personal secretary and assistant. I began work in October 1968 and here I am, in 2000, perhaps still well trained, accurate and dependable! I heard later, via the grapevine, that I was hired because Mrs. Fleming liked my name, Sarah Rushbrook-Williams, and because of my handwriting, but I don't believe it. I think it was because she liked British secretaries!

Gai Fleming met me at the Lugano train station, took me to the campus, and introduced me to her mother. We shook hands, and I started work in the tower of Casa Fleming.



The **first "great hug"** and lipstick smudge was on my wedding day! Mrs. Fleming wished me well, and whispered in my ear that she

would be anxiously awaiting my return when the honeymoon was over! In addition to the happiness of my wedding day – I was on kissing-cheek-to-cheek terms with my boss, Mrs. Fleming!



Many small lipstick-smudging kisses and hugs followed, until the **second "great hug"**... the hug Mrs. Fleming gave my daughter, Giorgia, when she graduated from TASIS in June 1998.

What a wonderful reward for me! A lifetime at TASIS and two great hugs!



*Sarah Di Lenardo  
Secretary to Mrs. Fleming  
Montagnola, Switzerland*

## Dearest Cris – it has been ever thus!

Salutations, congratulations, and warmest love to you on your Ninetieth Birthday.

What an innings and what achievements in an eventful, passionate, colorful, immensely stylish and successful life and business career. Others will chronicle these achievements better than I – but you are unique.

It is our friendship, which goes back so many years, that is so particularly special and important to me. Indeed it has been an essential feature of my life, since I was a young man.

My diary for 1969, somewhat self-consciously recording an European peregrination after graduating from Oxford, notes that our first meeting took place in the early evening of August 8th in the tower at TASIS. I had driven the slow way from Geneva in my Swedish motor car, (“What kind of car is a Volvo – for God’s sake.” MCF), and arrived rather weary. All this changed in a flash.

“Mrs. Fleming greets me with a wonderful handshake and an immensely strong gin – and I know I have arrived. Mrs. F... has a great sense of humor and is very good value – but the poor thing is overburdened with end-of-semester work and

has to go to New York for a Board Meeting.”

Dearest Cris – it has been ever thus!!

From those distant but not forgotten days – the first days at Vezia and Mr. Mellon’s publicity film, ‘till today, we have been the best and firmest of friends.

Capitignano has provided, through your personal magic, a wonderful and unique refuge for all members of my family. Our Easter visits – trips to Florence, picnics in the snow with bonfires, walking up to San Cresci for mass, are indelibly etched in my memory. My father, Richard, was happiest there of all places. Fittingly, his grandson was conceived in that blessed house.

If I have a regret, it is that in these most recent years, I have not been able to see you as often as we both would like. That has not dimmed our love and friendship, which will never die.

*Nigel Blackwell  
Oxford, England  
Chairman, Blackwell Publishing*



## Naturalmente quella che meglio si conserva è la “guapa” Mrs. Fleming

Alla domanda se MCF ha influito sulla mia vita, posso rispondere che con la sua energia, con la sua creatività, è stata l’esempio che mi ha fatto decidere di restare nel mondo dell’educazione.

Di MCF, con la quale non persi mai il contatto durante questi 33 anni, vorrei sottolineare la sua grande capacità di amare la gente che la porta a esprimere con un sorriso, un abbraccio, un gesto, una espressione di giubilo, il suo piacere di rivedere le persone che ha conosciuto durante la sua vita ed accogliendo con lo stesso entusiasmo parenti ed amici di amici.

Per questa sua enorme capacità affettiva non è possibile non volerle bene.

*Mimi Quadri  
Madrid, Spain  
Former TASIS Teacher*



Mimi Quadri, Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Fleming, Lynn Fleming, Luigi Caglio, reporter from Il Corriere del Ticino, at Villa Negroni, June, 1966



Mrs. Fleming with Mimi after 30 years

## Revisiting Old Haunts



John in the early years with La Grande Dame

In 1997 we decided it was time to revisit a few old haunts and so we planned a trip through Lugano and on to Tuscany. We had not returned to Lugano since 1986 when we stopped running Le Château des Enfants, though we had kept in contact with many TASIC people and had several times visited TASIC England. We had not seen Mrs. Fleming for quite a few years and it was a pleasant surprise when the telephone in our room at the Bellavista rang and the unmistakable voice of MCF filled the air. By chance she was in Lugano and she insisted on inviting us to lunch.

Lynn and Anna were also there and we had a wonderful time sitting on the terrace of Casa Fleming reminiscing about old times, talking about present lives, and discussing the future plans for the campus. We were delighted to find Mrs. Fleming had not changed: she looked the same, still had her prodigious memory, her mind bubbled with ideas and as always was making plans

for the future. When she heard we were heading south to Tuscany she insisted with her usual generosity that we stay at her house, Capitignano. Mrs Fleming is one of those people to whom it is impossible to say no, so we changed our travel plans and took her up on her offer.

As soon as we arrived we were greeted by the faithful Signori Cerbai whose twins Piero and Paolo, now grown up, had been first campers at CDE and then counselors. We spent 3 days radiating out from Capitignano to the remembered sites of Florence, Siena and San Gimignano, returning in the late afternoons to enjoy a swim in the pool, eat Parma ham with fresh figs picked from the huge tree on the terrace, and sip red wine as the sun set over the Tuscan hills and the stars came out one by one. It was magic - thank you Mrs Fleming.

We wish you a wonderful birthday filled with fun and happiness and many more to follow.



*Michèle and John Watson  
Luxembourg  
Former TASIC Faculty and Former Directors of  
Le Château des Enfants*

## Unam! In Her I Have Always Trusted



*Nicla Mambretti,  
Casoro/Ticino, 1958 – Rome, 1999  
Former TASIC Faculty*

# I Have Never Been So Upstaged in My Life!

The famous British actor Robert Morley called me from the Hotel Beauvillage during spring break many decades ago for advice on schools for his 14-year-old son, Wilton. He arrived for a visit in his Bentley during a blizzard with a storm raging.

In his thick British accent Mr. Morley said, "I wouldn't send a sick dog to Le Rosey." Cris Fleming kept coming to mind. Mr. Morley, to avoid the weekend blizzard, wanted to visit Lugano for better weather. I recommended that he visit The American School in Switzerland. Robert Morley rose to his full height and stated that he didn't want an American School. I persuaded him at least to look at TASIS.

Mr. Morley liked to catch schools unawares, but I phoned TASIS and spoke to Robert Wilson to warn him. Mrs. Fleming had already left for Florence, but when she heard the news, she turned around and returned to Lugano.

On Monday, I received a phone call:  
 "Richard, Morley here."  
 "Did you go to Lugano?"  
 "Yes, I did. I have never been so upstaged in my life!"  
 "Where will you send your son?"  
 "The American School. I wouldn't **dare** send him anywhere else. I would never hear the end of it from Mrs. Fleming!"



Robert Morley with Michael Aeschliman at a TASIS England graduation



Le Château de la Boissière



## The French Adventure

Mrs. Fleming was determined to find a property in France, so her students could learn French. She asked me to come and see Le Château de la Boissière. I found six striking students and potted geraniums around the pool for photos for the brochure. I kept asking what the Château had been – no answer. I finally found out that it had been a "road house".

When I am asked what Mrs. Fleming is **really** like, I say, "She is the only person I know who could buy a brothel, do it over, and sell it to the Catholic Church!"



Jack Rich, Florida  
 Long-time educational consultant  
 and friend

You told me you were  
 a survivor ...  
 and in 2000 your word  
 is still good!

Robert Hixon Glore,  
 one of many suitors!  
 Lake Forest, Illinois  
 Alumni Parent and Grandparent



## Images from the '30s

The many personas of  
Mrs. Fleming...  
here the Bride  
(notice no groom or  
other men!)  
MCF the Feminist par  
excellence!



## Ford-ing Europe Wildcliff in Europe – November, 1937...



1937  
Mary Crist, Maggie, Holly, Lil, Evelin  
Ford-ing Europe

Through the Windshield Sees  
France, Switzerland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary,  
Austria, Germany, Belgium, Holland, England,  
Scotland, Ireland.

At the Wheel – Mary Crist!

Mary Crist:

White Doeskin gloves (even in Yugoslavia),  
fresh lipstick, Bandanas that match(!), Bill, sub-  
dued nail polish, arguing with the staid British,  
a smile that would melt an iceberg.

Quote: “Pardon me, but are you holding a  
snake?”

## I Was Hooked

“If you were to get up and sing Happy Birthday, she’s the sort of lady who’d appreciate it”, said John Amis.

Well, it was her château. And it was her birthday, 1987. And we were her guests. And we had just had a few days of exquisite French chamber music. We owed her something.

From the moment she swept into the salon, arms spread to embrace us all, smile wide as the world, I was hooked. Seconds later she grabbed my

hand: “Come on dear, we need more champagne!” I followed a very elegant pair of legs swiftly down a spiral staircase to the cellars of her château.

And I have been enthusiastically following those elegant legs ever since. And I thank my lucky stars I found her, and her students, and faculty, and a thousand rich experiences.

*John Watts  
London, England  
Actor and Baritone*



With La Signora

## Ad Multos Annos



Rick McGrath with, (l. to r.) Rose Bishop, Mrs. Fleming, and Diana Dearth

I was watching the old film “In The Garden of Allah” on the television one day. You may remember that Charles Boyer is a Trappist monk who leaves his monastery and falls in love with Greta Garbo. Well, who wouldn’t? I went to TASIS England in 1987, intending to stay for a year, and then begin studies for the Catholic priesthood. But, of course, I met Mrs. Fleming, and fell in

love, with her, and all that TASIS represents, and so each year I postponed my leaving, with an apology to God, whom I rather think has a soft spot for Mrs. Fleming as well. I hope that doesn’t sound blasphemous. It isn’t meant to be, for I am a Catholic priest now, just eight years later than intended, and still in love with Mrs. Fleming, and still grateful for the wonderful experiences and opportunities that TASIS gave me.

The ancient Latin greeting for birthdays and other anniversaries is: “Ad multos annos” – “many more years.” Amen to that, and I look forward to celebrating Mrs. Fleming’s 100th with her.

*Father Rick McGrath  
Ashstead, Surrey, England  
Former TASIS England Faculty*

## Mentor and Role Model

Mentor and role model – you ever will be!  
To stretch and to risk...  
Make a mark, make a difference – your unwritten decree.

There’s just one life out there, we hear you say  
with a smile.  
Get going, don’t waste a minute;  
Make the world better, more beautiful – and do  
it with style!

Energy, enthusiasm, confidence – hope and  
dreams;

You continue to hold up an ideal  
That keeps us all striving for a world better –  
than it so often seems!

Thank you, Cris, for being you and for touch-  
ing our lives!

*Ray and Lenita Robbins  
Zermatt, Switzerland  
Former TASIS Headmaster, 1961-1968*



Ray and Lenita Robbins with daughter, Heather Carley, and son, Kris. Lugano, 1999

# Some of her Favorites



Cris Fleming with her favorite cousin, Ros Gilpatric



and one of her favorite Coors sons, Pete



and her favorite lawyer, Alex Korach

and some of her favorite men: Assistant Chef Fabio, Chef Elia, Headmaster Chris Frost, and Head maintenance man Bruno



and, of course, as proud mother of Lynn, Tom, and Gai



With her best friend Holly Coors and daughter Lynn



and her favorite dog, Saxon

## The Role You Have Played in My Life

When requested to write this tribute my mind went on a whirlwind of thoughts. How can I put down in words such strong feelings of love and admiration? I still don't know the real answer, but I do want you to see how much of a role you have played in my life. These past ten years of my life have probably been the most formative and transforming for me. I went from a young girl to a young adult, and I hope that I am playing the role well.

Whenever I have doubts in my mind, I have learned to stop and ask myself, "Would Nonna approve of the way I am acting?" You have taught me patience, love, kindness, and compassion by example. Watching you treat everyone as respectfully as you do, no matter what their status, has taught me how we are all human beings, and should treat each other that way. My hope and prayer is that I can take everything you have taught me either by example or advice and put it into practice.

I love you Nonna, and I hope that you have a wonderful 90th birthday. I can't wait for the 100th!!!

*Your granddaughter Anna Aeschliman  
Montagnola, Switzerland*



Nonna with (from l. to r.) Daniella, Gai, Anna, and Lynn



Nonna with her two granddaughters Daniella and Anna



Nonna with granddaughter Daniella, daughter Gai, and granddaughter Anna

## The Birthday Girl Herself

The other day, I was explaining the scale of my Nonna's ninetieth birthday party to one of my friends. That automatically led to a description of the birthday girl herself. There's an inevitable vocabulary to describe Nonna, including words such as amazing, phenomenal, inspiring, and big-hearted. I have certainly been at the receiving end of all these qualities. Nonna has a way of calling me higher, of expecting more from me, of challenging me to be a student, a lady, a thinker, and a giver. I have learned to appreciate the beauty of the ideal picnic spot, of the perfect bourbon old-fashioned, of the finest view. She has taught me to love languages and learning, and, most importantly, she has been one of those who have shown me how to love other people. Nonna teaches by example. I love and respect



Nonna with Lynn, Daniella, Gai, and Anna

you very much and am so happy for you on the occasion of your ninetieth birthday.

*Your granddaughter Daniella Case  
Durham, North Carolina*

## She Never Puts Up With Second Best



Nonna and Adrien  
in cahoots with  
the bourbon bottle

Nonna, or Mrs. Fleming as the rest of the world knows her, is an antique, and like antiques she has retained her value or in this case values. During the last century and into

the next millennium the world around Mrs. Fleming has changed drastically, but she has held strong to her standards and like a fine antique has shown to those young persons around her a glimpse of the old-world charm. She has retained her value because of a steadfast striving for what is good, or as in her case, for what is perfect. She never puts up with second best and therefore encourages those around her to do their best. Around her she has created a world that lives up to her standards, her ideals. Her schools do not institutionalize students but open their eyes to the beauty around them and to living life as a civilized human being. She has created a legacy that will last at least another 90 years!

*Her grandson Adrien Aeschliman  
Montagnola, Switzerland*

## To Eliminate Chaos

Delving into TESIS archival materials, as I have been privileged to do these past months, has only intensified my knowledge of and feelings towards the magnificent lady we are honoring.

Evidence of her imaginative and creative vision for TESIS is apparent on every piece of correspondence, every illustrative brochure, every admonition in speech or written message - - all geared towards a successful fulfillment of her dreams of using international education to "eliminate chaos," one of her favorite themes.

Through the years, her personal warmth and unstinting friendship have highlighted my TESIS times.

No better summing up could be offered than that written by the Editor of *The Lyoness*, in her dedication of the 1943 yearbook of The Mary Lyon School (her parents' school):

Mary Crist Fleming  
Thank you, dear God, for a person  
Who knows your day from night,  
Who in this world of shadows  
Sees life in its true light.



And grant she walks forever  
Without reproach or fear,  
Please keep her always as she is - -  
Direct, steadfast, sincere.

*As always, dear Mrs. Fleming, your  
Emma Christine  
Archivist and Former TESIS Librarian*

## Lynn Fleming Aeschliman Addresses TASIS Alumni at the Washington Reunion

A warm welcome to each of you! It is wonderful to see so many of our alumni. And, it is an honor to be so generously hosted by the Ambassador of Switzerland...

It is a hard act to come after my mother, in many senses, but she has entrusted the reins of TASIS to my hands. No small challenge. As I said to our faculty in the fall, there is little significance in the present and prudent hope for the future unless one looks at the past, rooted as we are in an honorable, industrious heritage. As we set our sights on the 21st century, it is important to look back across the 20th century to find and reconnect with our moorings. It is in strengthening our ties with what is best in our past that we can best be prepared to face the future.

Mrs. Fleming founded TASIS on the traditional values and standards on which she was herself nourished by her educator parents, and to which for over 65 years she has given personal, vivid, eloquent, and elegant expression. The contemplative and the active dimensions of life must both be cultivated; the mind, the spirit, and the body need proper development. For many hundreds of years such efforts have formed the basis for Western Civilization and their noble products visibly surround the TASIS schools. In their light Mrs. Fleming has always emphasized "beauty" and "duty" in her schools - even in their very settings, buildings, furnishings, ceremonies, and social style. In our Schools the devotion to beauty and duty should be particularly prominent as bases for educating our young people. Joining them together is a major part of the formation and vision of M. Crist Fleming and of a TASIS education: the belief that courtesy and excellence are both important because "manners are minor morals"; that "noblesse oblige".

TASIS started with a handful of students, a band of pioneers caught up in the vision of my mother. Over the last 45 years many thousands of students have been touched by the magic of this vision. Now our richly international community brings students together from around the world in a common endeavor - in a fervent attempt - to prepare them to be decent, thoughtful, skillful, and compassionate citizens



Daughter Lynn and Mrs. Fleming, looking on to the future...

of the world as well as of their separate nations. We hope our students come to understand, appreciate, and respect the universally good qualities as well as the bountiful variety of customs that can be found in the several cultures that make up our community. This is an exceptionally important experience for our students to have so that they are prepared to live in a "global village".

I am committed to carrying on the legacy I have inherited from my educator grandparents and from my mother. I consider it a tremendous opportunity and challenge. I am ambitious for TASIS and I have high hopes and plans for what I want to accomplish before I, in turn, pass on the baton. I wouldn't be my mother's daughter if I didn't have big dreams and the commitment to work hard to realize them. After all, I grew up with the attitude that nothing is impossible, it just may take a little longer! So, I have set my sights high on behalf of TASIS.

The day I started full time as the Executive Director three years ago, I started working with a very gifted classical architect, David Mayernik, who has since developed beautiful master plans for our campuses both in Switzerland and in England. The magnificent new Palestra sports complex, the first phase of the TASIS Global Village project in Lugano, was completed last year. It is a tremendous addition to our facili-



Mrs. Fleming  
passes the baton  
to daughter Lynn

ties... The next phase and challenge will be to build a new library/dormitory that will enable us to convert the old library into much-needed classrooms.

In the meantime, a tremendous opportunity presented itself when a property my mother has been eyeing for 40 years came available. To prevent the subdivision of the property next to our campus into 10 house lots, we took a calculated risk - let's remember, that's how my mother started and built TASIS! - the calculated risk of signing a deferred-purchase contract to buy this beautiful land and villa, a natural addition to our campus that will increase the school property by more than 40%. We have two years to raise the 2 and 1/2 million dollars to complete the purchase. The challenge is on for all of us...

We are also very excited about our newly-developed Master Plan for TASIS England. This school has grown so rapidly and is full to overflowing. We now need to step back and plan for the long term, seeking to improve our facilities for our present full capacity. We plan to break ground on the first phase - a classroom building and an office building - next year.

I, with the wonderful, dedicated TASIS team, have plenty of challenges ahead to realize these Master Plans before I retire, a word my mother didn't realize existed! We are always striving to evaluate and improve what we do, not just with the physical facilities, but also with the quality of our programs, winter and summer. We are

not only working to make our campuses the most beautiful of any school in Europe, but, more importantly, to educate and prepare our students, those who bring the campuses alive, to become defenders and ambassadors for the good - for virtue - wherever their paths take them. There is need all around us. My most heartfelt hope is that each of our students will make a difference for the better in each of their communities.

Written in the front of my grandmother's Bible are the words: "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."... I was very pleased to hear the same words quoted at our recent TASIS Commencement by our distinguished guest speaker - and cosmopolitan Swiss - Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the International Red Cross.

My mother set up the TASIS Foundation to perpetuate her vision, a rather traditional educational vision to which she has given unique inspirational expression and unique international scope. She has placed the entire campus and management of The American School in Switzerland in a non-profit Swiss educational foundation. We finally have the structure now to receive large tax-deductible donations. We decided to launch major fundraising to support our expansion and building plans. The School cannot build all that we need to build and develop all of the programs we would like to develop solely with its own resources. We need the strong support of generous TASIS alumni and friends.

With all of the talented and loyal people at TASIS, many of whom are here gathered, the vision will go on. We count on you the alumni to give your continued support in small and large ways to ensure that the TASIS schools will remain strong and improve, and that our students and alumni will flourish far into the future, well prepared to make a difference.

Please return to your alma mater this summer! You are all invited to celebrate my mother's 90th birthday in Lugano August 18-20. It will be a memorable occasion with an original musical based on my mother's life and a history of TASIS film, along with much good company in a magnificent setting - Switzerland! I look forward to seeing many of you there.

The Senior Classes of 2000, Switzerland and England,  
congratulate you, Mrs. Fleming, for creating  
and giving us TESIS



TASIS Switzerland  
Class of 2000



TASIS England  
Class of 2000

In appreciation and devotion to the most  
remarkable mother,  
I dedicate this volume to MCF - What a Life,  
What a Woman, What a Mother!  
God bless you always.

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Lynn Fleming Aeschliman, Editor  
Designed by Rick Bickhart  
Typesetting by E.M. Typesetting  
Original printing by Kaminer & Thomson, Inc  
Charlottesville, Virginia

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Lynn Fleming Aeschliman, Editor  
Reprinted with Addendum  
by Tipografia Grafica Bellinzona SA  
Claro, Switzerland

Mary Crist Fleming

MCF—WHAT A LIFE!

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McJ



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