

Beauty and Duty: Persons, Accomplishments, and Events in the Making of the TASIS Schools 1956 - 2022

A volume in honor of
Fernando Gonzalez on the occasion
of his fiftieth year with the
TASIS organization

Edited by Lynn & Michael Aeschliman, Reni Scheifele, and Jacopo Riva

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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, Epistle to the Philippians 4: 8

The good life, the beautiful life, the just life are the same.

Socrates in Plato, Crito 48b

The cover illustration is from the famous Renaissance fresco cycle of "The Journey of the Magi" by Benozo Gozzoli (1421-1497) in the Capella Medici-Riccardi in Florence. In addition to the original Christian context and significance, it suggests the idea of a purposeful pilgrimage toward meaning and value by a variety of civilized figures sharing in this noble endeavor.

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Beauty and Duty: Persons, Accomplishments, and Events in the Making of the TASIS Schools.

M. D. Aeschliman

This volume is dedicated to **Fernando L. Gonzalez** on the occasion of his fiftieth year with the TASIS organization.

The book is a set of essays solicited from long-term or prominent TASIS figures or alumni, many of whom reflect on their TASIS careers or an accomplishment or event that helped build the school or schools and the organization. The first group of essays is focused on Fernando's achievements and service to the organization.

Fernando Gonzalez is given pride of place in the volume and contributes an initial, overarching essay on his long and effective career at TASIS. Twenty other contributors write on him. Along with Lynn and Mrs. Fleming herself, Fernando has been the most important figure in the shaping of the schools since his arrival in Montagnola in 1972. He has not only founded TASIS schools and programs (and closed some of them!), including the ventures in Puerto Rico and Portugal, but he has been instrumental in actually saving the TASIS schools in both Switzerland and, most recently, in England, during periods of great crisis. Some of these experiences can never be told publicly or fully, but to those of us who know about them they have shown Fernando to be a person of the highest adaptability, integrity, and fortitude.

The title "Beauty and Duty" focuses on the unusual insistence of the Founder in the origin and development of the TASIS schools on beauty of sites and surroundings; beauty of buildings---old, restored, and new---and of furnishings and grounds; emphasis on art, architecture, music, theater, art history, and European languages and civilization; grace of manners, courtesy, hospitality, and hopefulness; and the related intellectual-ethical dimension ("duty") of the independent day and boarding school in the Judaeo-Christian and classical traditions (descending from the medieval Cathedral schools, the Renaissance Italian Christian-humanist schools, the English "public schools," and the American independent schools). The intellectual-ethical dimension includes scholastic rigor, as much personalized instruction and experiential learning as possible (including academic travel), innovative programs and short courses, and attention to the whole young person, with the school or

¹ See M.D. Aeschliman, "Humanist Educational Projects," The Journal of Education (Boston), 184 (2): 69-83 (April 2004)

program experience conceived not only as preparation for further study and later life but also as in and of itself a valuable humanist educational project in the liberal-arts tradition.

Fernando has contributed uniquely and enormously to all these aspects of TASIS, helping to shape the schools and programs and, as mentioned above, founding some of them. The editors hope this volume is a fitting tribute to him, and to its other valuable contributors, and an asset to developing and clarifying the organization's and the schools' identities in a time of rapid, widespread, often thoughtless and hasty change.

Section two of the book prints a few essays, tributes, and greetings in honor of Lynn Fleming Aeschliman, daughter of TASIS Founder Mrs. M. Crist Fleming, one of the school's first students, and its longest-serving employee and executive. This editor, her husband, put together on the occasion of her sixtieth birthday in 2006 a privately-published volume of tributes and greetings by about 70 contributors, entitled **Grace Under Pressure**. Three selections from this volume are here reprinted along with three new essays of appreciation.

Section three of the book consists mainly of essays by "major TASIS personalities," several of them having served the school or schools for several decades---a dozen of them for over thirty years. These are people who have given their lives to make a reality of the originating vision and impetus of Mary Crist Fleming. A final "In memoriam" eulogy by Mark Aeschliman (an alumnus with over 40 years of service to TASIS) is of long-time TASIS art and photography teacher Horst Dürrschmidt, who died while this book was in preparation.

The penultimate section of the book consists of essays on or by three particularly generous TASIS alumni whose benefactions have decisively affected and improved the educational experience at TASIS and the lives of its students---a Norwegian, a Turk, and an American. Their practical benevolence reminds us that individuals can and do indeed affect history and change the lives of institutions and individuals for the better. In a world of recurrent folly, vice, and sin, these individuals have kept heavenly light shining, the radiance that attracted those wise men of old, depicted by Benozzo Gozzoli, who sought orientation and meaning and took a long geographical and mental pilgrimage into strange and foreign lands.

Michael Aeschliman Ph.D., Columbia University Professor Emeritus of Education, Boston University

TASIS Foundation Board



Fernando Gonzalez, Duty and Beauty: A TASIS Lifetime

Fernando Gonzalez



It would take this entire book to properly describe what TASIS has meant to me over the past five decades. I am extremely touched that Lynn and Michael Aeschliman have honored me by giving me "pride of place" in this significant collection of essays which reflect the reminiscences and accomplishments of so many distinguished colleagues who have helped build and perpetuate Mrs. Fleming's legacy. As I enter my fiftieth year with TASIS, I reflect fondly on my many wonderful memories and challenges that changed a one-year leave of

absence from Harvard Design School into a life-long experience that continues to this day. Without question TASIS has transformed my life and presented me with opportunities most people can only dream of. TASIS and Mrs Fleming defined my life and that of my family, for which I am eternally grateful.

I have been blessed with the chance to combine two of my passions – education and architecture – in one job and be inspired by a visionary who would become my mentor and inspiration for life. Most people never have one, let alone three such meaningful opportunities offered to them in a lifetime.

My Introduction to TASIS

While teaching art at Phillips Academy in Massachusetts 1971, my Andover classmate and good friend Topper Lynn, who was then the TASIS Admissions recruiter, visited and asked me if I'd be interested in teaching art in Europe. I was intrigued but was about to begin my architecture graduate program at Harvard. A year later a contract arrived in the mail with a handwritten note from Mrs. Fleming, whom I had never met, saying, "I have heard such high praise from Topper that I am offering you employment at The American School in Switzerland as Chairman of the Art Department for the next academic year. I want you to create the finest art program of any school in Europe." Thus began my love affair with MCF, who became my second mother, mentor, and inspiration even after her death in 2009.

A number of things merged to make my decision inevitable. First, the opportunity to build an art program from scratch and spend a year traveling in Europe to see first-hand the great masterpieces I had studied in Art History was too great a temptation. My design-school instructors strongly encouraged me to spend a year in Europe because it would strengthen my background in architecture. Finally, during college I had spent a summer traveling in Europe and fell in love with Italy. In my senior year as an undergraduate at Harvard, I decided to study Italian A, where I met my future wife.



When I told Mrs. Fleming that I would be bringing my fiancée to Lugano, she suggested that it would be inappropriate to live together in a boarding school environment and "strongly recommended" that we get married. A teaching contract for my soon-to-be wife followed and we began our honeymoon at TASIS. Little did I know at the time that Mrs. Fleming's vision of "Europe as a Classroom" was about to become my own.

An Auspicious Beginning

Two days after our wedding we arrived in Lugano, and I admit my first impressions of the campus were a big disappointment. The campus was in pieces from having combined the Vezia and Montagnola campuses into one, and with two weeks left before the start of school, there was no way I thought it would be ready. The property was a chaotic construction site with temporary buildings going up everywhere, the top-floor of the De Nobili extension was being dismantled because it was too high, and the new pre-fab pool sections cluttered the entrance to campus. More importantly, the art facilities which I was supposed to convert into the best art program in Europe were inadequate and poorly located. They would not work for the program I had in mind based on my Andover experience, with students actively involved in creating 2 and 3-dimensional art. It was an inauspicious start to my TASIS career.

Upon sharing my concerns with the Headmaster George Lawson, he said that he was not in charge of campus developments and that I would have to discuss it with Mrs. Fleming. An appointment was set for the following day which I approached with great trepidation, as I wondered whether I would become the shortest-term employee in TASIS history. However, Mrs. Fleming's charm immediately put me at ease and when she asked me to make the drinks, including her beloved Old Fashioned, which I had no idea how to prepare, she said: "Young man, anyone who is going to work for me has to be able to make an Old Fashioned!" I was amused many years later when this anecdote was included in the musical on her, MCF: What a Life!

I was quickly absorbed in her fascinating world and soon she knew my entire life story and that of my family, in which she took genuine interest. This was a crash course in MCF 101: her ability to connect with people, from a corporate CEO to a maid, by making them feel they are the most important persons in the room is legendary.

Our conversation finally led to the purpose of the meeting when she asked: "Now, what can I do for you, my dear?" When I explained that my plans for the art department would have to be curtailed and that the art facilities were not adequate to realize her dream, she replied immediately: "That will not do...let's take a walk." We toured the campus and I showed her a cramped ski storage closet which was meant to become a photo lab, and the back-end of a temporary prefab building with paper-thin walls that was converted to an art studio. She understood my concerns immediately.

By the end of our tour, the art studio was re-located to the lovely brick vaulted ground floor of Coach House, which was flooded with natural light and where student art could be displayed at the heart of the campus. The relocated photo lab took over a section of the new chemistry prep room and a nearby bathroom was converted into the film developing room. I was stunned; what in most schools would take months to change had been done in a day. I quickly realized this was a woman who knew what she wanted and did not hesitate to make it happen.

Despite antagonizing both the math and science departments by stealing their spaces on my first day on the job, I soon became part of an extremely close-knit team of extraordinary educators who were adventuresome, dedicated, talented, hard-working, and above all loved



Fernando with Lynn Fleming Aeschliman, Michael Aeschliman, and Foundation Board Director Gianni Patuzzo

their subject matter and working closely with students. It is a long list: John and Michèle Watson, Ewan Mirylees, De Haven and Windie Fleming, Akbar and Wendy Khan, Max and Marcia Page, Peter and Hope Stevens, Chris and Anne Frost, and in later years, Lyle and Sharon Rigg, John Smalley, Perrin Tingley, and Carmen Armistead, to name just a few. Many of them have remained my close friends over the years, and above all else it has been the quality of the faculty and the relationships we have forged that have made my career at TASIS so rewarding.

We were able to build a special, caring community as reflected in Mrs. Fleming's vision while also challenging and stretching our diverse and motivated students. Many of the students from my earliest TASIS years have stayed in touch, and one of my first students, Barry Iverson, has taught photography in my Arts and Architecture summer program in the South of France for 5 years. In addition, my two sons Adrian and Sebastian, who are both TASIS England graduates, are perhaps the best reflection of what a TASIS education represents and comprise what is my greatest reward for having been part of TASIS.

The Fleming Formula

The effects of Mrs. Fleming's influence resonated with me consciously and subconsciously. One of the highlights of my early years at TASIS was the addition of an architecture course to the curriculum, which enabled me to take a class of twelve students to the south of France to design an abandoned hamlet of six 18th-century buildings into holiday homes. I fell in love with the Ardèche and the hamlet of Les Tapies.

As a result, I purchased and began restoration of one of its buildings, a beautiful stone barn overlooking the Rhône Valley. I was eventually able to buy and restore the entire hamlet into an extraordinary artists' community which became home to the very successful Les Tapies Art and Architecture Program, which I codirected for fifteen summers with TASIS England Master Art Teacher John Smalley. After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the program will reopen in summer 2022.

The program's success is based on MCF's fail-proof formula for starting a school: find a beautiful property, attract the best faculty who will serve as role models and have a passion for teaching, create a challenging program of studies and activities which will stretch the students, and sprinkle these ingredients with a generous dose of tender loving care to nurture and bring out the best in them. I particularly enjoy the opportunity of being back in the classroom again and working closely with students, which brings my TASIS career full circle.



A New Career

But before I was able to emulate Mrs. Fleming's fail-proof formula, I returned to Harvard Design School. My leave of absence had been extended for a second year, but any further delay would have forfeited my credits. I enjoyed being on the other side of the classroom again, though I spent much of my time in the studio redesigning the barn in Les Tapies instead of doing the assigned projects—and even tempted a few of my instructors to invest in my dream of creating an artists' community.

So when Mrs. Fleming contacted me in Cambridge to discuss the possibility of returning to TASIS, I was intrigued. As she unveiled her plan, it was clear that what she had in mind combined my love for education and design as Director of Institutional Development. The opportunity to return to Europe to promote TASIS, Fleming College Florence, and the summer programs, as well as oversee campus developments and build the TASIS image was extremely tempting. Most compelling of all was the opportunity to work closely with Mrs. Fleming to help her realize her dream.

Although I had no experience designing promotional materials or in public relations, Mrs. Fleming was convinced that I was the ideal person for the job and said she would not leave Boston until she had an answer. One does not say no to Mrs. Fleming in such a situation. My one condition of employment was to have the summers off so I could rebuild my barn in Les Tapies; she agreed, and it was settled. This was a turning point in my life and one I will never regret. Since our agreement five decades ago, I have been fortunate to have been involved in the founding of TASIS England, TASIS Greece, TASIS Cyprus, TASIS France, TASIS Dorado, and TASIS Portugal, as well as a number of summer programs.

Highs and Lows

As Co-Founder of TASIS Dorado and President of the Board during its first 20 years, I am proud to have watched the School grow to become the largest of the TASIS Schools with nearly 900 students. In addition to having had two Presidential Scholars, its AP scores and college acceptance record are excellent and TASIS Dorado is now widely considered to be the finest school in Puerto Rico. To build an outstanding TASIS School, in partnership with the Stubbe family and with the dream team of my Harvard roommate and close friend Louis Christiansen as Headmaster and my sister Maritere Matosantos as Principal, to educate and provide tomorrow's leaders for our beloved Puerto Rico, has been an opportunity of a lifetime.

Our most recent venture, TASIS Portugal, is proving to be my greatest challenge. Converting a commercial center into a beautiful TASIS campus on a tight time frame has been a huge undertaking. Even the TASIS Foundation Board had doubts about starting a new school during a pandemic, but already in our second year we have 520 students enrolled and a strong TASIS culture under the leadership of Headmaster Keith Chicquen. A dysfunctional shopping mall has been steadily transformed into a beautiful classical building full of reclaimed historic stone features to marry the new with the old in the finest TASIS tradition. I know Mrs. Fleming would be proud of the latest addition to the TASIS family.



Perhaps my most significant achievement at TASIS was revamping the leadership and addressing the concerns of a failed Ofsted inspection which in 2017 identified TASIS England as not meeting compliance standards with respect to safeguarding and the boarding program. In addition to serving as Acting Head of School, which I shared with fellow Foundation Board member David Hicks during the transition, and rebuilding the Board of Directors, we had to replace 38 faculty and completely redesign the boarding program. Under the excellent leadership of new Headmaster Bryan Nixon and in my renewed role as Chairman of the Board, we were able to address the Ofsted concerns, restore faculty morale, rebuild enrolments, and reduce costly overheads to balance the budget. I had the invaluable support of the TASIS Foundation to meet significant operating losses and we are now on track to becoming the school of choice in the UK again. It has been a community-wide effort which reflects the TASIS resilience when faced with major setbacks.

Another significant challenge was back in 1975, when we faced three separate US Dollar devaluations due to an oil embargo. The cost of a TASIS education doubled in a single year, and our enrolments dropped to such a dangerous level that TASIS had to sell school buildings to meet our payroll requirements. The Board decided to open a school in England because our survival in Switzerland was in doubt; and to avoid competition with ourselves, my wife and I went on the road for three months to boost our enrolments from the oil-rich US Southwest.

One of our stops was the El Paso Natural Gas Company, where I made a presentation in the middle of a blinding sandstorm. The company had just been awarded a contract to extract gas from the oil production in Algeria, which resulted in our recruiting 38 students from El Paso employee families, all of whom enrolled in TASIS Lugano. More importantly, the company paid the first semester fees up-front, which addressed the School's financial problem at a critical time in the School's history.

The MCF Legacy

When I asked Mrs Fleming at the age of 92 for her blessing in starting TASIS Dorado, she said: "Fernando, if it is in your heart you must do it and, if I was 10 years younger, I would do it with you!" This came just after the 9/11 tragedy when the TASIS Board was reluctant to take on any new ventures, especially one outside of Europe. But Mrs. Fleming had taught me, "Do not take no for an answer!" Her support was critical as I moved forward with my own vision.

It was this *joie de vivre* that made working with MCF such a joy and a privilege to have played a part in helping her realize her dreams, which eventually became my own. This was her secret to success: empowering others to believe they could achieve the impossible, especially when one's back is up against the wall. The first time I met her, I sensed immediately that Mrs. Fleming would serve as an outstanding role model and provide me with challenges and opportunities of a lifetime.

Still today, I think of what MCF would do before I make a decision. My commitment and love for her, and TASIS, has remained steadfast throughout my career. I once asked her if she had any regrets in her long, successful life and she responded immediately: "I only regret the things I did not do, not the ones I did." I have tried to emulate this positive approach to life in my own career. I have been fortunate indeed to have played a part in creating and perpetuating Mrs. Fleming's legacy.

My TASIS experience has been a richly rewarding journey full of opportunities, challenges, friendships, successes and, yes, failures, which have made me grow and



Mrs. Fleming, Michael and Lynn Aeschliman with Fernando and Kristina at their wedding

reach for the next goal, having learned from my mistakes. Every moment of my journey can be traced back to Mrs. Fleming. Her entrepreneurial and "can do" spirit is infectious and continues to inspire those of us who have had the good fortune to work with her and her daughter, Lynn Fleming Aeschliman, to reach for the stars. My life and that of my family have been immeasurably enriched by our TASIS experience: I have received much more than I have given in my half century with TASIS.

TASIS Governance

William T. Fleming

The 50-year career of Fernando Gonzalez with the TASIS organization has been a remarkable history of dedication, wise counsel, a tireless work ethic, exemplary management skills, a no-quit attitude, all the while, throughout this up-and-down journey, displaying an unflappable disposition. No one associated with TASIS, other than the founder, has been a more essential component of the TASIS success story. I will recount my direct experiences with Fernando after I re-engaged with the TASIS organization in the late 1990's after 20 years in banking and became Chairman of the TASIS Foundation in 2002.

In the mid 1990's there was a change in leadership of the TASIS schools from founder M. Crist Fleming to her daughter, Lynn Fleming Aeschliman. While this change brought in a new generation of leadership, the form of ownership and governance remained proprietary. The structure of management remained in the form of an Executive Committee comprised of an Executive Director (Lynn), a Chief Financial Officer (Paul Zazzaro), and a Director of Sales and Marketing (Fernando Gonzalez). This structure continued to function effectively, as it had over the prior decades; however, as it was dependent on the competence and dedication of just the three principals, it was not the ideal governance structure for the long-term stability of the TASIS organization.

In recognition of this, the Fleming family made the decision to contribute the TASIS schools and campuses to a Swiss Foundation governed by a Board of Directors that shared the vision and values of the founder. The very nature of a Board of Directors, which invites new members as existing members retire, provides a form of self-perpetuation that would better assure the sustainability of the TASIS schools. The donation to the TASIS Foundation of the TASIS schools and campuses was completed in 2005, at which time the Board of the TASIS Foundation made the decision to transfer governance of the schools from the structure of an Executive Committee directly overseeing each school to the form of a Board of Trustees for each school responsible for the supervision of that school.

Each new School Board would be comprised of no more than ten members with a Board Chairman elected by the Foundation and board members elected or reappointed annually by the Foundation. This arrangement was specifically designed to provide the Foundation with a continued degree of control over the schools through the selection of board chair and board members. Lynn became the Chairman of the Board for The American School in Switzerland and she continues to serve in that role today. Fernando became Chairman of TASIS England; the election of two other board chairs at TASIS England since the creation of the Boards in 2005 has demonstrated the self-perpetuating nature of a Board of Directors.

This board structure served the schools well until 2015, when a combination of a poor selection of a headmaster at TASIS England together with poor board supervision of the senior management of that school resulted in a failed inspection by OFSTED, the inspection arm of the British Department for Education. While this failed inspection did not immediately close the school and, instead, allowed time for the school to take necessary measures to correct the deficiencies, it did have a severe, negative impact on boarding enrollments by prohibiting the issuance of Visas for international boarding students.

As he had done on numerous occasions since starting with TASIS in 1972, Fernando stepped into the breach of this perilous situation and, together with David Hicks (Vice Chair of the TASIS Foundation Board), assumed the duties of Headmaster while the Foundation Board restructured the members of the TASIS England Board. While the recovery process was slow and required a complete restructuring of all boarding houses, both in physical layout as well as staffing, Fernando orchestrated a turnaround that resulted in a fully compliant inspection 18 months later. The reconstituted TASIS England board, under Fernando's leadership, hired a new Headmaster, who has successfully led the school to this day. Without Fernando's rescuing of this situation the outcome would have been disastrous.

A new venture for TASIS

After almost 15 years of successful board supervision at both The American School in Switzerland and TASIS England (albeit with the painful experience and consequences of the failed OFSTED inspection at TASIS England), the TASIS Foundation was seeking new opportunities in Europe consistent with the objectives of the Foundation as stated in the By-Laws:

The Foundation's objectives are to support existing and future schools outside the United States,... which are to be conducted as American schools according to the principles and educational philosophy of Mary Crist Fleming.

Once again, Fernando was the instigator of a new venture that was brought to the attention of the Foundation by a group in Lisbon, Portugal. While the Foundation had seriously explored other opportunities both in Europe and the Middle East, none, on initial inspection, had the attractive qualities offered by this prospective start-up school. Portugal is a country in a corner of Europe with a rich history and culture that contributed significantly to Western civilization. It remains today largely unaffected by mass tourism and immigration that has overwhelmed other European countries. To our surprise, our market research discovered a rapidly expanding presence of international companies selecting Lisbon for their European headquarters as well as an under-served demand for international schooling.

This start-up opportunity included, as a potential campus for the school, a largely empty shopping-mall in Sintra, an upscale residential suburb of Lisbon. Upon further inspection it was determined that this facility, properly converted, could provide comfortable and attractive accommodations for a day school with an enrollment in excess of 1000 students in grades Pre-K-12. Of course, the transformation of a stark, commercial facility into a campus that would meet the TASIS standard of beauty would be a daunting task. Here again, Fernando's background and education as a trained architect would play a crucial role in the transformation of this facility.

The Foundation made the decision, in March 2019, to pursue this opportunity with the understanding that Fernando and David Hicks, the only members of the Foundation board with experience in starting a school de novo, would be the principals in initiating and guiding this venture. This included obtaining the shopping-mall facility and converting that for use as a school, engaging the leadership team (Headmaster, marketing director, academic director, financial director), establishing the academic curriculum consistent with TASIS standards, and doing all of this with a launch deadline of September 2020.



Lynn Fleming Aeschliman '63 with brother Tom Fleming

As we all will remember quite vividly, the Covid-19 pandemic hit world-wide in March 2020, in the very critical months of this start-up new school venture in Portugal. This resulted in the closing of both The American School in Switzerland and TASIS England for the remainder of the academic year and moving to an online delivery of the academic program at both schools. The uncertainty created by the pandemic, and the resulting prospect of continued school closures and likely declining enrollments at the TASIS schools, caused alarm bells to ring at the TASIS Foundation. Could we continue to afford the required investment in the start-up school in Portugal when the TASIS schools would likely require significant financial support from the Foundation to cover operating losses resulting from pandemic-related declining enrollments?

Opinions among Foundation board members were mixed and the debate over continuing the significant investment in the Portuguese start-up in the face of so much uncertainty was lively. Support for the venture remained strong, however, as evidence of the need for a new school in this market was reinforced from the months already spent in organizing the new school. Fernando and David Hicks, the two principals directly guiding and organizing this undertaking, remained convincing proponents and ultimately the Foundation board made the decision to continue.

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, that decision was the correct one. TASIS Portugal opened in September 2020, with 250 students in grades Pre-K -7 in a beautiful, partially converted facility. The school started its second year of operations in September 2021, with 500 students with the addition of grade 8, and each year we will continue to add additional grades through High School. Fernando continues his remarkable work in transforming this mundane commercial property into an impressive, efficient property for a TASIS school while both he and David Hicks guide the excellent Headmaster Keith Chicquen and his management team in this remarkable enterprise.

No school organization could have been as fortunate as TASIS, or for that matter no business either, to have 50 years of talented contribution, dedication, and service as the TASIS organization has had from Fernando. May he soldier on forever.

With much gratitude.

Tom Fleming is the Chairman of the TASIS Foundation Board.

Intelligent by Design

Lyle Rigg

When I first arrived at TASIS England back in 1979, Fernando already had been with the organization for seven years. Throughout our more than four decades of working together, I have enjoyed interacting with Fernando in many different roles and locations. He has been a wise mentor, supportive colleague, and valued friend.

Although I was honored to be asked to write something about Fernando on the occasion of his golden anniversary with TASIS, I also was somewhat intimidated by the request. How does one capture adequately what Fernando has done for and contributed to TASIS throughout his fifty years? His contributions have been legendary—and still are very much in progress.

Fortunately, as I considered what to write, I remembered the arches. To me the arches that grace the Oak Court classroom building on the campus of TASIS England are a perfect example of Fernando's extraordinary vision and his enormous talents.

When I served an interim year as Head of School in England in 2009-10, the school opened the year by inaugurating such new structures as Vicarage Mews, Thorpe Hall, and the Oak Court loggia. Although Fernando played an important role in all of these impressive additions to the campus, I found the arches to the Oak Court loggia the most remarkable.

I had seen these arches elsewhere on campus a year earlier. Although I don't remember exactly where they were being stored (it may have been the Fleming Garden area), I do remember thinking they were a lost cause. It seemed to me that these old, damaged, dirty, and disgusting arches probably weren't even fit as wood for a Guy Fawkes bonfire.

Not surprisingly, Fernando saw things differently. He had acquired these arches years before and stored them away ready for just the "right" project. Yes, Fernando ensured that these decrepit four-hundred-year-old arches were lovingly and beautifully restored so that they eventually were ready to impressively frame the loggia of the Oak Court Classroom block. I think the words of John Ruskin, the 19th century English theorist of art and philosopher, sum up ideally Fernando's vision, "Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort."

Just think of the number of "arches" that Fernando has saved, restored, and erected throughout his fifty years with TASIS. Fernando's vision and talents can be found everywhere at current TASIS schools in England, Switzerland, Portugal, and Puerto Rico, and also at former campuses in France, Greece, and Cyprus. His vision and

talents also can be found at the village he restored in France and numerous homes in England and Puerto Rico. Yes, Fernando can transform an ancient arch or a modern shopping mall into a thing of beauty. To quote Ruskin yet again, "We require from buildings two kinds of goodness: first, doing their practical duty well: then that they be graceful and pleasing in doing it."

Fernando, of course, is much more than "arches." He also is an intelligent and caring leader and educator. He understands the importance of effective and open communication with others. He also understands that projects come at costs that must be considered carefully. Many of the "arches" he has created throughout his career at TASIS have helped support the schools with their local communities and have connected individuals (school leaders, teachers, staff members, students, parents, and alumni) with each other and their schools.

Throughout my association with TASIS, I have had many opportunities to observe Fernando in meetings and to work with him on boards. I admire his ability to present thoughtful arguments not only on building projects and campus developments, but also on other important aspects of school life including academics, the arts, athletics, and overall school culture. Throughout these meetings, I have been impressed by Fernando's willingness to listen to and to consider other arguments. Fernando also helps to ensure that the TASIS mission and Mrs. Fleming's vision remain at the forefront of planning for the future.

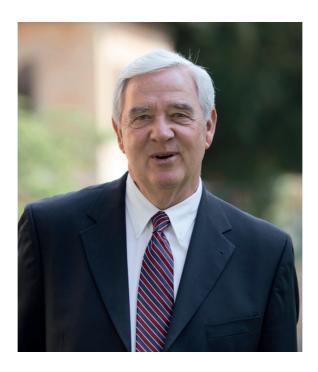
During his illustrious career with TASIS it is impossible to calculate how many times Fernando has "stepped up" for the good of the organization. Fernando has always been there to help out: even if it meant agreeing to serve as interim headmaster for a year while also performing many of his other daunting TASIS duties!

Throughout my years as head of school, I was reassured knowing that I always could count on Fernando's help—even if and when the situation looked bleak. Yes, Fernando was often at his best when things were most challenging. Over the years TASIS has benefited greatly because Fernando seems to thrive on challenges.

Although the development of school facilities is probably viewed as Fernando's greatest contribution to TASIS throughout the past fifty years, I think there are many reasons to offer a different argument. Yes, without question, Fernando has helped create some of the most beautiful school campuses anywhere. Nevertheless, as he reflected back in 2005, "No matter how good your buildings and your facilities and your programs are, they are not going to be good enough. It's important to get the right people... "Fernando continued, "TASIS has attracted people who also believed in the vision that you can do things with a lot of hard work and some inspiration. One of the things that I have always enjoyed is that we have attracted wonderful people. We give people tremendous opportunities, but tremendous responsibilities too."

Yes, it's the people who make the difference—and Fernando is at the top of the list! Fortunately for TASIS, Fernando's devotion to beauty, duty, and people throughout the past fifty years has done much to create some of the most outstanding schools in the world. Although Ruskin lived in the 19th Century, I'm convinced he must have been thinking of Fernando when he wrote, "The constant duty of every man to his fellows is to ascertain his own powers and special gifts, and to strengthen them for the help of others."

We owe tremendous gratitude to Fernando for using his considerable powers and special gifts not only to preserve the Oak Court arches, but also to make us better in every sense of the word.



Lyle Rigg served as Headmaster of TASIS and TASIS England from 1979-1998, and then, after several years as Headmaster of Pennington School in New Jersey, again as Acting Head of each TASIS school, finally retiring in 2017.

My Friend Fernando

David V. Hicks

Only a fool like myself would attempt to use one word to describe someone as many-sided and multi-talented as Fernando Gonzalez. This is the challenge that Homer must have faced when trying to describe Odysseus before he fastened on the word *polytropos*, variously translated as ingenious, complicated, a man of many ways, or many turns. This was probably the best way to describe a man who drank, in Tennyson's words, "life to the lees" and was "always roaming with a hungry heart." It would also be a good way to describe my dear indefatigable friend Fernando.

It is rare, I think, for men to form strong bonds and friendships in middle age. This is usually the privilege of youth, before wives, children, careers, and earthly cares demand all our attention and little store of affection, so it is with a profound sense of gratitude to TASIS and Fernando himself that I reflect on the happy fate that brought us together in mid-life and made our friendship possible. Even though we graduated from Harvard and Princeton in the same year and had spent all of our adult lives working in the small, incestuous world of independent education, we neared our half-century mark before crossing paths. And to be honest, I can't even remember the moment we met; however, I'd be willing to bet that either Cris Fleming or her daughter Lynn made the introduction in one of their celebrated Casa Fleming soirees in 1996 when I was invited to speak at Lugano's Commencement.

Since then, Fernando and I, usually on behalf of TASIS, have undertaken many projects together and visited with our patient wives in our several far-flung homes. I recall all of these projects and visits with great pleasure, starting with a strategic-planning process for TASIS England that Fernando asked me to coordinate when he chaired the board and later temporarily headed the school there. That led to a similar project in Lugano, after which I joined the Foundation board and regularly saw Fernando, who always played an active and wise role in those meetings. Meanwhile, Fernando was launching his own TASIS school, so to speak, in his native and beloved Puerto Rico, and at a critical flexion point there he asked me to join his board and coordinate yet another strategic-planning process for TASIS Dorado.

A pause in this laundry list is now in order. Something needs to be said about the unique combination of traits that I find so attractive and special about Fernando. Like his mentor Cris Fleming, he possesses an irrepressible and bold entrepreneurial spirit with a highly developed creative sensibility. These shared traits must have first attracted Mrs. Fleming to him, and him to her. And these traits, it seems to me, largely account for their undeniable charisma and charm. At the same time, a genuine interest in people,

a respect for their differences, and a warm desire to share their lives and dreams with others tempers their charisma and, let us be honest, clear and well-formed opinions about what they like and don't like. All of these ingredients in the same pot make for an irresistible dish!

Another characteristic both this matriarch and patriarch share is an ability to take the long view. TASIS itself is the beneficiary of this unusual strategic mentality. Most of us apply our backs to the daily grind without a compelling vision of what we expect to leave behind after our brief sojourn on the planet, but this could not be said of Fernando, whose work for TASIS always takes into consideration a view of where he is going and what he will leave behind. Most vividly, this characteristic is on full display at Les Tapies, the small hamlet in Southern France's Ardèche that Fernando has acquired house by house and rebuilt stone by stone over a lifetime. And true to form, his vision has people in it. Over the years he has shared and populated his hamlet with friends, artists, and students of all kinds.

This suggests one of the passions Fernando and I share: stone masonry. There's something deeply satisfying about building with stone, either putting up a random-rubble dry-stack wall or repairing a crumbling stone cottage. Each in our own way has courted criticism and had to manage stressful conflicts, and the Zen of stone-masonry is probably our best therapy, whether done in France or at my home in Montana, where my neighbors cannot understand why anyone would go to the trouble of building a stone wall when all you have to do is "string a wire." Barbed wire, of course. One of my fondest memories is of a visit Fernando and Kristina made to Montana when on a cold, rainy day Fernando and I "competed" (we were both athletes in college) in rebuilding two crumbling stone walls at the entrance to our ranch, *West of the Moon*. (Both walls are still standing, although Fernando's shows more promise of enduring.)

No doubt our most harrowing joint venture was the half year we tag-teamed the recovery of TASIS England after its failure of two OFSTED inspections and years of mismanagement. Probably the less said about that the better. The heavy lifting, even by the standards of my challenging school assignments, was prodigious, but throughout it all I could always count on Fernando's unwavering determination, creative problemsolving, and positive attitude. The end crowned the work, as they say. We trimmed the sails, not without giving and receiving some pain, and the little ship righted itself; I think we emerged a stronger school and were able to present Bryan Nixon with a better, more coherent crew and an organization able to pass future inspections.

Anyway, by this time our bona fides were pretty well established, I suppose, and it was natural for Tom Fleming and the TASIS Foundation board to invite the two of us to partner in helping to build a new TASIS school in Sintra, Portugal. Our interests and abilities, such as they are, appear to complement each other: Fernando with his

architectural and design expertise and his deep understanding of TASIS' history and ethos, and yours truly with my peripatetic career in independent schools and my many and varied personal encounters with modern education's successes and failures. What a privilege for both of us, when many of our contemporaries are looking for efficient ways of sinking little white balls into eighteen holes, to have one last chance to apply the lifetime lessons of what has worked and what hasn't in a marvelous new school venture in beautiful and hospitable Portugal. Glory to God.



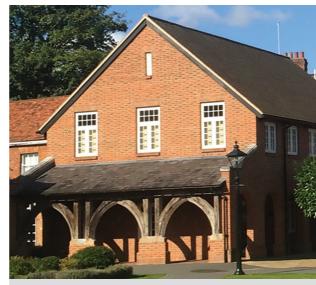
David V. Hicks is a member of the TASIS Foundation Board, former Headmaster of several prominent American independent schools, the author of the award-winning book on education **Norms** and **Nobility** (1981), and a translator of classical texts.

Challenge, Question, Design

Jay and Heather Wyper

Our family exposure to TASIS began in 2001 on relocation to London from five years in Spain. With the strong recommendation from good friends whose children were at TASIS and after a tour of all of the American-curriculum schools, the clear difference for us was the admissions interview and tour — both standout experiences from all the other schools. The personalization, the warmth, and the focus on our children were evident from the first visit. And our TASIS buddy family were so well matched to each member of our family that they are still close friends today.

The more we learned about the TASIS history and Mrs. Fleming's values, the clearer were differences from the other schools. Educating the whole child, the broad liberal-arts curriculum, mixing art and beauty with math and science, culture and humanism with sports and service. Our children were not only challenged and motivated but were flourishing in no time.



His many "projects": Fernando had found these arches, bought them because he thought they were beautiful and stored them in a field somewhere, knowing that he would find "just the right place for them sometime." I recall the months of planning, painstaking transportation, and cutting of these antique sculptures (insisting on dowel pegs for authenticity) — as Fernando wanted to incorporate them into the new building at TASIS England to bring beauty, art, sculpture and craftsmanship into the students' daily lives.

I had been on the parents committee and school board at the international school we attended in Spain and had witnessed the pro's and con's of school parents solely driving the school strategy and direction, especially in an international day school. As board chairman, I worked to balance affordability with the fiscal direction and sustainability of an international school in a small market. At TASIS I met Fernando Gonzalez early on. We shared a background in architecture, design and real estate. He let me carry his golf bag. We discussed Mrs. Fleming's decision to create a sustainable charitable foundation for the TASIS schools with separate boards at each school and I shared my experiences in Spain and the lessons learned there. This was the start of an enduring friendship and my joining the inaugural TASIS England Board in 2005.

I was lucky to be invited to visit Capitignano to visit Lynn and Michael Aeschliman during summers on a few occasions. One of the first trips was also shared with Mrs.

Fleming. I enjoyed a number of conversations with her that weekend about education and the TASIS difference. I recall sweating through one like a college interview. She was a challenging interviewer – and very clear about her vision of a TASIS education. I loved her character, admired her drive, witnessed her charm and began to understand her mission.

Fernando represents many of Mrs. Fleming's values in his life. First and foremost, he is a teacher who loves to share his passion and creative talents in art, architecture, construction and beauty – which he has done in various forms for five decades and still does every summer at Les Tapies. His partnership with Lynn Fleming Aeschliman on the TASIS England campus renovations, interior design, materials and finishes bear his fingerprints on every building as well as his vision on the evolving master plan (again in 2022), each responding to the space and fiscal needs of the TASIS brand. Fernando is also expanding that brand, first with his family support in the establishment of TASIS Dorado in Puerto Rico, and most recently with his leadership in the formation and physical environment (and renovation design) of TASIS Portugal.

Fernando challenges the status quo as did Mrs. Fleming. Standing still is falling behind. The physical environment is important. Quality and beauty matter. Challenge, question, design. He does all three well

Thank you, Fernando, – an amazing 50 years. You are not finished yet!



Jay and Heather Wyper, TASIS England parents 2001-2009 of Kelly Wyper '05 and Kyle Wyper '09. Jay has been a TASIS-England Board Member and Chair of the Finance Committee since 2005. He is an architect and currently Hines SVP and Real Estate Development Director in Texas.

Energy and Success in Puerto Rico

Maria Teresa Matosantos

Energy everywhere, an immense joy, and a real sense of pride were buzzing in the TASIS Dorado classrooms in Puerto Rico in early September 2002. The excitement extended to the hallways where the Bulletin Boards welcoming families were optimistic, warm, and in both English and Spanish. Teachers everywhere were asking Louis Christiansen and me about the "President of the Board" who was flying in from Europe the next day. Were we going to have some kind of reception? Was there going to be a formal meeting? I laughed at the barrage of nervous questions and we both asked them all to relax. "Fernando is here to work, to help," we told them. "He'll be in the classrooms and all around the premises to see what he can do for us." Trust me that his ideas and suggestions are always on target and useful, and since beauty is a way of life for him, we are going to have fun! I knew Fernando would blow my teachers away!

They never expected to see him putting the tables together, helping with the organization of the classrooms, gently suggesting alternate design for the educational areas. (Yes, he was careful of their feelings.) "Tere," as he calls me, "we need to be careful not to kill their initiative and creativity," with which I fully agreed. I am used to his hands-on approach to setting up schools and his practical problem-solving skills. He surprised and delighted them when they saw him carry boxes and helped distribute educational materials. When he visited the Pre-Kindergarten, he carefully inspected and loved the noble wood and fine craftsmanship of the cubbies, especially made by the teacher's dad. Soon he had contracted these for all the other classrooms, instead of the plastic cubbies teachers were ready to set up. Many things were not quite ready so we worked harder than in any other year. But it was a happy, energetic faculty who appreciated Fernando's tireless enthusiasm. When in more formal meetings he said, "we are a family, we need to work together and plan carefully for excellent student outcomes," we all felt his words. He inspired effectively because everyone got to know him in the trenches. He listened to their plans and concerns, inspiring each and every one to stretch their visions creatively, thinking of the students' well-being in every classroom decision. Those warm memories are forever etched in my mind.

That was my brother Fernando when we first opened TASIS Dorado.

Fernando had always dreamed of having the blessing of a TASIS school in his native Puerto Rico. A lifetime working with and for TASIS reinforced his love and admiration for Mrs. Fleming, Michael and Lynn Aeschliman, and what we here coined the "TASIS way." When I met Mrs. Fleming, Michael and Lynn in Europe, before TASIS Dorado opened, I was struck by their vision, their clearly delineated educational views, their belief in the Core Knowledge Curriculum of E.D. Hirsch, their view that a complete, comprehensive curriculum, where the

highest standards were for all, was the goal that would serve our students well and help them change their world.

On our side of the ocean, TASIS Dorado was founded by dreamers who were also very active doers, partners who tended always to see problems as challenges - opportunities for growth. Friedel Stubbe, more than a developer, was a creator of beautiful communities. He believed a school should be the center of his new community in Dorado. In his vision of excellence, he was looking for a world-class institution. Every project in which he is involved has had a positive impact: first Gurabo, then Dorado, and ultimately Puerto Rico. Friedel dreamt of educating leaders, responsible and community-involved students who would understand the need for excellence in education, thoughtful innovation, and a clear vision of what Puerto Rico can be. Students would quote from his first conversation with them that "The sky is the limit and maybe someday even beyond the space we know." Friedel was joined by Louis Christiansen, who at the Harvard Graduate School of Education had concentrated on innovative programs and roomed with Fernando as a fellow graduate student. As Head of School, he was tremendously respected on the island and in all the professional educational associations: Middle States Association, College Board, CAIS, NAIS. Fernando's team, the TASIS Dorado team, was committed to the school. I was the Principal running the day to day - turning their dreams and expectations into reality. This led these first classes to run when others walked, to excel beyond expectations. Having such talent and dedication on both sides of the ocean ensured success. To Fernando's credit, he was always comfortable communicating with partners of strong minds and powerful convictions. He was a leader who listened to the very talented people with whom he worked, and I saw him as the one leading the way. In the day-to-day he trusted Louis and me but always checked to ensure we were building "a true TASIS school."

For our parents, Fernando embodied the successful TASIS schools in Europe, which are well known on our island. In August 2003, in preparation for Lynn's and Michael's first visit to TASIS Dorado in November, we compiled a list of Puerto Rican alumni of both TASIS and TASIS England schools and summer programs. There were hundreds! But Fernando's warm narrative about Mrs. Fleming's educational tenets, his descriptive explanation of the symbols of our logo, his view of what our graduates could achieve and could become, gave confidence to our parents. Through the years, his voice has been the strongest in promoting opportunities of improving ties between all the TASIS schools. His dream of bringing us together has enriched us all, academically, athletically, socially, and politically, preparing our students for the interrelated world they will face, and that we hope they will change for an even brighter future.

Maria Teresa Matosantos is one of the founders of TASIS Dorado, where she served as Principal for 20 years. She is president of the board of the Jane Stern Dorado Community Library, and was recognized twice by the White House as a "most influential teacher" by the Presidential Scholars Committee and recognized by the **Universidad del Sagrado Corazón** and the Association of Supervison and Curriculum Development for her work in Puerto Rico.

An Older Brother's Reflections

Jorge R. Gonzalez

Fernando, the Person

Many know Fernando's positive traits: loyal, persevering, responsible, responsive, consistent, athletic, competitive, team player, creative, artistic, hardworking, persuasive, intelligent, analytical, and emotionally well balanced.

Many also know his not-so-positive traits. I suffer from the same challenges of trying to keep them under control in myself: stubborn, relentless, tough taskmaster, overly critical, overly competitive, impatient, and undertaking too many things at the same time.



In the case of Fernando, the positive far outweigh the not-so-positive, and TASIS has been able to benefit tremendously from this reality.

Now let me relate relatively new experiences I had with Fernando that depict the essence of many of his positive traits.

I was showing him the three structures devastated by Hurricane María on the Cayey, Puerto Rico, farm my wife and I had recently purchased and describing our plans for remodeling them. He had four major suggestions that we adopted, one of which was to build a tree house. He initially looked at a clump of trees and remarked, "You should build a tree house among those trees," but as we walked to the area, he started to change the "you should" to "we should." The "we should" turned out to be a real mischaracterization of my role, since all I did was hand him the tools and materials.

I thoroughly loved the experience of watching him design and build the tree house with such creativity, skill in handling the tools, and passion for making sure everything was precise, aesthetically pleasing, and practical. He had described and shown me pictures of his many personal and TASIS projects, and I had seen him build part of a wall in Les Tapies, but this was my first hands-on experience watching his creative process, with all those other positive traits and abilities, come together from start to finish.

Fernando, the Family Man

Fernando has always had his priorities very clear: work is important, but the family has a higher priority. He has balanced these two priorities masterfully, raising two boys that he, and all of us, are very proud of. They left England a long time ago, and he makes sure he visits them and his grandchildren as often as he possibly can within the complicated life he continues to live. Fernando is a great photographer, and he always has the latest pictures of his grandchildren to proudly describe their latest exploits.

Prior to TASIS Dorado when his visits were far more frequent, Fernando annually visited Puerto Rico to spend quality time with our parents, his siblings (we are seven, five boys and two girls), and our cousins. Our parents always taught us by words and actions the importance of family unity, and Fernando, despite living in England, has been a leader in helping to keep us together.

Fernando has been a loving and loyal husband and I want to close with this recent story that brought to me a dimension that I had not known, arising from his love of Kristina. Fernando embarked on the TASIS School in Portugal with all the positive traits that I have described, made especially challenging by Kristina's battle with lung cancer and the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are some areas in the lives of people whom we know very well, about which we do not have discussions - in my case, politics and religion. With Kristina's illness, Fernando visited the Portuguese Catholic shrine of Fatima by himself and subsequently described to me the incredible sense of peace that came to him while there, and signs that his prayers for Kristina's health would be answered.

One was that the design of the cross in the center of the Fatima Sanctuary seemed familiar to him, but he could not initially put his fingers on why. A few weeks later he came upon a cross he had designed in a Studio Art Class at Andover almost 60 years ago: It had the same design. We hope Fernando's faith will be rewarded.

I end my reflections by thanking God for having Fernando in our lives and asking Him to continue to bless my beloved brother.

Jorge R. Gonzalez is the oldest of the seven Gonzalez children. Like Fernando, he attended Phillips Andover Academy, and Harvard College, and then went on to Harvard Law School. Raised partly in Puerto Rico and partly in Saranac Lake, NY, he went on to a 42-year career in corporate law with McConnell Valdés in Puerto Rico.



How does one pack thirty-three thousand years into a single day?

John Smalley



Fernando poured each of us a glass of rosé and we spread the Ardèche map out across his dining table. It was 10:45pm, "lights out"—and after another 15 hour day of intensely creative activity, our twenty-seven young artists, photographers, and architects had retreated to their rooms. The hamlet of Les Tapies was at last quiet, the ambient heat of a searing July day still glowing from the stone of its 17th-century Huguenot-built dwellings. Stars gleamed in the clear night sky and a crescent moon hung over the ridge at the head of the valley. It was finally time to have a look at tomorrow's field trip to the ruins of the 12th-century Cistercian Abbey of Mazan, an hour to our north and west in the Ardèche Uplands. Fernando and I had visited the ancient monastery back in the spring and I had put together the slide presentation we'd all just seen earlier in the evening. This extraordinary constellation of medieval stone buildings, hidden among pine forests at the edge of the vast volcanic Massif Central, had housed successive generations of Cistercian monks, whose abiding concern had been to create a peaceful and productive spiritual community, but who seemed, for centuries, to be under almost constant attack from all kinds of unfriendly forces. They had persevered—thrived, in fact, and created this magical sanctuary... I was looking forward to setting up field easels with my drawing and painting students among its majestic ruins and becoming thoroughly immersed in a series of careful observational studies of what remained of these hauntingly beautiful structures, aptly described by historians as "an ideal balance between the intimate and the monumental, a pure and harmonious architecture of silence..."



"Now here's what I'm going to suggest", said Fernando, leaning over the table as he pointed to another location some distance across the map, "If we play our cards right, and leave Mazan by around 2:00, we should be able to get to the Chauvet Cave Museum, here, near the Pont D'arc, in the Gorge D'Ardèche, by 3:30 or so. We could kill two birds with one stone and we wouldn't have to do a separate field trip later to see Chauvet."

"Oh," I said, taken utterly by surprise, "but I thought we'd planned to spend the afternoon at Mazan. And hadn't you planned to do a watercolour workshop with your architecture students there?" "Oh, yes, but I think we ought to be able to wrap that up by about 1:30 or so. And perhaps, I could leave early with one van full of students, procure all the tickets, and meet you and the rest of the group at the Museum entrance." I looked down at the map, tracing the circuitous network of roads through the Monts D'Ardèche towards the Pont D'arc... "Have you driven that route before?" I asked, "It looks like it might take a good while, especially around the Gorge"... "I've driven parts of it and I think it should be fine, possibly leaving us with enough time to stop at the Pont D'arc for an ice cream before we go on to the museum..." I stared at the map as Fernando finished his glass and poured another. Of course, I was also very excited about the opportunity to visit the Chauvet Cave Museum, which had only just opened that summer, featuring an exact replica of the cavern and its exquisite paleolithic wall drawings executed some thirty-three thousand years ago. Admittedly, I was also just a little concerned that we might be trying to fit a bit too much into our field trip for one day, and as I studied those winding mountain roads, I began to envision some very car-sick students in our vans as we drove from Mazan to the Cave Museum. This is a problem we often faced up here in the hills and we had to be very careful to drive slowly as a result...

Of course I agreed to go with Fernando's revised plan (since it is not at all unusual that he might thoroughly rethink everything at the eleventh hour, invariably *adding* something to what has been planned. The only things "carved in stone" for him are the walls of vernacular buildings—everyday reality remains very flexible indeed). The next morning we loaded up the vans with easels, paints, and packed lunches and set out towards Mazan at just after 8:30am, driving across some of the most stunning landscape to be found in our region. As we drove ever upward, across the forested uplands, the air cooled and one fabulous vista after another opened out in every direction. Within an hour we had arrived at the Abbey, taken a group photograph, and unloaded all our equipment. We convened inside the now roofless nave of what had once been the the Abbey church, where we were met by a young French archeologist who had been integrally involved with the ongoing excavation of the site and who proceeded to give us a quite detailed tour of the abbey, its history, and its environs. She had much to impart and spoke for nearly two hours. By the time we set up our equipment and began to draw and paint, it was getting on towards noon.

My teaching colleagues and I exhorted our students to "look hard and work with a great sense of urgency" as we set up in the church's nave and began our studies... and as it would happen, we were quite well prepared after nearly ten days of working "en plein air" in the landscape around Les Tapies. Our students were also clearly carrying with them what they had just heard from our guide.

"I feel like I'm in a time machine", said one young lady, as I stopped to examine her progress. "You are", I agreed, "and time is quickly getting away from us...!" "Yes, and the future is now", said someone from across the nave, "Yes, and I'm hungry, isn't it time to eat lunch?", asked a student from near the altar. "I definitely paint better when I'm eating an apple," said another voice in a near whisper. Suddenly, we began to realise that the acoustics in this ancient space were truly extraordinary, even without a roof. "You can hear *everything*, even when someone's whispering!" said someone else. "I do believe that that's how the Cistercians planned it", said Fernando, appearing suddenly in the apse behind the altar. "These spaces were designed for long reverberation times which reinforced the Gregorian chants they sang here."

"Well, you learn something new every day", said Alyssa, my teaching colleague, looking at her watch, "let's eat!" After a rather rushed lunch, we returned to painting until Fernando appeared again, fresh from his watercolour workshop. "Well, we've done some excellent work here, folks, and now it's time to head for Chauvet! And before we had managed to pull down our easels, he was off with his van load of architecture students. Just before he left, though, he reminded me: "Do remember to stop off at the ice cream stand near the car park at the Pont D'arc. The kids will really enjoy that."

By the time we left Mazan, it was 2:20pm and those of us who were driving the two remaining vans were getting a little nervous. The air-conditioning was on, but I was sweating bullets, navigating the route and consulting my rearview mirror every few moments to make sure that Alyssa's van was still behind me. At one point, I made a wrong turn and started through a very dark tunnel which seemed to go on and on... coming out of it, a sign informed me that I was indeed going in the wrong direction and needed to turn around and go back through it. Finally, after what seemed like an infinitude of endlessly tight curves, we began to see signs for the Pont D'arc and then suddenly there was the ice cream stand!



We pulled in, got out, lined up in the queue of other tourists, and began to order ice creams. Everyone relaxed and began to get that blissful, spaced-out look you get when you're eating ice cream on a summer's day...And just as the last couple of students were sitting down in the shade to eat theirs, I got a call on my mobile from Fernando. "Where are you folks? I've got all these tickets and it's a timed entry. You need to get here immediately."

"We'll do the best we can, Fernando," I said, "See you soon." The next little while is a blur in my memory. I'm not sure how, but we did make it on time, and we had the most fantastic tour of the Chauvet Cave museum. "Now we're *really* in a time machine", said the same student, as we gazed up at the beautiful drawings of rhinos, bison, woolly mammoths, and reindeer, gambolling across the grassland steppe of an age quite unimaginable in our very limited conception of time. Near the beginning, in fact, of a lengthy ice age, known as the Last Glacial Maximum, in which these European early-modern humans, the Aurignacians, hung on to existence by hunting the very animals they drew with such sensitivity on the walls of the cave. We thought that the Cistercians perhaps inhabited a world somewhat remote from our own! Unlike the sheep-keeping Cistercians, the Aurignacians' was a world in which these animals overwhelmingly outnumbered them, and were, in fact, the true "keepers" of the world and the universe that surrounded them.

"But how is it that they drew these animals with such absolute acuity?" I asked. "Urgency", was Fernando's answer. "Their survival depended on the sharpness of their powers of observation and their ability to act quickly and with determination. And look—their culture lasted some 20,000 years..." We left the museum, rather overwhelmed, having been transported to another kind of "present", a moment so fresh, it felt as if these ancient artists had left their work only minutes ago...

That evening, back at Les Tapies, as we gathered to talk about the day we'd just experienced, we all agreed that our field trip had been nothing short of astonishing. To be able to witness, up close, the extraordinary achievements of these two resilient European cultures, separated by many thousands of years, within the space of a few hours! And despite my worries about cramming too much into the day, it had been transformative, not only because of our collective desire to look closely, but also because we had done so with a sense of real *urgency*. "It never pays to do anything half way", said Fernando, as we said goodnight, "And tomorrow is another day..."



John Smalley was Head of Visual Art at TASIS England from 1989-2018 and Co-Director of the Les Tapies Arts & Architecture Summer Program from 2004-2019. Perrin Tingley, his wife, taught history at TASIS England, 1988-2018.

Who knew what lay au bout du monde?

Perrin Tingley



At the end of a narrow, circuitous and vertiginous drive in deepest Ardèche, southern France, a destination described to me TWICE by delivery drivers as 'the end of the world' (au bout du monde) lies concealed. "Don't look down," I always intone to my novice passengers, mischievously knowing that just by saying that, they will. At the end of the approach, nearly one kilometre along, can be found the hamlet of Les Tapies. The term means 'nestled into the hillside' in Old French, not the rather unglamorous 'the carpets' of the contemporary language. Resembling the prow of a ship projecting high above the valley of the River Orsane, the cluster of buildings may be clearly viewed from a few kilometres away on the main road, but not at all from the beginning of the drive, or even the end, as only the roofs are from there visible. At the starting point, the sole indication of what lies beyond is a wooden sign bearing the hamlet's name. Time has reduced it to a rather small, ambiguous signpost which is in no way indicative of the great portal that it actually represents. Some local residents, at a loss to explain what exactly does exist down that drive, have settled on their own explanation. Perhaps it is a cult.

Who knew?

In fact, these glorious, unassuming, 400 year-old farm buildings encompass the site of an arts program described by many a student, parent, teacher and staff member as "like no other." Students live on site and immerse themselves in art and friendship for

three weeks in the summer. The program, also called Les Tapies, originally conceived by Fernando and brought to life by him with the assistance of his fellow founding fathers John Smalley and James Perry and founding mother, me, was born in 2004. Fernando enthusiastically envisioned providing an opportunity for students not only to study the arts but also to practice architecture, drawing and painting and photography in these inspiring, energizing, elevating and elevated surroundings. The vernacular buildings and upland setting would provide the meat and bones of the experience, we would provide the heart and soul.

"You want to start a what? With us? We have never done this before. So, let's go for it!" Luckily, we never considered a feasibility study, or rather unfeasibility study, i.e., listing the practicalities, or rather impracticalities, of such a venture. If we had, it would have read something like this:

Proximity to necessary resources (art materials, food, office support): not near

Acquisition of these supplies: tricky

Transport of students to the site: complicated ('au bout du monde')

Practicality of housing/feeding/caring for an ever-expanding
number of students (12, 15, 20, 29...) in the hamlet: problematic

Level of expertise/engagement of teachers required: high and continuous

Who knew?

So, onward through the fog we went. Fernando and his family had already done much renovation in the hamlet over the previous decades, and for our project local skilled artisans continued and expanded upon that work, turning a barn into studios, a leanto into a gallery (with a tower!), a wood shed into a sculpture studio. We ourselves converted an outbuilding into a student centre and ping-pong 'pavillion', elevated a rabbit hutch to a terrace-with-a-view, and turned a cave into a dark room, to name but a few of the larger projects carried out over roughly 15 years. Anyone visiting, make that everyone visiting, child and adult, friend and family member, casual visitor and frequent guest, poured cement floors, pointed walls, painted walls, doors and shutters and put together furniture. TASIS veteran and Les Tapies 'neighbor' John Watson, who with his wife and fellow TASIS stalwart Michèle lured Fernando to this special corner of France in the '70s, rewired and *de-fouined* spaces. Most inspiringly, in his favored role as alchemist, Fernando 'I have just the beam/panel/bolt/screw/1 cm piece of wire for that' Gonzalez repurposed everything. He repaired stone walls. And mixed cement. And mixed cement.

We willed the program into life after a relatively short gestation period. In the best TASIS tradition, we drew upon established practices while also incorporating new ideas. Those that worked, worked and worked and worked. Those that did not, did not. Some

(most) staff members stayed and stayed. Others did not. The students arrived from everywhere. Many have gone on to the best schools of architecture, art and design in the US and Europe. They have sent their brothers and sisters to Les Tapies. They have sent their teachers to adjunct teacher programs held at Les Tapies. They have been inspired. Most pleasingly, they have also kept in touch. The students have left their mark on this place. And, as Fernando always says, they have taken a piece of Les Tapies with them.

Les Tapies has made a difference in their lives. In OUR lives. A real difference.

Who knew what lay au bout du monde? Fernando knew.

Perrin Tingley taught at TASIS England, 1988-2018. Her heart always lay in the classroom. Relative to this essay, it might be worth noting that during the final 15 of those 30 years, she served as the cook and factorum at Les Tapies.



Working with an Artist

David Jepson

For 15 years (1992-2007) I worked with Fernando in what was known as the "Development Office" on TASIS England's south campus. (The pavilion moved from Lugano no longer exists.) This was a time of remarkable technological advancement, and our work in promoting the TASIS schools continually evolved as we rode the waves of change. But whether we were creating a TASIS brochure for one of the schools or summer programs, targeted advertisements, or web pages, the constant thread that ran through everything was Fernando's high standards.

To create a TASIS brochure in those early days typically required the ongoing assistance of a printing company to render the images and graphics and to produce the typeset text. Layouts were done by hand ("cut and paste" was not a metaphor back then), and there was usually quite a long lag time before the printed copies were delivered. However, as the "90s went on, Fernando and I revolutionised the process as technology made new and faster ways of working possible. Not only were we early adopters of desktop publishing (we were the first school in the area to acquire a laser printer, for example) but we also pioneered the use of the Internet in education with email on campus and a TASIS website, well before most other international schools.

Here's how we worked: Fernando would set out the strategic goals of our publications and provide the timeline, basic structure, etc. He also took many of the photos himself. Sometimes we collaborated on the text; other times I would write most of it. I would work out a plan that seemed good to me, lay out some pages, and then show them to him. Invariably, Fernando would return the pages to me with multiple suggested changes. I would make those changes, resubmit the pages, and they still wouldn't be good enough! I seemed to be caught in an infinite loop, and this happened again and again, for years. Before long, I had no more hair to pull out!

Yes, it was frustrating. But I must also admit that Fernando's suggestions, unwelcome as they might have felt at the time, *always* improved the result. Every time. Eventually, I realized that I needed to set my emotions aside because he just couldn't help it – he was an *artist!* It could be the color balance of a particular image, the wording of a certain sentence, or the design of the entire project – Fernando's eye was always sharp, and his intention was always to elevate the quality of the production to yet a higher level.

It is obvious that the way TASIS has developed, from the early years until now, has been shaped in no small degree by Fernando's significant involvement in a number of

major areas. And it follows that TASIS is what it is today because Fernando is not just an architect, designer, builder, photographer, or teacher, and not merely all of those at once; he's an artist, who is, as I understand it, someone in love with beauty.



David Jepson has served TASIS in several capacities over a 38-year period: Starting in 1979, he has taught English, Latin, Philosophy, and Computer Programming, as well as working as chief publications writer in both TASIS schools. At TASIS England, he was Academic Dean and Head of the Upper School, and also Director (together with Kay Hamblin) of the summer program "ShakespeareXperience". David is currently Director of Studies for both TASIS Switzerland and TASIS England.

Here's to YOU, Fernando!

Chris Tragas

I am very fortunate to have known Fernando since the beginning of my forty-year incredible career with TASIS. For every position that I held, for every hat that I wore at TASIS, Fernando was always instrumental in the decision for me to move onwards and serve TASIS in different capacities, namely as Academic Dean and then as Head of TASIS Hellenic International School (Greece), as Academic Director of TSLP/TASIS Summer Language Program (Lugano, Switzerland), as Director of TSSP/TASIS Spanish Summer Program (Spain), and as Head of Upper School of TASIS England.

Throughout my career Fernando has served as my beacon, and as a great professional and inspirational role model. I am greatly indebted to him for believing in me and playing such an important role in offering me numerous remarkable professional opportunities within this amazing organization called TASIS!

I admire him, for he exhibits exceptional talents and character as an educator and a leader. I have the deepest personal and professional respect for Fernando, for his unique energy, optimism, passion, determination, expertise, and tireless creativity that he has brought and continues to bring to TASIS.

His unconditional commitment, limitless respect, and love for Mrs. Fleming is evident in every endeavor, duty, responsibility, role, and project that he undertook in continuing her legacy in the name of TASIS.

Fernando is a natural leader. He is at his best in a group environment and succeeds in getting full involvement of all other team members to derive the best results possible. He has served TASIS at large in a large number of positions. Whatever his administrative task over his long career, it is with equal passion, purpose, aspiration, and determination that he represents the school not only to students, teachers, staff and parents but to the world at large.

It was with these same attributes and his remarkable marketing talents that he has always sought opportunities to expand the name of TASIS while managing buildings and budgets, but also ensuring teaching excellence and demonstrating true leadership to TASIS schools and their communities. His association and involvement as one of the founders of the last two TASIS Schools, namely TASIS Dorado in Puerto Rico and TASIS Portugal, are a

testament of Fernando's love, drive, passion, and determination to carry on Mrs. Fleming's legacy.

On a more personal note, I cherish our many productive meetings and discussions during my long service to the school. I remember borrowing his line, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," which would always bring a smile to our faces and no further words were needed. Additionally, expressing ourselves in Spanish allowed for a special connection and a mutual understanding and appreciation of each other.

Te agradezco por todo, estimado Fernando! Your vote of confidence and the support that you selflessly offered me over the last forty years are a testament of how fortunate and blessed I am to have known and worked with you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a co-traveler on your incredible TASIS journey!



Chris Tragas worked for TASIS from 1979-2016, starting at TASIS Hellenic, Greece; first as teacher of Spanish and French, then as Academic Dean and Assistant Head, and later as Head of School. From 1982-2017 he worked as teacher and Director in the TASIS Summer Programs in Lugano, Spain, and England, and from 2016-2019 he was Head of Upper School at TASIS England.

A Reflection on Fernando Gonzalez

Dennis Manning

Beauty is truth, truth is beauty.' – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

I had the great privilege and pleasure of serving as Headmaster of TASIS The American School in England from 1998-2001, having responded to Mrs. Fleming's Olympian invitation and command. What a life-changing decision she helped me make, and opportunity she gave my family and me, including forming a profoundly important personal and professional relationship with Fernando Gonzalez.

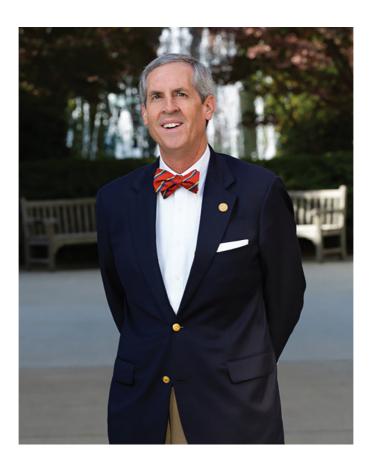
I first met Fernando in Princeton when interviewing for the headship, and in so doing discerned qualities in him then that I came to know more personally, professionally, and deeply in the years ahead. And what prodigious abilities and talents Fernando possesses, the combination of which I have not seen in anyone else whom I have known or with whom I have worked. Fernando has a powerful intellect that he puts to manifold uses — he is a Renaissance man. A visionary creator and builder, Fernando does not merely dream, but translates vision and concept into three-dimensional reality. Fernando is a natural but humble leader, and thus mentor to those fortunate to know him and work with him. Even though Fernando possesses such remarkable abilities and talents and could easily wrest away control of any meeting or organizational structure or management, he consistently demonstrates remarkable patience and humility — he has a near sixth sense for making organizations and groups discover themselves and achieve a higher purpose. Though he easily could, Fernando never lorded his intellect over others.

Fernando's home in Thorpe -- "The Cottage" -- was a living reminder of and metaphor for his relentless ability to build, to realize beauty and function could be joined in one place he called home — and that he freely shared with his friends. Likewise, though I never had the pleasure of visiting his home in France, I know Fernando and his sons nearly built and re-built much of the property and dwellings. It is a place of unusual beauty and serves as one more emblem of Fernando's unique abilities, his attention to Old World craftsmanship, and his belief in the importance of beauty in our built environment.

In the literary tradition of confidante — Pylades to Orestes or Horatio to Hamlet — Fernando was my confidante, and, just as important, a mentor during my years as headmaster in England. As a first-time headmaster, I reflect now on his patience, but also unusual nuance in working as a Board member with a new headmaster, never stepping out in front of me, always respecting the office and position, and with a Merlin's

magical powers seeming to provide counsel and guidance with a "lightness of being," never over-bearing or meddling. He had the most nuanced sense of and appreciation for governance – the role of a Board member in supporting the head of school – that, to this day, I have encountered in a quarter-century of serving as a head of school.

The highlight was working for nearly three years closely and collaboratively with Fernando, Lynn Aeschliman, and campus architect David Mayernik on a comprehensive campus master-plan for the TASIS England campus. Fernando understands how a school works and should work – how a built environment needs to serve the mission and advance the function of the school, while embodying beauty and aesthetic formation for anyone stepping onto the campus. The sum total of these experiences — the powerful influence Fernando exerted over me and certainly many others — had that rare, ineffable quality and effect of simply making me a better school administrator, a better thinker and analyst of organizational and educational issues, and a better human being. What greater tribute could I offer this singularly rare and talented gentleman and dear friend?



Dennis Manning, Headmaster of TASIS England, 1998-2001. Currently Headmaster of Norfolk Academy, Virginia, and member of the TASIS Foundation Board.

Bringing Great Intellectual Focus to Any Problem

Christopher "Topper" Lynn

In the fall of 1971 I stopped by Fernando's apartment in Cambridge where he was a year away from graduating from the Harvard School of Design. He and I had been friends at Phillips Academy Andover, where he was an outstanding athlete and excellent student. During that visit I mentioned to him that my recent employer, TASIS, was looking for a new art teacher beginning the following year. I asked him if he knew of anyone, never dreaming that Fernando would seriously consider the position for himself. In talking with MCF after my return to Switzerland, I told her of Fernando, his impeccable character and his intellectual abilities. Although I wasn't party to their conversations, I am guessing that they each quickly recognized in the other a deep appreciation of beauty, art and architecture, and a commitment to excellence.

The next year, in the early fall of 1972, Fernando came to TASIS for the first time as a first-year art teacher. When we met at my apartment in Vezia, I told him with great excitement that I had both good and bad news for him. The bad news was that I was taking a leave of absence, but the good news was that he would not be forced to find an apartment, and that he could have mine. I'm convinced that is where Fernando fell in love with massive wood-burning fireplaces. (That apartment had a grand one, as did many of the places Fernando lived in and built over the ensuing 50 years).

Why do I value Fernando's friendship so deeply, and what has he has done for TASIS?

First, for TASIS he:

- Established a diversified and complete art/photography department at TASIS Switzerland
- Played a pivotal role in campus planning at TASIS Switzerland and TASIS England
- Was Director of Development for TASIS, and in 1975 recruited a large number of students to help transition through some very difficult years
- Played a pivotal role in establishing TASIS England, and subsequently acted as Headmaster in 2017 to restore and re-tool the institution
- Has been a long-standing and critical member of the TASIS Boards



- Established the Summer Art and Architecture program at Les Tapies, France
- Almost singlehandedly established TASIS Dorado in Puerto Rico
- Drove and accomplished the founding of TASIS Portugal
- This is a much abbreviated list. One must ask, "What would TASIS look like today without Fernando's contributions"?

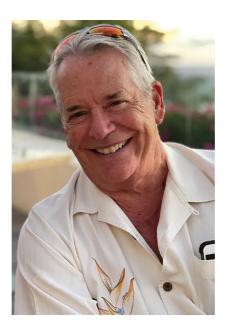
I could not write these few words about Fernando if I did not mention one of the loves of his life (Kristina being foremost) - Les Tapies. Shortly after he purchased this magnificent cluster of 18th century broken-down barns in 1974, I visited him there. During a massive snowstorm in 1975 which closed all the passes back into Switzerland, I had to detour around through France. He had mentioned this place to me, and somehow I found it without a true set of directions. Upon entering the building, I asked in my very poor French of a lone worker on scaffolding high above me where I might find Mr. Gonzalez? As you might guess, the workman turned out to be Fernando himself, working (as always) in the freezing cold affixing tongue-ingroove ceiling. On numerous trips and stays at Les Tapies since then, guests were always asked to contribute time/labor towards the hamlet's reconstruction in some way, and I'm sure there are hundreds of people around the world who have come to

love Les Tapies and restoration in general as a result of his enthusiasm for making rustic buildings complete.

And finally, one of his greatest gifts is his ability to bring great intellectual focus to any problem which he is trying to solve. He is up at 4:00 am looking at the chain of events that could follow an action on his part. Not only is he very, very smart, but he can bring all of that intelligence to bear on a single issue, blend it with excellent intuition to sort through numerous potential outcomes before making his decision. And his course of direction is inevitably the correct one. I can vouch for this, having lost lots of francs, marks, euros, and dollars to him over the years, and always with compassion, intellect, and humor on his part.

It is most fortunate for TASIS that I won our final bet in 2018. We had a long-standing discourse about who would retire first, and I made that jump in 2018. If he had not stayed working at TASIS, I have no doubt that TASIS Portugal, which is perhaps his crowning achievement at TASIS, would not exist as it does today.

Fernando, my deepest respect and love to you and your family. You have achieved through your work at TASIS what most people can only dream of: to create beauty and opportunity for future generations. Congratulations on a lifetime of achievements, my friend. And oh, how proud Mrs. Fleming is of you.



Christopher "Topper" Lynn served as TASIS Admissions Officer from 1970-1972, Director of the TASIS New York Office, 1973-1974, and Director of Admissions at TASIS Switzerland and Fleming College Florence, 1974-1975.

Fifty Years of Friendship

John and Michèle Watson

We first met Fernando when he joined TASIS some 50 years ago. Little did we know then that we would become life-long friends. The semi-communal life at TASIS, which brought teachers and students close together through academics as well as sports and cultural activities, was the ideal ground to create strong bonds of friendship.

Fernando embraced all aspects of living in the TASIS family. There were the endless faculty bridge games which could carry on well into the night with a few accomplices, Ewan, Akbar, and Topper being the regular ones. There were also the fun ski trips with students at the week-ends and many cultural trips, thanks to the available fleet of blue mini-buses. A born sportsman, Fernando was interested in all sports and so he enthusiastically joined the rugby team. This team of faculty members and students was started by Ewan and John. A novelty in Ticino, they soon played against clubs in Northern Italy and down as far as Florence. Fernando took to the sport like a natural, and quickly became our secret weapon as the fastest man on the field.

Fernando was passionate in his interests in art and photography, which he taught and promoted at TASIS, but his greatest passion was and still is architecture. Visiting us in the Ardèche, in southern France, where we had just acquired an



Ewan Myrilees, Michèle and John Watson, Kristina and Fernando Gonzalez, and Topper Lynn

old farmhouse, he painted our vaulted bathroom, fell in love with the area and bought an old barn which he quickly restored using his architectural talents and building skills. One image of that period sticks in our minds: Fernando driving from Lugano to Les Tapies in his Audi, with students in the back and a castiron colonial wood-stove strapped to the roof, sparks flying when the exhaust occasionally touched the ground on the bumpy roads of the Ardèche.

Fernando is never happier than when he is manipulating old stones and cement, building dry stone walls, rebuilding arches, bread ovens, and steps. From one barn Fernando gradually acquired the whole hamlet of Les Tapies and restored it step by step to its original beauty. This became the perfect setting for a new TASIS summer program: Art and Architecture. There, students were given a lifetime experience in a beautiful, rural setting with courses in architecture, drawing, painting, and photography. Fernando worked on all fronts with the assistance of John Smalley and a few dedicated teachers to make sure the students would get the most out of their living in a small community, sharing with each other, visiting inspiring buildings and natural sites, and developing their creativity through demanding projects.

However, Fernando's love for architecture certainly found its fulfilment in his work for TASIS development. There he found the scope to express his vision and ideas in the building extensions of the growing TASIS campuses, and also on creating a stylish new campus in Puerto Rico, and now working on a very challenging project for the new school in Portugal. Respect for local architectural styles, reaching harmony in mingling the old with the new, and integrating the buildings into the landscape have been his priorities and success.

We have been lucky along the years to see Fernando and his family frequently and to share so many happy moments together: our children are close friends and our grandchildren now play together. We have had a few memorable celebrations in the Ardèche which could only have happened thanks to Fernando housing our TASIS friends and our families in the stunning hamlet of Les Tapies. Thank you, Fernando, for your generosity, vision, positive energy, and faithful friendship.

John and Michèle Watson worked at TASIS Lugano from 1969 to 1976, Michèle as French teacher, and John as Biology and Geology Teacher, Head of Science Department, and Head of Middle-School. They also started Le Château des Enfants in Uzès in 1970 and ran it until summer 1985.

A Very Special Person

David Lyons



The Fearsome Foursome

Fernando Gonzalez is a very special person, exceedingly passionate about all of his special interests in life, especially family, friends, architecture restoration, photography, and of course, TASIS education.

I first came to know Fernando on the golf course in England in 1989. Fernando and two other great souls, Doug Groseclose and Ed Berthiaume, and myself played golf every weekend at Foxhills Country Club. The game we played was not the norm as you would typically expect. We cajoled and kidded each other and had much fun in the process. It was a great release from the stresses of the times. This evolved into trips all over Scotland and Ireland with many heartwarming experiences. We called ourselves "The Fearsome Foursome" for no other reason than it sounded good, for clearly we were far from fearsome!

Except for Fernando, we all moved on from England a few years later and for the most part fell out of contact, but then in 2009 we decided to reunite in Fernando's native country, Puerto Rico. This is where I saw first-hand Fernando's passion for his life's work, extending the TASIS education model of excellence. In the heart of his country, he was building a much needed school, based on the TASIS model. His family surrounded him there as his heritage was honored, but nothing came before TASIS. He was enthusiastic about establishing the school, explaining every detail to the whole group. We met his whole family and had a wonderful experience.

From that time to now, we have come together approximately every two years to meet along with our spouses. We have been to Seattle, Sarasota, Cape Cod, France, and back to England in 2012. Throughout our trips, everything has revolved around TASIS. TASIS has always been his

first priority, his first love, his calling in life. Other than the love of his family, nothing is more cherished. As I write, we are planning our next trip to Portugal to visit the latest of Fernando's ventures: the TASIS school in Portugal!

God willing, the Fearsome Foursome will meet again to see Fernando's latest restoration, play golf, laugh, enjoy friendship, and of course, learn more about the expanding world of TASIS.

David Lyons is the father of Mary Lyons, TASIS England student, 1989–1998, and Meghan Lyons, TASIS England student, 1990–1993.

The Guy Who Gave It All for TASIS

Doug Groseclose

The Groseclose family moved to England in 1989 and stayed for five years before Boeing brought us back to Seattle. During those years both our children attended TASIS. In our introductory meeting the first person Polly and I met was Mrs. Fleming and what a warm welcome we received from her: she was a remarkable lady. It's important to note that Polly and I have kept up our friendship with Fernando over the past 33 years. Our travels have taken us back to Europe and even down to his roots in PR. He is the kind of friend everyone should have.

My story will forego listing all of Fernando's many accomplishments at TASIS: I will leave that up to the other writers. This story simply highlights his work ethic and his tireless dedication to making TASIS the success it is.

Polly and I, along with two other couples, were invited to the Gonzalez home for dinner one Saturday night. Kate, his wife, welcomed all of us and explained that Fernando was going to be late to his own party because he was still at TASIS. We all looked at each other and admitted we've never known him to be on time. When he finally arrived, Kate asked him to go tuck their two sons in bed for the night. He had worked so hard all day at TASIS that he looked exhausted, but he proceeded upstairs to read the boys a bedtime story. Half an hour later we all ventured upstairs to find all three of the Gonzalez men sound asleep in one bed. The seven of us enjoyed the rest of the evening together.

Just another example of a guy that gave it all for TASIS.

Doug Groseclose's son Jeff and his daughter Jayme attended TASIS England from 1989 to 1994.

The Man of Many Sides

Barry Iverson '74



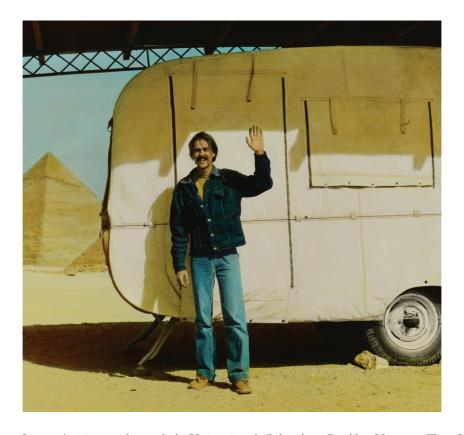
I had the honor of attending TASIS Montagnola from 1971-73. It was there and then that I took a photography course with Fernando Gonzalez. He inspired and motivated me to really think about photography in a way I never imagined before: to think about it all the time; to practice it all the time in my free time. I did the photography for the yearbooks and was constantly in the darkroom. I knew pretty soon it was my passion and something I would do in life. And this I did, later working for 27 years at TIME-LIFE, the pinnacle of my profession as a photojournalist.

Fernando the educator, the artist, the administrator, the architect, has many sides. In 2014, forty years after I left TASIS, I was offered the opportunity to teach the photography course at Les Tapies in the mountains of south-central France, his TASIS-sponsored summer Arts & Architecture program, alongside Fernando, who taught the architecture course, and John Smalley, who taught the painting course. It was here over the ensuing five summers that I came fully to appreciate the consequential devotion of Fernando to education, and in particular to the arts. The summer-program workshop, held in a unique 16th-century stone hamlet in the south of France, was tailor-made by Fernando and represented in condensed 3-week to 1-month sessions everything that Fernando valued: hands-on, experiential learning;



Mark Aeschliman, Mary Seyfarth PG'66, Steve Maloney PG'61, Barry Iverson '74, Fernando Gonzalez, Lynn Fleming Aeschliman '63, and Bill Eichner at the grand opening of the Ferit Şahenk Fine Arts Center

immersive travel; community; art critiques; charrettes and exhibitions. It is this little community of stone buildings set on the sloping hills of the Ardèche that is his real passion, and every summer it suddenly springs into life with the vigor and dynamism of yet another group of students, keen to challenge themselves artistically, and get away from city life and the trappings of social media. This program serves to infuse art, architecture, and photography into those eager to expand their horizons, open their minds, and welcome this incredible life-changing experience. We have Fernando to thank profusely for this initiative and reality.



Barry Iverson '74 is a graduate of the University of Colorado at Boulder. He was a Time-Life photographer in the Middle East for more than 25 years.

Fernando Gonzalez's Influence: An Impressive and Unsung Opus

Rick Mullen '77

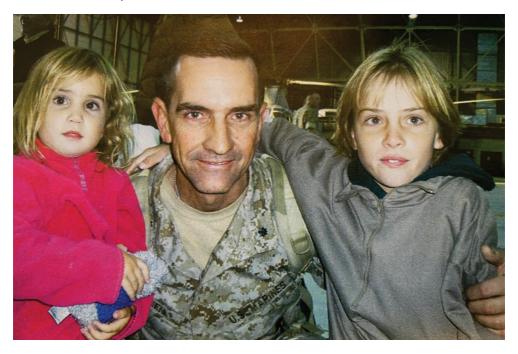
I was a student at TASIS during a steep part of my developmental curve as a person - ages 14-17. That is a crucial period in anyone's development. I was very lucky to find myself in that "beautiful place" that Mrs. Fleming extolled as a way to enhance and add depth to your education during that important period of life. I was also lucky enough to be influenced by some excellent teachers, mentors and role models. Foremost amongst those mentors was Fernando Gonzalez if for no other reason than my passionate interest in photography. During that developmental curve of one's teen years you are impressionable and if exposed to the right mentor and the right advice it can set you on a course or even guide you long after you leave his or her company. I can still hear Fernando's tactfully delivered admonition to me about my tendency to be "lazy" (ouch!...but true) and his yearbook quotation about "there is nothing so fatal to a man's character as half-finished tasks." If I ever have some not quite finished projects, I still hear those words in my head. I had benefitted from his inspiration and his "tough love", which consisted of a handful of words that have remained as a guiding directive. Maybe that is partially why I get up every day at 4:00 am.

As our photography teacher, Fernando pushed us to mature our understanding of photography as an art form. From the basics of understanding simple things like the difference between shape and form, through getting us out of our comfort zone in our photo essay assignments, he continually nudged us on in our developmental process. I did an essay on TASIS's beloved Chef Mario and spent several days with him at work and even at his home with him and his wife. The result was something that I was not only proud of but that I eventually gave to Mario after his retirement. He was very appreciative. I was able to step out of my comfort zone, mature my understanding of the differences between a journalistic and an artistic approach, and I was able to give a gift to an important TASIS individual who had meant so much to so many students for many years. I had used photography to impact someone emotionally by immortalizing what had been a significant portion of his working life. That was very rewarding and it was a result of a push out of my comfort zone by Fernando.

Fernando had a depth of knowledge and understanding of not only art but also architecture, which was his educational focus at Harvard. He invited my friend and fellow photography student, Kelly Bouwens, and me to his house in the south of France for a week or two at the end of our junior spring semester. While there, we

helped him to renovate an old farmhouse into a large art studio and home. It was a wonderful experience and we learned a lot about not only architecture and the beautiful hills in the south of France but about his own impressive personal work ethic.

I am just one student who was there for a tiny slice of Fernando's 50 years of guiding and influencing the trajectory of students' lives, so one can imagine the immense scale of the positive influences on the many students he came into contact with. That is an impressive and unsung Opus. Fernando was my teacher 48 years ago and his influence is still present in my thought process. Just think of the immensity of his influence on the TASIS student body! I consider myself very fortunate indeed to have crossed paths with Fernando in that "Beautiful Place" Mrs. Fleming established in order to positively influence young people. Mrs. Fleming's mission was accomplished in my case and Fernando's lessons and positive influence are still with me to this day.



Rick Mullen, TASIS 1973-77, graduated from the University of Colorado in 1981 with a BS in Journalism and subsequently worked as a photojournalist, before joining the US Marine Corps in 1984, where he did active duty as a Helicopter pilot (1984-91) and served in the Reserves (1992-2014). In the 1990's, he worked as an Aviation photojournalist. He is currently a station Captain for the Los Angeles County Fire Department, having served the City of Malibu since 1998. Rick is married to Jenny Ball (TASIS 1974-75). They have 2 adult children and live in Malibu, CA. Rick's 3 siblings Trish (1971-72), Steve (1974-79), and Tom (1977-81) also attended TASIS.

Fernando's Specific Influences

Glenn Heinmiller '74

As I've gotten older, I've come to recognize the individuals who fundamentally influenced what I did with my life and who I became as a person. Fernando Gonzalez is one of those influential individuals. I arrived at TASIS Lugano as a junior in the fall of 1972. Having lived all my life in the same town and the same house in upstate NY, I abruptly found myself at boarding school in Europe, and not by choice. Looking back, I realize that Fernando helped immensely with my adjustment to this new world. His calm, care, good nature, and encouragement gave me a foundation to thrive and to take advantage of all TASIS had to offer.

Fernando's specific influences were in the areas of photography and architecture. I entered Fernando's photography class with some training I'd received from my father, who had died three years earlier. Poor Fernando, he had no idea he was picking up where my father had left off! Sure, he taught us all the technical skills like developing film and making prints in the darkroom. But more importantly he created an environment for exploration and learning-by-doing. I remember the assignment to produce a "photo essay." Pick the subject, take the pictures, develop the film, print, mount, and exhibit. We had to make all the decisions and figure it out. You learn a lot and fast! Now, almost 50-years later, photography is my personal passion and has also contributed to my professional life. Without Fernando's inspirational teaching back then, I would not now have this pursuit which gives me so much satisfaction.

And then there is architecture. Who would think to create a *high-school* architecture course from scratch? Fernando Gonzalez! Once again, he created a framework for exploration. He didn't tell us what to do, rather he gave a challenge and some ideas and tools to get us started. I think before the class I had no idea what an architect really did. By the end I did, and it seemed very interesting! Twenty years later, the seed that Fernando planted in my mind began to germinate when I decided to make a big career change. I took classes and soaked up everything I could about architecture. And guess what I do now? I'm a professional architectural lighting designer and partner in one of the best firms in the world.

Thank you, Fernando!

After graduation in 1974, Glenn Heinmiller completed his BA in Theater at Wesleyan University. In 1978 he moved to Boston to pursue a career in theatrical lighting design. In 1981 he joined Image Engineering Corporation and helped build it into the top firm in laser light show entertainment. Glenn transitioned to architectural lighting design in 1996 when he joined Lam Partners. Today Glenn is a Principal at Lam Partners helping to lead this award-winning design practice. In 2015 he was inducted into the College of Fellows of the International Association of Lighting Designers. Glenn lives with Cathy, his best friend and wife of 40 years, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Antidote to Callow Youth

Dan Lawrence '74

My first year at TASIS was 1972, the same year that Kate and Fernando arrived as part of a wave of smart, young teachers who breathed new life into the TASIS curriculum: Mac Ross and Ewan Mirylees spring to mind. For me, TASIS was very much an intellectually and socially stimulating world apart, an intense but insular international community of teachers and peers that held no small measure of intrigue. The entrancing backdrop of Europe and beyond came to life largely through in-program and independent travel during school breaks.

I remember a particular personal quality of Fernando. His amused tolerance of callow youth stretched only so far before snapping into gleeful derision. And yet the good humor and truth in that derision tended to rob it of its sting. I remember one off-campus, end-of-semester gathering where I rambled on about something without quite getting to the point. After a polite, puzzled pause, the conversation moved on. Several minutes later, the point occurred to me, and I loudly interjected it. Everyone gave me a blank look except for Fernando, who cracked up and marveled aloud at the fact that I'd been thinking it through that whole time, completely oblivious to what was going on around me. The evident truth of this got a big laugh, and yet it was so good-natured that I felt somehow in on the joke rather than the butt of it.

Along with Glenn Heinmiller and Dieter Metzger, I had the good fortune of being enlisted by Fernando and Kate to help with the beginning stages of renovation at Les Tapies in the summer of 1974. Glenn, Dieter, and I slept in the loft of the old stone sheep barn, pillowed by untold generations of sheep dung, which we later excavated from among the cobbles with garden forks. Kate and Fernando slept in a tent in the paddock below, laughing late into the night as Fernando regaled Kate with retellings of the day's misadventures. One of our tasks was to rebuild the broken-down stone walls that traced the property. Rebuilding the mortarless walls seemed to us an insurmountable task, but to Fernando the solution was obvious: construct two parallel lines of wedge-shaped stones with the wide edge of the wedges facing out, and fill the cavity with rubble; When the two lines get high enough, cap them with wide, flat stones. Despite the repetitive simplicity of the task, the results were gratifying, and the sheep gathered to gaze at our handiwork in dumbstruck awe.

At the end of the summer, we made the pilgrimage across the valley to Michele and John Watson's farm to spend the day slow-roasting one of those sheep on a spit in preparation for an all-night bacchanal, replenishing fluids lost to the fire with beer. At one point, I referred to the wisps of hair I had carefully cultivated on my upper lip all summer as a mustache. "Mustache!" crowed Fernando, laughing and stroking his own formidable *bigote*. "You call that a mustache?" I did not dare to do so again for several years. In fact, I shaved it off the next morning, doubtless sparing myself untold humiliation, not to mention failure with girls. Which goes to show that sometimes a little good-natured truth-telling can be kinder than any amount of amused tolerance.



Dan Lawrence received his BA from UC Davis and his MFA from Columbia University. After a 25-year career as a magazine editor with Time Inc. and Reed Elsevier in Manhattan, he dropped out to the rural Eastern Shore of Virginia to help his wife homeschool their three sons. On the side, he was the principal soloist for the Orchestra of the Eastern Shore and a founding member of the popular local hand, Swing Project. He recently moved with his wife and eldest son to Richmond, where he has resumed writing fiction. His stories have been published in several literary magazines and anthologies.

Testimony of an Artist

Sally Gall '73

I've lived my entire life as an artist and TASIS sent me on this path.

Although I was only at TASIS for one year, it was a year that changed my life. I write this at age 66, thinking back over my experiences during that formative time. I was primed for a European experience, and I was the perfect candidate to come to TASIS but I did't know that then. I was eager to escape my suburban upbringing in Houston, Texas, and was searching for a life of art and culture that I intuited was out there somewhere. It is easy to say this now with hindsight, as I would not have been able to express this as a high-schooler. I was seeking something other than what I was surrounded by, yearning for things sophisticated and cultivated, and TASIS opened that door for me. I loved language and reading and literature and the visual arts and I wanted to know more about them. I still do, and I have made a life full of those activities. I discovered TASIS myself, at age 15, in the pre-internet days, through research at a local library in an advertisement in the back of a magazine and begged my parents to send me. It is still remarkable to me that they agreed, being middle-class folks, conservative, from the south and the mid-western US...it was a leap of faith on their part to send their daughter to "Europe", which seemed so far away and which was so "other."

And oh, Lynn's mother Mrs. Fleming also stays with me; I was awed by her and I remember seeing her, at the beginning-of-the-school-year dinner, whip her lipstick out of the bosom of her dress at the dinner table, and re-apply. She struck me as so strong and full of life, not at all like other "older" women I had been around. Nothing like my mother or my mother's friends either. I recently read through the book "Wit and Wisdom of Mary Crist Fleming" and was struck anew by her philosophy and largesse towards life and beauty. I didn't know it then but I was in such agreement with her general attitude towards life, which obviously permeated the school. She had a glamour, an allure, and it represented all things art and culture. Reading "Wit and Wisdom" both moved me and made me laugh out loud: *Mrs. Fleming was larger than life*.

I remember driving to the Houston airport to fly to Switzerland for the school year, excited and nervous, and thinking "how ugly it is here", and then finally arriving at Villa da Nobili, and at my amazing "dormitory" room: the living room of a house with a floor-to-ceiling "window", i.e., a wall of glass, with a view, and a terrace overlooking lake Lugano and thinking "how beautiful it is here." I had rarely seen anything like it. Mrs. Fleming talked of beauty, Fernando Gonzalez

talked of beauty, and I still think of beauty as it was imparted by both of them.

And then how wonderful, how fortuitous to have landed in an art class taught by Fernando, which included photography as one of the class components. Fernando was a first-year teacher and not really so much older than me at the time (although I was not aware of it then). Through Fernando's teaching and attitude of discovery, I fell in love with photographing the world and have never stopped. (Two other students in that art class also became very involved with photography, Barry Iverson and Brad Fowler; both still have professional careers as photographers, as do I). Thank you Fernando!

Equally important were those 5-day trips that happened several times during the academic year. One that is memorable was a driving trip with Fernando at the wheel to see a chapel designed by Le Corbusier, which was a mind-altering experience (Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp, France). I didn't know such things existed, nor did I know what an architect is. My memory is that during that trip Fernando stumbled across the abandoned hamlet of Les Tapies, which he purchased and spent 40 years restoring, which is now the headquarters of a TASIS summer program in art and architecture for high school students.

Writing this, and thinking back over all my experiences during my senior year at TASIS, I wished I could have had my entire education at TASIS. Oh well ... *I'm* grateful to have had one year.

Sally Gall '73, is a talented photographer who lives and works in New York City. She has photographed the beauty and mystery of the natural world for over 30 years. Her work is in numerous museums and collections worldwide. She has published three books of photographs: The Water's Edge, 1995; Subterranea, 2003; and Heavenly Creatures, 2019. Sally has been awarded several prestigious fellowships.



Duke Vincentio (in disguise) to Isabella:

"The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good:
the goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty brief in goodness;
but grace, being the soul of your complexion,
shall keep the body of it ever fair."

Shakespeare, "Measure for Measure," III, i, 178-181



Lynn Fleming Aeschliman
Grace Under Pressure

Jewels and Their Settings: Lynn Fleming Aeschliman

Michael D. Aeschliman

The beauty-and-duty theme is a perennial one, and deservedly so, and it is particularly relevant to Lynn. On the obvious level, she was as a young woman astonishingly beautiful and yet also unusually gracious in her human interactions, with a charm, courtesy, and good humor that I have seen steadily exerted and exemplified for well over fifty years, including 51 of them together as a couple.

Perhaps the best or most generally evident example of Lynn's generosity and grace of spirit was her loyalty to her mother, both personally and professionally as an educator. Mrs. Fleming, MCF, her brilliant, charming, domineering mother, was like the sun, giving light and warmth to countless persons over many decades; but also like the sun, planets too close to her could be burned up. How to reflect her radiance and channel it but not be consumed by it?

Lynn put a frame around her mother's life, especially over the last fifty years of her life, putting on major public birthday parties for her (a three-day house-party and celebration in a chateau in Burgundy for her 80th birthday), featuring her in alumni-magazine portraits, visual and written, commissioning a memorable musical comedy in honor of her life ("MCF: What a Life!"), editing a book of tributes to her on her 80th birthday and updating it for her 90th. The 90th-birthday party, in Montagnola, was combined with an alumni reunion and the premiere of the musical comedy. Deferring to MCF in public and setting her off like a jewel was, of course, prudent for the well-being of TASIS, a school that was and still is in some ways what Emerson called "the lengthened shadow" of a single individual in its inception and establishment as an enduring institution. But it also showed love, loyalty, and respect.

But Lynn intuitively understood something early on that was shared by her mother: for persons—students, teachers, staff, friends, guests, visitors—to flourish as authentic human beings they need settings: social, aesthetic, symbolic settings; and they need courteous, good-humored, appreciative treatment. The importance of this realization—this ethical, educational, and aesthetic belief—is impossible to over-estimate and important to understand. It is central to the Christian-humanist vision of literary figures as different as William Blake, Charles Dickens, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and John Ruskin. This conception of beauty is not merely decorative or ornamental, except in an exalted sense (e.g., "Amicitia ornat vitam"—Friendship ornaments life). The young artists gathered in 1827 around the aged, then-obscure, dying artist-poet William Blake in his tiny London apartment said that his noble presence, works, and words made "two little rooms in Fountain Court greater than the court of a king."

The development of the arts---especially architecture--- in the last 100 years has hardly been hospitable to this aesthetic and ethical tradition, a classical version of which dominated the visual arts for the previous 400 years (and in some ways even for a thousand years before that). In our era aesthetic irony, parody, neo-brutalism, avant-garde arbitrariness, and shameless commercial utilitarianism have laid waste the visual landscape the allegedly "advanced" West. Lynn's quarter-century partnership with the gifted neo-classical architect David Mayernik has been a dogged, noble counter-measure to the abject, promiscuous surrender of individuals and institutions to post-modern post-



humanism: their creation of the new TASIS campus has made it an outstanding alternative to affluent contemporary barbarism. As one artistically-inclined recent TASIS graduate commented plaintively, "It's too beautiful---the rest of the contemporary world is not like this!"

But "in brief measures life may perfect be," and in humane settings persons may learn to see. Over almost sixty years Lynn has renovated, restored, or built major buildings in five countries---Switzerland, Italy, England, France, and the USA. I knew that I was in trouble when, around 1990 near Charlottesville, Virginia, where I was happily teaching at the University of Virginia, she came home one day and said of her successful architectural-renovation business: "I am not going to spend the rest of my life building mega-houses for the idle rich!" And she didn't.

Perhaps the deepest lesson here is that true gentility---real courtesy and the love of harmony and beauty---has something of sanctity to it. One of the most beautiful chapters and films in Kenneth Clark's **Civilization** (1969) is largely about St. Francis and the Middle Ages at their best (which they were not always, of course). His paradoxical devotion to courtesy, inverting the inherited, class-based social order, led him to "drastic acts of self-denial" little short of lunacy; but he said that he had taken "Lady Poverty" as his chivalric mistress. Clark comments: "It was partly because he saw that wealth corrupts; partly because he felt that it was discourteous to be in the company of anyone poorer than himself." When the American educator, musician, and writer John Erskine (author of "The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent," 1915; first president of the Juilliard School of Music) looked back on his late 19th-century

Columbia undergraduate education from the vantage point of sixty years later (around 1950) he remembered three particular teachers who "contributed to our education by treating us always with such courtesy that we had to improve our manners in order to respond in kind." This is the kind of courtesy that my esteemed cousin Rev. Dr. William Schumacher found in Lynn when he was a poor visiting student, and about which he wrote in two poems about her (reprinted in this volume). Many others have found it too, I most gratefully of all.

Lynn built and restored beautiful buildings in the USA, but ultimately she wanted more purpose for herself and her buildings---not "mega-houses for the idle rich." She and her mother loved the old landscape of Europe and its gracious settings, seeing them as providing occasions for human flourishing---in schools, not warehouses or "machines for living." They refused to be brow-beaten by "neophiliac" architects--including friends---who tried to get them to "see the light" of avant-garde modernism, as most educational authorities have been intimidated into doing for the last century.¹ She and her intimates---her husband, Fernando Gonzalez, David Mayernik, Lyle Rigg---retained and extended an educational vision with traditional contents but gave it vigorous personal loyalty and unique formulation. There never was a golden age, but the materials of this brazen one can be turned into gold, such transformations being an essential process of real civilization. The teachers in the classrooms, but also the ensemble of classrooms, dormitories, dining halls, gymnasium, library, with noble proportions, designs, materials, arrangements, vistas: frames for portraits, settings for jewels. For if human persons are to do noble things, they can be encouraged to do so by noble settings.

By now everyone should know that there is no guarantee in these things, no automatic cause-and-effect. The oldest civilized European nations have committed inconceivable atrocities in the world in the modern period (especially since 1914), with no benign end in sight: we may well be entering new dark ages. Education is a process of multiple variables, motives, and effects, ultimately mysterious and undetermined, with its measurable features important but insufficient to gauge success. Perhaps this is why Lynn's good-humored courtesy is so noticeable---ultimate outcomes are unknowable, even intermediate ones are uncertain, but immediate courtesy is indubitably valuable. She likes to quote a friend of ours, long-time TASIS music teacher, distinguished pianist, and dormitory resident Bertha Seifert (who lived in retirement in our family for several years) as saying "Do the best you can with what you've got while you've got it." Most of Mrs. Fleming's wisdom was also proverbial, as Lyle Rigg showed in his anthology of her sayings and writings²; but it was proverbial with panache, "style" in the sense of a consistent human personality that made it effective and memorable.

¹ See John Silber, Architecture of the Absurd (2007)

² Lyle Rigg, ed., *The Wit and Wisdom of Mary Crist Fleming* (2011)

Lynn's style is cognate---the acorn did not fall far from the oak---but more self-effacing and, yes, less domineering and histrionic. Like her noble sister Gai, she has taken joy in meeting the needs and hopes of others, in serving a remote or long-term good by vigorous and generous, immediate and local activities for all those blessed enough to have encountered her radiant beauty and lambent loving-kindness (I the chief among them).

We all should know by now that form, beauty, and elegance can and often do mask or serve mere vanity and selfishness, though the preference of the fashionable, mindless rich nowadays for the ugly, funky, odd, and brutal in visual art has given a new, lamentable twist to the history of fashion and taste. But providing functional and beautiful educational settings for young people---and for faculty and staff---and matching them with noble and charitable ideas, attitudes, and conduct---is as certain a good as we mortals are given to pursue in our occupational lives. This Lynn has done, to the improvement of the world in which she has lived her noble life.



Michael Aeschliman, writer and professor emeritus at Boston University, first met Lynn in New York. City in 1966 when they were students at Columbia University. They have been married for 48 years. Former Headmaster Lyle Rigg is on the right.

The Beauty of Dedication

Lyle Rigg

I have had the pleasure of being associated with TASIS over more than four decades. During my 23 years of actual day-to-day employment with TASIS, I have had the unusual experience to work on three different occasions both in England and Switzerland. Yes, TASIS has provided me with unique opportunities!

Perhaps one of the most unusual aspects of my years with TASIS is the honor of being fêted and toasted at "farewell parties" on SIX different occasions. Three of these special events were retirement parties! Although I have been honored by all of this recognition, I also have been somewhat embarrassed by the attention. I'm certain there may be those who are convinced that I keep returning to TASIS just so I can be honored at yet one more farewell party.

When I thought about the request to write something for this volume on "Beauty and Duty," many different thoughts raced through my mind. Perhaps I could write about my tradition of inviting elementary-school students to join me for "tea" in the elegant Salon of Thorpe Place or the beautiful living room of Casa Fleming? Perhaps I could write about the special ritual I followed when signing graduation diplomas or the importance I attached to interviewing prospective teachers?

I also considered the possibility of expanding on one or two of the themes that I used for speeches throughout my years as a head of school. Among some of these themes were: success, kindness, service, character, the arts, change, friendship, wisdom, leadership, attitude, happiness, enthusiasm, courage, gratitude, failure, optimism, and communication. Yes, there were many different approaches for me to take in these remarks that could highlight both beauty and duty. Nevertheless, I was drawn to remarks that I made on "beginnings and endings" at the graduation exercises of the Pennington School (New Jersey) back in 2006 on the occasion of my first retirement. Just as graduation can be viewed as both an ending and a beginning, I think retirement can as well.

Retirement has been on my mind a lot lately. Many of my former, valued colleagues and friends at TASIS have retired recently after distinguished and long careers. Although I'm sorry to see them leave TASIS, I'm also happy for them and grateful for their dedicated service.

Fortunately for TASIS there also are individuals who don't have the word "retirement" in their vocabulary or thoughts. Fernando Gonzalez (whom I have written about elsewhere in this volume) is one of these people and Lynn Fleming Aeschliman is another.

In the midst of these thoughts on retirement, I have received many upbeat and exciting communications from Lynn regarding the new master plan for the TASIS Global Village in Montagnola. This impressive plan includes such additions as the Donald MacDermid Center (for music, classrooms, and dormitory), renovation of Belvedere for the Elementary School Center, the Limonaia Classroom Building, Casa Bianca Dormitory, and a spectacular new Dining Hall.

The current time-frame for this massive campus development is from 2022-34. And as Lynn acknowledges, this immense building project will take a lot of time, work, and money to realize. Lynn, undoubtedly, will be the major driving force behind all aspects of this undertaking. I find myself asking, why is Lynn taking on such a huge project when she could easily retire? Yes, Lynn could announce her retirement and spend the next two decades relaxing



in Capitignano with Michael and visiting the beautiful campus that already exists in Montagnola—a campus that her immense talent and hard work have done so much to create. Yes, Lynn could rest on her laurels and have a wonderful, well-deserved, retirement party!

Fortunately for TASIS, retirement is not Lynn's style. Back in 2006 (the year of my first retirement), Lynn was featured in a volume entitled "Grace Under Pressure," on the celebration of her 60th birthday. Re-reading this volume has helped remind me of all that Lynn has done for TASIS throughout the years. She has brought beauty to every aspect of the school—buildings, programs, people, and overall school culture.

Since 2006, there have been many times when Lynn could have retired and been praised for a job very well done. There probably were many occasions when she should have retired for the sake of her health. Still, Lynn has carried on enthusiastically. It seems that she must agree with an assertion of George Eliot, "The reward of one duty is the power to fulfill another." Perhaps in Lynn's case, it is not the power but the obligation to fulfill another duty. As Lynn wrote two decades ago, "I am ambitious for TASIS and want to accomplish a great deal before I pass on the reins. My problem is that there are never enough hours in the day to realize all my dreams for TASIS."

In describing her mother in an article a few years ago, Lynn wrote, "My mother wanted to surround young people with beauty, and this was for her a true passion and ideal and not merely a decorative idea. ... my mother passionately believed that human persons—teachers, students, citizens, souls, all of us—hunger for beauty, also in the sense of courtesy, harmony, coherence, decent Godly order, the loveliness of form and grace of which we are capable."

Without question, Lynn shares her mother's passion and sense of duty. We are extremely fortunate that Lynn is determined to make TASIS even more beautiful in every sense of the word. Retirement will have to wait until at least 2034 (when the current master-plan is scheduled for completion). Yet at that point I am certain Lynn will consider the advice of C.S. Lewis, "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

At the final farewell assembly upon my fourth retirement in 2017, I used a quotation from my wife Sharon, a prominent novelist. Sharon has been so taken and affected by the beauty of Montagnola and TASIS that she has used this location as a setting for two of her books for children. Once in an interview when Sharon was asked to describe her book "The Unfinished Angel" she commented, "On one level the story is about dualities: the small and the large; the petty and the noble; sorrow and joy; ugliness and beauty. It is about the angelic qualities of humans and the human qualities of angels. The story explores, as other books of mine have, how often young people refresh us and lead us to what is important. It is a story, I think, of kindness and hope." Perhaps if Lynn ever does decide to retire one day, a good title for a follow-up volume to "Grace Under Pressure" and "Beauty and Duty" would be "Kindness and Hope." Lynn certainly exemplifies all of these qualities—grace, beauty, duty, kindness, and hope.

Back in 1982, Lynn and Michael and Mrs. Fleming took a chance on me by giving me my first opportunity to serve as a head of school. With much thanks to Lynn's support and guidance, I not only "survived" that first year in Switzerland, but also found a career that I loved: a career that I was happy to leave retirement for on a number of occasions, when Lynn (and duty) called. Although I am finding that retirement is "right" for me at this point in my life, I'm also pleased that Lynn is happy to put her retirement party on hold until at least 2034.

As the British writer and philosopher John Ruskin wrote, "When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece." TASIS is fortunate that Lynn has more masterpieces to complete before she retires for the first time.

Lyle Rigg served as Headmaster of TASIS and TASIS England from 1979-1998, and then, after several years as Headmaster of Pennington School in New Jersey, again as Acting Head of each TASIS school, finally retiring in 2017.

Beauty and Duty: On the Responsibilities of Building Beautifully

David T. Mayernik

Apart from their rhyme, most people would not associate beauty and duty. Beauty is generally thought of as a superficial luxury, whereas duty has to do with necessity. Putting those two words together in the context of a book about TASIS suggests that, for TASIS at least, beauty is a necessity, a duty. But it also suggests that there can be beauty in duty, in doing what is needed, obligatory, or of service.

It is partly, I'm sure, due to my role as an architect that I would see the building of the TASIS campuses as the most obvious manifestation of this uncommon binary (or an elective affinity, as Goethe might have called it). Any architect's role involves solving a host of problems, from the nature of the site to the needs of the program to the complexities of construction. Once upon a time, it would have also been thought of as essential that the architect was responsible for making his work beautiful. It is not solely the architecture profession's responsibility that the requirement for beauty is no longer a given: apart from the aesthetic problem of defining just what beauty is, few clients want, much less need or demand, that their project be beautiful. Beauty is an added value, an extra, a bonus once the practicalities have been taken care of (within budget, of course). Even local planning boards are more concerned that any new building not be offensively ugly; most aesthetic and environmental codes are premised on preventing the worst, not encouraging the best.

If beauty is more than the merely attractive—that it is somehow knowable, that it can be a conveyor of something transcendent, and that its value is itself transcendental—it will only happen with commitment, with effort, with struggle in a world that is happy to appreciate it when it already exists but reluctant to make it happen anew. It takes knowledge and talent on the part of the architect, and taste and commitment on the part of the client; which is why, whatever is good and beautiful about the TASIS campus is owed in large part to the taste and commitment of Lynn Fleming Aeschliman.

While I had won numerous architectural awards and competitions by the time I was 36, it was Lynn who in 1996 gave me my first chance to design a comprehensive project like the TASIS campus. I'll always remember my introduction to the campus with her, Fernando, Bill Eichner, and then-Headmaster Chris Frost. The tour lasted the morning, along with lots of history and lore about TASIS and Mrs. Fleming. In the afternoon, before my train back to France, we all sat down in front of a map of the campus, and Lynn asked me, "So, young man, if we hired you, what would you propose for our master-plan?" I had told my wife the night before that, no matter what happened, I was

not going to give away any free ideas. But in the moment, and under the influence of Lynn's energy, I decided it was worth the risk. I laid my hand over the area of Certenago (they happened to be close enough in size), and then showed her that they had the same size land around Monticello. So, they could effectively build a Certenago around Monticello, and preserve the rest of the campus as open green space (it should be recalled that the campus was also smaller then). "You're hired!" Lynn exclaimed. I went to the train elated and on fire with how we could make this all happen.

For the next month I worked side by side with Lynn in her new office (she had just been named Executive Director). We fleshed out the plan, with input from Fernando and Chris Frost, and found a local architect who would shepherd the project through the planning process, which, of course, was not as easy as the design process had been. There is a reason Ticino hasn't been building Certenagos in the last century. They have effectively made it illegal. The zoning overlay on almost all land other than existing villages is for suburban development—individual units or multi-unit housing separated parcel by parcel by green buffers. The implicit reason for these buffers is that we can't expect new buildings to be beautiful, or that they know how to play nice together. So, the separation between buildings, more than being anti-urban, is really about screening your neighbor's building from your own. Despite having dotted all our i's and crossed all our t's, the one regulation we hadn't respected was maintaining that eight-meter buffer between buildings. In fact, the new palestra would be only three meters from the corner of Monticello. In other words, the kind of intimacy and density of Certenago wasn't possible.

The TASIS Global Village



This is where Lynn showed her mettle. She wanted this plan, this academic village, and she was going to find a way to get it. The head of the local planning board, Arch. Brocchi (the municipio of Montagnola is on Piazza Brocchi), somewhat unwittingly gave us the key. He could accept the buildings so close together if they were all connected, essentially making the whole village an addition to Monticello. But he would only accept that if they were all treated as one big building, either in the form of a comb (pettine) or a spine with symmetrical ribs (spina dorsale) climbing the hill. But, we asked, what difference does the form of the buildings make as long as they're connected? We found an advocate, the author of the definitive book on interpreting Ticino's planning codes, to defend our interpretation that the hillside could look like a collection of individual buildings even if they were technically all connected.

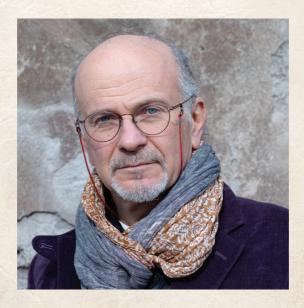
Our defense convinced the mayor, and we had our master-plan, our Global Village. Realizing it, though, over the next 25 years would not be any easier than the planning approval for the first master-plan had been. The other reason Ticino hasn't built any Certenagos lately is that the architecture profession and local planning boards are monolithically opposed to an architecture that is not Modernist in style. This, unlike the planning laws, is not enshrined in law, so it is harder to enforce. But it has made every building permit a struggle, every iteration of the master-plan a struggle, in part because of what we have managed to do: the beauty of the TASIS we have built has not made its continued realization any easier, but actually harder.

To be clear, this commitment to beauty isn't just a matter of Lynn's personal taste, but her sense of responsibility or duty to an essential part of TASIS: Mrs. Fleming's commitment



to founding schools in places of beauty, whether on the hills above Lake Lugano, or a village in Surrey, England, or a château in France. At some level, beauty is the *raison d'être* of TASIS. In the early history of the schools this had more to do with renovation, but building new buildings that would add to the beauty of the campuses eventually became important. And from the beginning Lynn has bought into my insistence that we build our buildings as true as possible in today's world to what they appear to be. We have committed to buildings that are substantive, solid, and not a sham or merely kitsch facades. This has incurred costs, and involved time, but it has resulted in buildings that are durable, sustainable, and true to their nature. Moreover, we have made a campus that both manifests and encourages community.

The only reason we have been able to do it is Lynn's determination. Perhaps her greatest strength is her resilience, her refusal to be defeated. We have sometimes triumphed, sometimes bent but not broken, in this long process of realizing the core idea of that original master-plan: a harmonious community of buildings, rooted in history but forward looking, a model of a better world based on the words written on the façade of the M. Crist Fleming Library: Truth, Goodness, Beauty. Beauty is the visual manifestation of the first two words. Making Truth and Goodness visible is to make them evident, tangible, but also available. It's not as if the world doesn't appreciate beauty, but it has mostly forgotten how to make it. In such a world it takes a Lynn Fleming Aeschliman to make beauty happen, because she considers it her duty. As one of my colleagues said at the architecture conference we held on campus after the completion of the palestra, "Signora, with you on our side, how can we lose?"



David Mayernik has been the TASIS Master Architect since 1996 and is Professor of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame (USA), teaching mostly in the Notre Dame program in Rome.

A Tribute: The Silken Tent*

Charles L. Glenn

This sonnet by Robert Frost applies more to you than to anyone else I can think of. Your kindness to me and to my children, among all your other concerns, has been continually gracious and modest, and above all I have appreciated your loaning Michael to me for a few months each year [at Boston University]; I know how much the separation costs both of you. May the 'sureness of your soul' always sustain you.

The Silken Tent

She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when the sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought
To everything on earth the compass round,
And only by one's going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.



The three oldest TASIS alumni: John Gage '60, Lynn '63, and George Clark '61

Rev. Dr. Charles L. Glenn, Jr., is Professor Emeritus of Educational Policy at Boston University, where he also served as interdisciplinary University Professor, Chair of his department, and Dean of the School of Education. Holding two doctorates, he was for twenty-one years the third-ranking official in the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Author of several influential books, he is one of the world's greatest living educational-policy specialists and an ordained Protestant minister.

*Reprinted from Grace Under Pressure: A Tribute to Lynn Fleming Aeschliman on Her Sixtieth Birthday (Lugano, 2006)

Two Appreciative Poems*

William W. Schumacher

For Lynn on her birthday, in memory of kindnesses done to a student many years ago.

I remember a house where all were good To me, God knows, deserving no such thing. (Hopkins)

The Tramp

A tramp came down across the Alps and found
A house of laughter, beauty, love unearned.
A place is set at table; books abound;
None here despises all that's yet unlearned.
Untongued and ignorant the tramp is sent
Behind the hill to buy the farmer's wares;
And robs the tombs and makes no argument;
Is paid with bread; unburdens here his cares.
Such wanton mercy slowly germinates
And alters bit by bit the tramp's own way
Till his life, all too weakly, imitates
The kindness that to him was done that day.
So undeserving hearts with love are sown
Till with this lady's goodness overgrown.

Kinder Than Our Kind Deserves

I tramped on the Autobahn south from the Rhine,
Slept rough in the truckstop latrine,
Ate little or nothing for days at a time –
Oh what a sight to be seen!

She's kind unto animals, students, and strays,

For she counts it a pleasure to serve.

So she puts them to work and then sends them aways:

'Cause she's kinder than our kind deserves.

My belly was empty, my wallet was light.

But she gave me a bed and a meal.

She chatted so friendly till dark of the night,

Then took me to graveyards to steal.

She's graceful and pleasant, and harder than nails –
She accelerates driving through curves –
And we're grateful whenever her goodness prevails
'Cause she's kinder than our kind deserves.

She sent me on errands of shopping and toil,

For cheese and for wine and for meat,

And she knew if I faltered, or shyly recoiled,

We'd none of us have 'aught to eat.

She'll stiffen the back of a weak-hearted fool,

She faces the future with nerve,

And she pours out her passion to build up a school,

'Cause she's kinder than our kind deserves.

Rev. Dr. William Schumacher has served as a Lutheran-Christian missionary and teacher in several African countries with his wife Tamara and their children. He is a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He gave the TASIS Commencement Address in 2018. His wife Tamara has taught EAL at TASIS since 2006.

^{*}Reprinted from Grace under Pressure

Expansive Enthusiasm*

Kathleen Blum

There are so many ways in which Lynn is an inspiration to me. This middle-class American girl, the first woman in her family to graduate from college, went to Europe for the first time with Lynn and could not have had a better guide. We did not "tour" Europe; we went to live in a tiny Swiss village near Gruyères, Canton Fribourg, from which we could visit mountain farms and attend local festivals, local masses, local markets. We saw the greater sights too, of course, but it was the daily life that was so particularly meaningful. The mingled church bells and cow bells, the mountain walks, the smells of grass, and wild flowers, and hay, and cheese, and Lynn's expansive enthusiasm for it all changed me forever.

I have so many things for which to thank Lynn; were I to enumerate them, however, this tribute would be more about me than it would be about her. That too, in its way, is a tribute to Lynn. For one of her special gifts is a generous discernment of others' talents and a dogged way of drawing them out. What she cannot do herself, and at times she seems bounded only by the hours in the day, she is rapturous about other people doing.

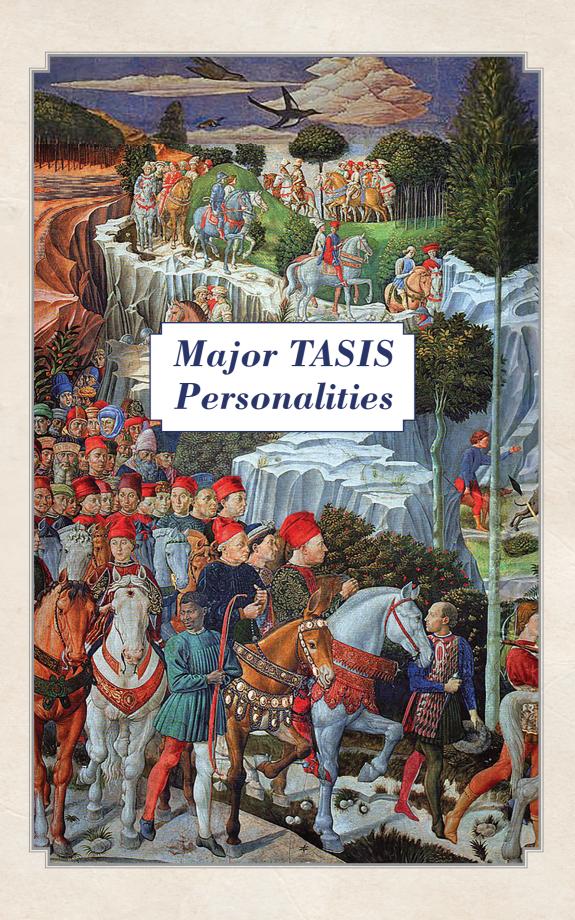
Tireless in her work, unflagging in her sympathy, intrepid, vigorous, demanding, she is yet motherly in her affections and attention to the little things. How many boys have been startled into a life-long firm handshake by her admonition? How many people have realized by her searching questions that they could in fact do more? How many of her guests have felt her attention to all the details of their comfort?

Her taste is exquisite; my first experience of this was in her little house outside Charlottesville, Virginia. This was far removed from the lovely Tuscan villa, or from Casa Fleming, or from the fine new buildings at TASIS, but they all give witness to Lynn's appreciation for beauty, and for living well, for it is not only physical beauty that she pursues. Much of her energy is given to fostering truly beautiful acts, be they intellectual, artistic, moral, or spiritual.

And she not only fosters them. "If it doesn't kill you, it will make you stronger," she has been heard to say. Endure the suffering, learn the lesson, accept the criticism, solve the problem, and, with the Lord's help, carry on, gathering strength from triumphs and from missteps or failures. This is what I have known Lynn to do. God grant her length of days.

Kathleen Blum graduated from the University of Virginia, where she and her future husband Christopher Blum were both students of Michael Aeschliman. She was a counselor in Lynn Aeschliman's Young Pilgrims in Switzerland in Canton Fribourg in the summers of 1991 and 1992 and subsequently the Director of the Middle School Program in Montagnola in the summer of 2001. A mother, she has also been a teacher, writer, editor, and music director.

*Reprinted from Grace Under Pressure



By Wisdom a House is Built

Gai Fleming Case '59 and Daniella Hatfield TE '99

By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

Just as a home's foundations are unseen below the structure, one's primary and secondary education becomes buried under decades of additional life experience. School years are distant memories, out of sight and out of mind, seemingly irrelevant to daily pressures and realities. And yet, the foundation laid in childhood continues, however imperceptibly, to undergird values, to inform thinking and perspective on life, to guide choices, and to influence relationships.

Daughter and grand-daughter of Mrs. Mary Crist Fleming, we share the background of a TASIS education, albeit a generation apart. We are both grateful to have been prepared for life at TASIS. We were certainly prepared academically, and, just as importantly, we see the strength of the foundations that were laid in those years- the beginnings of wisdom and understanding, of generosity to others, of conviction and character. We see the world with eyes that search for truth, goodness, and beauty, because we believe that those qualities are evidence of our Creator's fingerprints all around us.



We resonate with Mrs. Fleming's 1977 yearbook message, which reads, in part, "... I believe that a school like this one is not merely a campus and some classrooms, or a stop on the way between childhood and college. It is - it must be - a step on that inner journey which does not demand that we ever go anywhere, yet which makes us awaken, slowly or suddenly, to the fullest meaning of our own existence. If we cannot find paradise amid the daily demands and the practical necessities with which we must cope, we can at least pause and realize that at some moments in our time together here, we have possibly glimpsed something infinite, something eternal, about our own being. This realization is the purpose behind your real education; the journey will continue to be arduous, but the rewards will be with you all along the way."

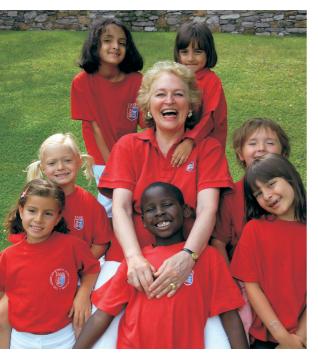
The rewards of the inner journeys that began in childhood have certainly been with us all along the way. Life has taken both of us through many seasons, geographies, cultures, and relationships. As the above verses from Proverbs describe, the "rooms" of our lives have been filled with treasures- some joyous, some poignant, tender, or hard-earned, all valuable in their own way. We reflect with gratitude on all those who invested, lovingly and carefully, in our education and formation in childhood, as well as the experiences and people who have helped us to mature over time. We hope to continue to build wise and beautiful lives upon the good foundations that were laid so many years ago.

Gai Fleming Case was one of TASIS's very first students, present on opening day with her mother, Mary Crist Fleming, in 1956. Daniella Case Hatfield enjoyed four years at TASIS England in the 1990s. Both have served on the TASIS Foundation Board---Gai until 2009; Daniella, 2009-Present.



For Beauty Lives with Kindness*

Betsy Newell



My first year as a student at TASIS was at Swiss Holiday, 1956. I have spent either all summer, or part of each summer, at TASIS since then – nearly 70 years. The school was originally located in Minusio, just outside of Locarno and on a hillside that had a path down to Lago Maggiore, where we swam, sailed, and water-skied.

My first day in 1956 we deplaned in Zurich as a group and were met by a flock of blue VW busses. But by the time we reached the Villa Verbanella Alta it was pitch black. It was really the next morning that I began a lifelong love and deep involvement with TASIS. Imagine waking up in southern Switzerland to bright sunshine and the most exquisite view across the lake and to the mountains on the far shore. I remember feeling faint.

So began my years and years of experiencing beauty at TASIS, both tremendous and overwhelming, as well as in the small details around the campus. Philosophers debate if one's reaction, the aesthetic experience, will be as profoundly emotional as the first time you saw it or heard it, if it happens every day? I have seen the view of the lake of Lugano every morning in the summer for as many years as the school has been in Montagnola, and my heart always sings.

When the school moved from Locarno to downtown Lugano, I was in my late teens. We went to the Verona Opera, held outdoors in a splendid Roman Amphitheatre. It was a spectacular setting, as the sun was setting and the audience lit thousands of candles. But, what was to influence my musical tastes until this day, was TOSCA! I just fell in love, and have seen it many times, even once again in Verona with Pavarotti as Mario.

In the 1990s, Mrs. Fleming invited me to become the Director of the Château des Enfants, which was the TASIS summer program for the younger children. The question for me was, could little children appreciate the beauty of the campus, which had brought such joy to me since I was a little more than a child myself? Just being surrounded by beautiful views, a village of classically beautiful buildings, our home villa, hung with paintings, three fine meals in outdoor dining, and all this in a place that was fragrant with flowers. Would

just being surrounded by beautiful things somehow rub off on my little charges as it did with me? How would it affect a child's future aesthetic development as it did mine? Mrs. Fleming believed in the importance of surrounding her students with beauty. She found spectacular places for the schools, and filled their rooms with wonderful furniture, art, and always fresh flowers. As the school grew, her daughter Lynn has conceived of and built a village of buildings that are in exquisite harmony not only with the land, but with the history of Ticino as we can still see it in the 17th century hunting lodge, the Villa de Nobili. It is remarkable that current students still walk through the Villa di Nobili every day, just as I did so many years ago, and are still in awe of those beautiful rooms and their decoration.

That shared experience, the camaraderie, the pure fun together, surrounded by the magnificent Swiss mountains, was for many of us an other-worldly experience. It intensified other feelings and emotions. When we undertook what was a great adventure for most of us, lasting friendships blossomed in the summer against the backdrop of the beauty of the place. As an older teenager I must have fallen in love a dozen times.

I am in touch with a woman, an American, who was our CDE student in the 1990s, who had a German roommate and they became fast friends and are still fast friends. I could tell many stories about lasting friendships, and several marriages, that have resulted from nearly fifty years of summer programs at TASIS. Years after those first experiences in Switzerland, it is not only our memories, but our friendships that live on and are a constant reminder of those Halcyon days: "For beauty lives with kindness."

Betsy Bacon Bigelow Newell attended as a student, then worked as a counselor, then assistant director of Swiss Holiday, then Project Europe (1956-1963). She ran the New York Office with Gai Fleming 1963-1971. Then she served as Director of Le Château des Enfants (CDE) from 1992-2018. She is currently the Director of Park Children's Day School in New York City.

*Shakespeare, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona"



You Had to Be There: My Time as a TASIS Tour Guide

Mark J. Aeschliman

Fine art is that in which the hand, the head, and the heart of man go together.

John Ruskin

Formation

During the spring semester of 2020 I told the Academic Dean, Mark Abisi, that I feel as though I'm able to use my education every single day of my teaching career at TASIS. Growing up in a family that valued scholarship, I was fortunate to receive excellent instruction at five different colleges and universities, beginning with Fleming College Florence. The *City of Florence* course taught by Meg Licht [1973] was held mainly in the streets of the city, only recently cleared of the damage from the flood of 1966. Dr. Licht's "reading" of the fabric of the city was formative for me. Her granular knowledge of the churches and palazzi was nuanced and deep. Her explanations of the historical context of these structures were exemplary. Her art-historical approach and her commentary have been a beacon to me throughout my years in Montagnola.

At UVM in Burlington, Vermont, where I completed my B.A., my interest in art history was deepened, especially in the courses of William C. "Bill" Lipke. But there was also Shakespeare with K.S. Rothwell, Greek and Latin mythology with Z.P. Ambrose, and Etymology with R.R. Shlunk. There followed the five summers of the M.A. in Italian at Middlebury and my return to Florence with the Syracuse Florence Fellowship in 1978 for the M.A. in art history. Here I experienced a great deal of on-site teaching, including my first presentation to Syracuse undergraduates on Masaccio's *Trinity* in the church of Santa Maria Novella. This navigation of sites was to serve me well in the TASIS PG Program, where I began teaching in January of 1979. I remember Syracuse Professor Rab Hatfield's admonition about on-site teaching: *If you can't point to it, don't talk about it.*

AP & IB

After my fall semester of ESL teaching in Naples in 1978, I was hired at TASIS to teach two of my specialties, these being 10th grade English, which consisted mainly of classics like the *Odyssey, Iliad, Aeneid,* and Shakespeare plays, and art history, which was a natural,



following on my Florence experience. During the 1979-1980 school year I introduced the AP Art History course which I continue to teach to this day. I'm honored to have been part of the reading committee in the USA for the exam for nine years in the 1990s. My course load at this time also included introductory Italian, which again seemed tailor-made for my qualifications. With my introduction of IB Art History in 2006 as a school-based syllabus course, TASIS became only the 12th school worldwide to offer this course.

Europe's great cities explored

But more than anything else, I found the most exciting challenge to be the PG Academic Travel trips, which were called In-Program travel at that time: week-long visits to Paris and Vienna, as well as multiple day trips to Florence, Rome, and Venice. For these trips I crafted the itineraries and incorporated city-specific art and architecture material into the PG/AP Art History seminar. We had an interdisciplinary curriculum for the PGs at that time, in which we coordinated topics in European Literature, European History, Italian language, and European Art History. The aim was to address the significance of Europe as a place, and we took our promotional slogans from those days very seriously. TASIS is in the cockpit of Europe, we know Europe by heart, Europe is our classroom... these were all things we believed then and many at the school still do.

Architecture. Thanks to Fernando and training at Penn

Enabled by a leave of absence, I had a two-year stint in the University of Pennsylvania doctoral program in art history. I was now able to branch out into teaching architecture at the school. At Fernando Gonzalez's instigation, beginning in 1994 in the summer program, and 1998 in the academic year program, I introduced the Architecture & Design course. From its very inception, this course, too, was designed to maximize students' European exposure to the fullest. Somehow in those days before the IB curriculum there seemed to be more time to dedicate to on-site visits: Designer Day Trips, the Culture Bus, two-hour In-Pros launched from school in a van. These required me to obtain knowledge about local architectural and artistic monuments, and expertise in delivering content on-site, followed up in class. My teaching assistantship at Penn in modern architectural history, as well as focused study of Byzantine, Islamic, and Italian medieval architecture enabled me to build up a new expertise in this field. Soon it seemed logical to introduce an IB Architecture course under the umbrella of IB Visual Arts. This course ran for several years and I have very fond memories of several students from those classes going on to architectural careers. Even now as I write this piece in 2022 my two sections of A&D are full, and I've even been able to re-introduce the weekend trip to the Vitra Design Museum in Weil-am-Rhein, Germany, after a hiatus due to Covid.

Emphasis on experience

As the youngest son of a Swiss-American father, I was exposed to European influence from very early on. Our family trip to Europe in 1971, when I was 16, included visits to Swiss cities, including Lugano, as well as an extensive tour of Italy. I remember returning to school in Vermont after that summer and trying to explain to my peers what Europe was like. Impossible. The multiple dimensions of the European experience required systematic attention and study. Fortunately, my parents encouraged my continental enthusiasm by arranging private lessons in Latin, but there was also my father's autobiographical novel of his childhood in Berne, his paintings of European scenes, his extensive library as stimuli. My high school yearbook listed me as "most likely to live in Europe," (or was it most European?).

Breakthroughs

There have been multiple times during the TASIS years when I've felt special enrichment and understanding – my own as well as the students'-- gained on site. I'm quite sure many TASIS students will readily recall their formative experiences on In-Program travel trips, and the epiphanies they engendered. In an ideal world, one would conduct the on-site visit to European locations the way Dr. Licht at Fleming College Florence did. On one memorable all-college visit to Assisi, she charged us to explore the Basilica of St. Francis on our own

prior to her tour. I'm always hesitant to launch into art-historical explanations on site before people have the chance to size up the monument for themselves. Looking and listening are different activities, after all. And yet this is mostly what I do, time constraints being what they are. And yet, at times it's merely the assignment to focus on the work that leads to the richest experience for the observer: the encouragement to look steadily, *far mente locale* as the Italians say, and contextualize. These have always been the cornerstones of my art-historical teaching and touring at TASIS. Of course, one of the biggest breakthroughs for all of us is the understanding that great art and architecture carry high meaning and purpose: *"The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths."* (Bruce Nauman)



Mark Aeschliman has served TASIS for more than 42 years, starting in 1979. During this period, he has taught English, Humanities, Italian, Art History AP and IB, Architecture and Design, and also IB Visual Arts/Architecture HL. He earned his AA in 1975 at Fleming College Florence, his BA in 1975 at the University of Vermont, his first MA in 1980 at Middlebury College, Vermont, and his second MA in 1981 at Syracuse University. He did doctoral work at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, 1983-1985. Between 1981 and 2004, Mark exhibited his art work in Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ticino, Tuscany, and Berlin. He is a recipient of the TASIS Master-Teacher Award.

A Passionate Teacher

Marcia Page



In September 1971, I arrived in Lugano full of enthusiasm and excitement, ready to bring my love of art and art history to Post Graduate TASIS students at the Vezia campus. The Post Graduates were encouraged to 'explore Europe,' so I took my students to Italian cities on the weekends to visit the original works of art in situ. One weekend we were in Giotto's chapel in Padua and the next San Vitale in Ravenna, followed by a week in Rome, and Pompeii during October break. The perfect way to teach Art History!

That TASIS community included equally passionate teachers who were as committed to their students and teaching as I was. My first lunch in Villa da Nobili I sat next to Max Page and listened to him discuss English literature with Michael Aeschliman. We know where that went! Max and I are celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary in June!

After five eventful years in Lugano, in 1976, Max, our daughter Elizabeth, and I moved to Thorpe, Surrey, to help start the new TASIS in England. We bought a house in Windlesham and had two more children, sons Giles and Felix. Living near London gave all of us as teachers the chance to take students to the theater, the historic sites, and, for me, teaching Art History, many trips to the British Museum, National Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, Tate galleries, and the Courtauld in London: London was our campus!

An annual, much-loved event was the Paris trip. With fellow chaperones historian Perrin Tingley and French teacher Chantal Gordon, we enjoyed a long weekend with a full schedule of visits to major galleries, museums and churches. Both in London and in Paris, students spoke in the galleries on the paintings and sculpture they had studied. They tell me they still remember 'their' painting. Wonderful memories for us all, I hope!

A significant change to my teaching career occurred with the introduction of the Culture and Values humanities course inspired by Michael Aeschliman in 1980. The aim of this course was to teach Western cultural traditions to our senior students. In my course we focused on a chronological study of art, architecture, music, philosophy and literature from the Classical world to the 20th century. Over the years I was happy to have many



Students with teacher Marcia Page in the Mesopotamian section of the Louvre Museum in Paris.

faculty children in the class, including Adrien Aeschliman and Adrian and Sebastian Gonzalez, Mary Jepson, Charlotte Raynor, Owen Smalley, and many others.

My premise for that class was that the deepest beliefs and values of a culture are revealed by the works created by its artists, writers and philosophers. I also encouraged our students to reflect on their own values, compared to those of the many past societies we studied. For example, one assignment was 'How is the TASIS boarding student's life similar and different from a monk living in the order of St. Benedict?' We found quite a lot of similarities, from dress code to a strict daily schedule! We also realized the value of a structured life to achieve our goals of studying and learning.

As more and more international students joined the TASIS community, I realised we needed to extend our cultural reach for my classes to include their beliefs and cultural history as well as our Western one. I was so grateful to TASIS to have the freedom in the syllabus to respond to this exciting new challenge. Sometimes I had over 10 nationalities in one class of fifteen students. A boy from Ukraine and a girl from Russia were in my daily advisory. Two girls from Pakistan and India roomed together on the Paris trip and presented art talks on paintings in the Louvre. The Chinese, Taiwanese and Japanese students in Culture and Values learned about the influences of each other's cultures on their own. Our discussion of 'which of the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers is the most relevant to your culture today?' provoked an animated discussion in a class with seven Chinese and eight



American students. One patriotic Chinese student believed with Hobbes that a society needs a strong leader. Our students were quite open about sharing their culture's beliefs with each other in class.

It was really a gift for me to get to know all these students and to share a year of learning together. My appreciation and understanding of the diverse cultures of our world expanded.

I am sure I learned as much from them as they did from me.

I have a wonderful collection of 'world' art which I received as valued gifts from the students when they left the school: a Muslim prayer rug from Pakistan (in green, my favourite colour, she said she had noticed), a wooden statue of the Hindu god Ganesha from India, a large intricate silk embroidered Chinese wall hanging and a set of Chinese calligraphy brushes, Japanese fans and hanging scrolls, Korean inlay boxes and a Celadon vase, a Taiwanese tea caddy, a Vietnamese stone shrine, Nigerian Yoruba and Igbo tribal wooden carved masks, a Russian silver tea holder, a Russian dolls set, and an especially treasured painted pencil case from my Iranian student.

As I now look at these gifts, I 'see' each of the students. They are all adults now, perhaps with important roles in business and government in their own countries. Watching the news today, we see conflicts between Ukraine and Russia, tension between China, Taiwan, and Japan, threatening words between India and Pakistan, and sanctions on Iran by the USA. Wherever our students are living in these countries and others, my hope is that they will remember their TASIS friendships with fellow students from other cultures and find ways to resolve conflicts by listening to and respecting the ideas of others.

I know this was a hope that Mrs. Fleming held dear... to make life happy, to help others, and to make the world a better place. While not wanting to 'lower the tone' of my message with a cartoon, I agree with Charlie Brown and believe that our TASIS teachers achieved this in the classroom, the dorm, the arts and on the sports field.

Marcia Hessemer Page is originally from York, Pennsylvania, and taught Art History and Senior Humanities at TASIS and TASIS England, 1971-2013. A graduate of Cornell University, magna cum laude, she worked at the Baltimore Museum of Art before coming to TASIS in 1971. In 1972, she married Max P. Page, long-time TASIS and TASIS-England English teacher, and they have three children. She took TASIS students to artistic sites throughout Europe for many years. Since 1986 she has also taught Art History to groups of expat Americans and international women.

Once More on My Adventure Brave and New

Chantal Gordon

As an educator I value the power of communication, cultural understanding, integrity and holding oneself to high standards. These values have been cornerstones of my career and have guided me through what I call my TASIS adventure, which has included campuses in both Lugano and Thorpe.

My arrival at TASIS Lugano in 1981 was the result of an intention to explore my Swiss heritage (my mother is Swiss) while continuing to work with young people, something I had done regularly as I grew up. I did not, however, have a plan to become a life-long educator and learner. What started as an attempt to discover my roots has become the development of a vocation to teach and to learn which has continued for 40 years. During that time, the School has challenged me to take on positions for which I had little to no experience, but to which I have committed myself and which have allowed me to grow and support Mrs. Fleming's vision. I am grateful to have been able to make my contributions to a number of different areas of the school and in return it has shaped the teacher that I have become. I recall that as I packed my bags to travel to Lugano for the first time, my father warned me that if I became a teacher, I would never make much money. What he didn't reveal to me was that I would feel a sense of fulfilment and make precious connections with both colleagues and young people, connections that would last a lifetime.

My first taste of TASIS life was in the summer programs, which have remained a fixture of my life all along. I was hired to work with John and Michèle Watson in the Château des Enfants program, where I took my first steps in teaching and continued to teach swimming, in very broken and elementary Italian. Coupled with this teaching came the adventures of driving the old VW vans in Val Verzasca on very narrow roads, but those adventures taught me the beginnings of taking my classroom to new settings. The years passed and I moved from CDE to TSP and into an administrative role where I have had the chance to help shape the academic program that we offer. In that role I have pushed myself and my teaching colleagues to maintain high standards of teaching to support an academic program which reflects the School's emphasis on beauty and the arts, the ability to communicate in a variety of languages, combined with an appreciation of and a sensitivity to culture and respect for others. I have been blessed, especially in recent years, to be able to work under the guidance of directors whom I respect deeply and with whom I have collaborated to develop a summer program which provides students with very positive summer experiences. I have worked with summer-program teachers to provide a focus on student learning and I believe that teachers should also be learners and that we can always learn from our colleagues. Time and time again, visits to teachers' classrooms have certainly proved that! I usually return to my academic year work full of a special kind of energy and rejuvenation that come from having been part of a very special summer experience. My role with the summer programs continues to evolve, and with it evolves my own professional learning, but I look forward to continuing to have a role in shaping the academic direction of the summer programs.

Alongside other roles, language teaching has been my constant companion during all of my TASIS years, and I find that the partnership between students and teachers to be energising and that the routine of teaching and enjoying that energy is very rewarding. Teaching has been a kind of anchor, as TASIS seems to have decided that throwing me into unfamiliar jobs in which I have no previous experience is a good idea. This first happened in Lugano, when I was asked to be Director of Summer Admissions. I vividly remember an initial meeting where I listened to other members of the admissions team talking about my job with little understanding of any of it. However, supported by a wonderful team of colleagues and armed with a desire to learn as much as I could, we developed an efficient office.

My life evolved and with it came a move to England: I needed a new job. I contacted Lyle Rigg about working for TASIS England and discovered that he had no French teaching job to offer me, but that the School did need a college counsellor! Here we go again, I thought. I responded that I had no college counselling experience, and my memory of his response what that 'yes, I know, but we have done this to you before!'. So off I went for the summer vacation, armed with a few College Counseling books and the knowledge that I had a lot to learn. That fall was quite a challenge, as I felt that many of the parents knew more about the process than I did. I also learned very quickly that this new role involved a great deal of teaching and that it allowed me to develop a different kind of relationship with our students. Guiding and supporting students as they approach an important transition in their lives and developing in them the ability to identify their personal strengths and values is very rewarding. In collaboration with devoted college-counselling colleagues, we developed a strong College-Counselling program which supported applications not only to the USA, but to an ever-increasing number of institutions in the UK, Europe and elsewhere. I was able to continue to teach alongside my college guidance work and felt that my professional life was in a very positive place. Little did I know that TASIS was about to invite me onto yet another learning adventure, but one with which, as I look back, I am proud to have been involved.

This next change of direction happened one day as I was quietly going about my daily college-counselling and teaching routine, only to look up and see Fernando Gonzalez striding in to my office to ask me if I wanted to take on the role of IB Coordinator, as TASIS prepared to offer the IB diploma in the fall of 2005. Taking another deep breath, I read through the job description. I suspect that Fernando knew that I can't really say no to a new challenge, and after a great deal of thought, I decided to go ahead and take on this next role. I have to admit that I was very nervous, as I had no IB experience and my team of teachers were mostly new to the IB. So, after attending IB training in Bratislava, Slovakia, it



Veteran TASIS England teachers and administrators Michelle Bett, Ute Reinikeinen, Lyle Rigg, and Chantal Gordon.

was with a certain amount of trepidation that we welcomed our brave band of 13 students to start year 1 of their IB Diploma. I was lucky that Howard Stickley and I started our IB Coordinator journey together, so that I had someone to lean on as we moved forward. The program at TASIS England grew, the program added new courses and forged a place in the academic program at the school. I know that I made mistakes along the way, but I am a true believer in the fact that one learns from one's mistakes – ask any of my students how many times I have said that in class!

After 8 years in the IB Coordinator role, which was primarily administrative for me, I felt a growing need to be back in the classroom and to have daily interaction with students, which is something that I thrive on and which I missed deeply. It was time for a return to the classroom, and luckily, there was room for me to do just that. I realised that teaching is a real vocation for me, and so I have spent the last 8 years teaching more and working as the Head of our Language Department. Another short foray into college counselling happened along the way, but I am enjoying the time I have to devote to students, to their learning and to my passion for language teaching. As I look back at my TASIS career, I know that I have grown a great deal through the chances I have had to make contributions to the school, and for the adventures I have been able to enjoy along the way!

Chantal Gordon worked at TASIS from 1981-1989 as French teacher, Head of MFL, Director of Summer Admissions, and in the CDE Summer Program, and from 1990 to present in the TSP program. At TASIS England she was Director of College Counseling, IB Coordinator, and from 2013 Head of the Modern Language Department.

An Exercise in Gratitude

Alexandra Heumann Wicki '80



Alexandra with TASIS Board member Berkley Latimer

Mrs. Fleming wrote in the preface to one of the many yearbooks I accumulated over the years: "Your time at TASIS is almost a magic time."

My charmed TASIS journey began at Le Château des Enfants (CDE), when it was still held at Vezia's Villa Negroni, a stately complex built at the turn of the 18th century. I was nine years old. Frolicking around the enchanting old hallways, passageways and formal gardens remains a joyful memory. I still remember the aromatic scent of the neatly trimmed box trees. My last summer at CDE I was cast as Wendy in *Peter Pan*, a role that ignited an enduring passion for the performing arts.

I joined the school, also at Villa Negroni, for sixth grade, just before TASIS moved to Montagnola in its entirety. With the backdrop of the stunning Collina d'Oro campus, the ensuing middle-school years were a time of adolescent orientation, tranquil, yet stimulating and exhilarating.

The first year of high school, I worked at CDE as a junior counselor, a role my mother convinced the program directors to create. A bit of a mascot, I was unpaid but happy and dedicated. I remember carrying a little boy who had never hiked before most of the way up Monte Bré on my back, feeling more like Athena than Atlas.

Back then, the boarding program was dominant at TASIS, with only a few day students, and living with people from vastly different nationalities and cultures was a daily adventure. Not only did I learn expletives in many languages, but I also gained insights into varied customs and mores.

We had a great number of students from the country formerly known as Persia, and whenever a package with pistachios from Kerman arrived in the dorm for one of the girls, it triggered a patriotic celebration everyone was invited to, often after lights out.

One of my favorite dorm memories is when Mrs. Fleming herself executed a room check. My roommates, having tidied the room perfectly before heading to classes, which I could not attend because I was ill, tucked me into my bed military-style, with no wrinkles in the sheets but also no way for me to move. Mrs.Fleming swooped in and did her grand tour while I, unable to move lest I mess up the bed, smiled and nodded enthusiastically to honor the occasion.



Alexandra with long-time TASIS teacher and theater director Robert Wilson

I discovered my hairdressing talents at TASIS. Towards the end of every semester, boys would realize their hair had grown in a way that their parents might deem unbecoming as they returned home for Christmas or summer holidays; they were desperately seeking ways to resolve their tonsorial predicament. So I found myself opening complimentary ad hoc barbershops on staircases and under trees. My first customers probably went home looking a little odd and asymmetrical. The most complicated part of this calling was that female fans of the popular boys would ask me to cut off a lock of hair for them. I could not keep track, so I handed out random locks.

When it came to the academic magic at TASIS, a multitude of instances shaped me. I remember writing a rather existentialist, borderline nihilistic essay for English class, proud of its sophistry and curated cynicism, only to have my English teacher point out that this work did not sound like me and could hardly represent what I truly believed in. It took me a moment to see the trees, but when I did, I experienced a profound moment of self-realization and immense gratitude that someone took the time and care to guide me far beyond syntax and style.

While the teachers who accompanied my journey were all unfailingly judicious and knowledgeable, a great number also stand out because of their exceptional pedagogical talent in inspiring and impacting young minds. From math to metaphysics, my learning roots lie in Montagnola. In more sportive endeavors, although I always fell asleep in yoga class and scored a few own goals in soccer, I did learn rugby and had a blast skiing down the slopes of St. Moritz.

Theatre took up a significant portion of my free time and instilled a wonderful sense of responsibility and discipline. Asking ninth-graders to sit through five-hour rehearsals on a weekend is no small matter, but having them show up prepared and on time, and loving it, is nothing short of a miracle. Experiencing faculty members and even MCF participate in productions further fortified the sense of TASIS community and pride.

Staff and personale also played a significant role for me. I often visited the administration office for a chat in Italian and a hangout, which consisted of my watching the secretary work and answer the ever-ringing phone.

In the time before cellphones, students were typically reached by their families and loved ones through a few analog phones strategically scattered around campus. I sometimes chose to illicitly take and make calls from the Chef's phone in the kitchen. He became a comforting witness to many of my young life's moments, as well as very generously handing me some extra merenda from time to time. I sobbed on his tiled floor after receiving news of my beloved dog's passing.

There used to be a requirement called Campus Duty. Every student was expected to dedicate four hours a month to community service. Mine usually involved weekend phone duty, which meant camping out in the Salon with homework, picking up the phone every time it rang and then running out to find the corresponding student on campus. This task involved lots of sleuthing and dragging people away from their leisurely activities or the library. Some of the accents and names on the other side of the line were challenging, and I occasionally brought the wrong student to the phone.

I also worked in the laundry room, where I learned to fold towels at breakneck speed as the ironing mangle spat them out hot and flat. I enjoyed the friendly gossip and camaraderie. Garments would often be commented on by the workers for their aesthetic value or degree of cruddiness, and I looked forward to my afternoons in that cheerful, hot and fragrant basement.

All these magical realms intersected at TASIS and shaped an inimitable experience.

After my graduation in 1980, I worked several summers at TSP. I drove vans full of excited teenagers, rode a horse back to the stable in skimpy sandals because the student-equestrian had given up, handed out snacks and oversaw dinner tables. I also worked in theatre productions, consoled homesick campers, had dorm duty and did a deplorable job as the occasional office assistant.

Although taking scores of students camping during the summer sessions was always an intense affair, it ranked as one of my favorite activities. The dazzling beauty of Valle Verzasca is unbeatable and, for many of these teens, one of their first rustic experiences. Together we experienced cozy fireside evenings, scary thunderstorms and forgotten canteen provisions.

Since the camping sites were complicated to set up, sometimes summer staff members were asked to stay on-site between camping trips. I remember waking up to sweetly chirping birds and gentle dawn sunrays. On these days, instead of managing sleepy teens clamoring for breakfast, I luxuriated on layers and layers

of surplus sleeping bags like *The Princess and the Pea*. Of course my colleague and I, friends to this day, also had to clean the campsite and shovel new latrine holes, all the while listening to the radio in the van, risking precious battery life.

All of these memories, and many more, informed my decision to enthusiastically join the TASIS Board of Directors in 2005 and the TASIS Foundation Board in 2017. This further journey with TASIS has been just as inspiring. I have had the honor to serve alongside truly extraordinary individuals and witness outstanding headmasters. The TASIS Lugano Board has laughed, cried, debated and celebrated together. Under Lynn's leadership, together with the headmasters, we focus on matters such as strategic plans, campus development, curriculum, community safety and myriad financial considerations.

One of the greatest challenges faced by TASIS in my time is the Corona pandemic. The emergency meeting, one of many, when the Board made the pioneering decision to close the school in order to ensure that all our families could be reunited before foreseeable lockdowns and border closures felt tense and historic. The crisis highlighted the valor and dedication of our phenomenal staff and faculty. So many of them went above and beyond duty to help the school continue to function and flourish, and still do so as we all learn to live with a new reality. Being a board member is essentially an exercise in gratitude.

In another of my many yearbooks, Mrs. Fleming wrote: "You will take away from us [TASIS] the sure knowledge that you are primarily and ultimately a citizen of the moral universe." TASIS provided this fundamental knowledge at the time and still does today. It is the North Star that guides us: beauty and duty.



Alexandra Heumann Wicki, CDE Alumna, TSP Staff Alumna, TASIS Class of 1980, member of the TASIS Board of Directors since 2005 and TASIS Foundation Board since 2017. She is now Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors

A TASIS Initiation: My First Four Years 1983-1987

Bill Eichner



In 1983 Lyle Rigg offered me the opportunity to join TASIS for the dream job of teaching art history to the Postgraduates, and I thank him every day. I really don't think a similar job existed anywhere else, and when I think back upon it, the PG Program was a microcosm of everything TASIS did best. Together with the Dean of the program, Bob Wilson, I led the PGs on In-Program Travel around Europe, and in those days In-Pros were measured in weeks, with the week in Rome, the week in Paris, and the 4-day trips to Venice and Florence. This was in addition to the two weeks in St. Moritz and the weekend trips that PG History teacher Jim Campbell and I offered to Italy whenever possible. It was an amazing teaching experience to be able to spend so much time out of the classroom with students, introducing

them to a subject I was passionate about. Back on campus, we dined together, held the occasional evening seminar, and of course spent time with Mrs. Fleming when she would host us for dinner. The PGs were a joy to teach—I'm still in regular contact with PG '84 and '85 alumni—and I grew tremendously as a teacher in those two years.

The other transformational experience of my early years was observing and earning the trust and confidence of Mrs. Fleming. I met Mrs. Fleming through Mark Aeschliman when we were both involved in the Syracuse University Florence Fellowship program. (Mark was a Florentine Fellow '78, and I '79.) After the Fellowship I remained in Florence to work for another school founder, Horace Gibson, where I started my career in education at the American School in Florence.

Horace knew Mrs. Fleming and was with her at the bar in Beirut in 1962 as one of the founders of ECIS. (Francis Clivaz was also there.) He told me wonderful stories about her power of persuasion, entrepreneurial drive, and commanding personality. Once I joined TASIS, I saw for myself how she brought a certain magic to a simple encounter with a student, how she could inspire at an assembly, and how she could rally support for an idea. How did MCF manage such a large and complex organization, which at the time included campuses in Switzerland, England, Greece, and Cyprus? Surely there was more to it than she famously claimed: red lipstick and a quality she characterized as, well...arbitrary.

I quickly learned that she ran the TASIS Schools with a small and nimble team consisting of her two trusted advisors—Fernando Gonzalez and the Financial Director, Paul Zazzaro—along with the Headmaster of each school. (Lynn and Michael Aeschliman were in the States at this time, for what would be a 12-year hiatus.) MCF was in perpetual motion, either on a plane to one of the schools or on the phone with a member of her team. I was an outside observer of this restless freneticism until the spring of 1986, when I was given a ringside seat to the inner workings of TASIS and MCF's management style, and I haven't left the ring since.

My involvement began with a dinner invitation shrouded in mystery. Paul and Fernando were coming to Nicosia and wanted to see Melissa and me off campus for dinner. Over Greek mege it was explained that TASIS Cyprus would close. The enrollment had been dropping, and the School was dependent on a single market, the Middle East. Coincidentally, Mrs. Fleming had acquired a beautiful property in France and had intended to fill that school with 80 students from an even smaller market, the niche USA junior-year-abroad, French-studies market. Apparently, Karen Ballard and Carrie Cox in the New York office had only managed to find six such American study-abroad students. My assignment was simple: I was to go to the Middle East and recruit 74 boarding students for TASIS France. I was to visit our feeder schools, current parents, and applicants, and deliver the unfortunate news that TASIS Cyprus was closing while presenting the exciting opportunity to be part of the founding class of TASIS France. I was 32 years old, had no admissions experience, had never traveled to the Middle East, and had no idea where TASIS France was. At least this last problem could be solved before my recruitment trip: Fernando and Mrs. Fleming invited us to see the campus over spring vacation.

Melissa and I flew to Paris, picked up a rental car, and made our way to La Ferte Bernard. Once along the autoroute, about an hour outside Paris, we pulled off at a rest area to read the map (remember maps?). Lo and behold, MCF's white Volvo had also pulled over at the same rest stop, not to consult a map but to break out her famous drinking kit. Fernando tapped on our window and offered us tall, ice-filled refreshments mixed by MCF. If I had to choose one moment that marked my transition from TASIS teacher to TASIS administrator, it was with the offer of this

particular drink. I became a member of the TASIS France start-up team and was to cover a wide range of responsibilities in the year ahead: teacher, advisor, college counselor, ski week and academic-travel coordinator, weekend trips and cultural-activities coordinator, duty administrator, admissions recruiter, and governing-board member. But first I needed to find the 74 students.

The only marketing tool at this point was a small flyer describing the French year-abroad program, modeled loosely on the PG curriculum, with one prominent photo of the fairy-tale Château Beauchamps on the cover. I therefore shot photos and took notes as MCF explained her vision and showed off the property, much of which was still in ruins. The property was impressive, with an elegant château for the girls and a rustic, soon-to-be-beautifully-restored *dependance* for the boys. A week later, armed with my stack of snapshots, I was traveling through the Middle East to announce the opening of TASIS France. Such was Mrs. Fleming's reputation that there was considerable interest in her new program, and I managed to collect the 74 enrollments needed to fill the school and give it a fighting chance. Marketing for all the TASIS Schools was handled out of Thorpe, England, at this time by Fernando and Mary Hart, and they schooled me well in this field. Another decade would pass before I took responsibility for Lugano admissions, but after this first trip to the Middle East, Fernando and Mary had me traveling annually to Saudi Arabia, Japan, and the USA for student recruitment.

TASIS France is often remembered as one of MCF's follies. I consider it a good idea at the wrong time, and while we did not succeed in building a lasting school, we did provide our full house of 80 students with a special and truly TASIS experience. Always philosophical about her successes and failures, Mrs. Fleming could salvage the best of any situation with her forward-looking, positive attitude. The one and only TASIS France Class of '87 went on to university, and the underclassmen found places at TASIS England or Switzerland. Another very special group of alumni I remain in contact with are those I taught at three different TASIS Schools, first in Cyprus, then in France, and finally in Lugano, where a small crew accompanied me and graduated in '88.

Mrs. Fleming spent the majority of her time in France that year and was immersed in the sort of work she loved: the creation of a new school. For me, the year in France was an opportunity to learn from MCF, as well as from Fernando and Paul, and to gain a deeper understanding of school administration. There was no aspect of school operations I wasn't involved in that year, including the decision to discontinue the program. When I returned to the Middle East for my second recruiting trip, it was clear that the boutique program in France could not compete with England or Switzerland. The broader market was changing as well, and the US office reported less interest in language and year-abroad programs. Only a few years later, we would discontinue the PG Program in Lugano. Asia and South America were to become our next growth markets.

With the closing of France, Mrs. Fleming installed me as Academic Dean in Lugano, another dream job, and the beginning of yet another chapter. But that's a story for another day. I now know that the best years of TASIS, and my involvement, still lay ahead. MCF indeed had the recipe for starting a school—recently followed to the letter in Portugal—and there was nothing that brought her more fulfillment than the creation and promise of a new program. But she left it to the next generation to build upon her legacy and reach for the ever-higher standards that today keep TASIS competitive with the very best schools in a crowded market.

Lynn often speaks of the pillars of TASIS: those faculty and administrators, Master Teachers and Headmasters, who have devoted their skills and talents to strengthening the institution. Mrs. Fleming's children Lynn and Tom are the first pillars in this long colonnade. The alphabetical triumvirate of MCF, FLG, PAZ has been replaced by the Foundation, which under the direction of Tom Fleming has retained its entrepreneurial spirit while ensuring the perpetuity of the Schools. Instead of starting new schools, Lynn starts new buildings! Under her direction, the TASIS campus has grown to include an Elementary School and evolved from a few historical villas in a beautiful location to what is becoming the most outstanding campus in Switzerland.

It is fitting that we celebrate Fernando's 50th year with TASIS with this collection of essays and vignettes. There are enough pillars in this volume to encircle a piazza worthy of Bernini. All who have contributed have been inspired and prepared by Mrs. Fleming, and we know she would look down with pride at all that has been accomplished.

Bill grew up in the midwest United States, graduating from high school in Cincinnati. He earned a BFA in Art History from Ohio University in 1976, and during his senior year spent a semester in Florence. He worked at the Cincinnati Art Museum for one year before attending graduate school at Syracuse University. After completing his MA in Art History in 1979, with the Florence Fellowship, he was a teacher and administrator at the American School of Florence, 1980-1983. He joined TASIS in 1983 to teach Art History in the PG Program, spent the 1985-1986 school year at TASIS Cyprus as College Counselor, 1986-1987 spent at TASIS France, where he held a variety of positions, returning to TASIS in Lugano in 1987 as Academic Dean. During the decade that he served as Academic Dean he earned an MA in Teaching and Curriculum at Michigan State University over the course of four summers. Bill became the Director of Admissions in 1997, and has served as Director of Institutional Advancement since 2017.

Learning in a Culture of Freedom

David Jepson

TASIS has forged an international reputation as a family of learning communities whose students demonstrate outstanding educational outcomes, measured not only by the quantity of good university admissions results but also by the quality of the graduates' contributions to society in creative, service, and leadership roles throughout the world. The focus on learning at TASIS has rightly been on the students, who come to Montagnola or Thorpe or Sintra from all over the globe. During the last decade or so, more and more attention has been paid to developing the curricula, improving standardised test scores, and using technology to help each student to succeed.

Yet learning is not limited to young people. Good teachers learn, too, all the time. Not only do they continue to master the content of their subject areas but they also learn more about pedagogy every day. They learn to make connections with individuals, to help the struggling, motivate the lazy, and stretch the high-achievers. They learn to differentiate. In time, they learn to integrate their content and pedagogical knowledge so that their understanding of the content is influenced by how it is best communicated to learners. Teachers' learning is pretty much a full-time job.

Yet the TASIS *Paideia* suggests something more about teachers' learning: "TASIS enjoys a culture that encourages and rewards initiative and creativity.... In addition, this culture demands an acceptance of risk, flexibility, patience, a positive attitude, and perseverance." Part of the atmosphere of TASIS has always been an air of **freedom**, in which faculty members are given the chance to try out new ideas, and thereby to grow and learn in new ways. This "culture of freedom" has allowed many TASIS teachers to create and sponsor new courses, sports offerings, clubs, service programs, and academic excursions all over Europe.

It's worth bearing in mind that freedom means *freedom to fail* as well as to succeed. Many faculty endeavours over the years didn't last very long or never really got off the ground. Nevertheless, TASIS has remained quite encouraging of faculty attempts to try new things, due not only to Mrs Fleming's "entrepreneurial style," as the *Paideia* puts it, but also (as I see it) to her sense of confidence and to her complete lack of fear. Building on that solid foundation, some of the schools' enlightened headmasters, Lyle Rigg foremost among them, fostered an environment of trust in which teachers could try out their fledgling ideas, some of which took wing.

Below is a description of three new courses that I helped to introduce.

Man and His Measure

In the early 1980s, I began discussions with Bob Ringer, the TASIS England Theatre Director, about a new senior Humanities course. The original Humanities course at the school, called *Civilization* after the BBC TV series by Kenneth Clark, had started in the 1979-80 school year. This course was first initiated by Michael Aeschliman, now on the TASIS Foundation Board, and it had become one of the school's graduation requirements. *Civilization* integrated art with history and ethics, and it was later modified somewhat and given a new title, *Culture & Values*. For a long time, *Culture & Values* was taught by Marcia Page, and its descendant still exists as a graduation requirement at the school.

Meanwhile, Bob and I were exploring the possibility of a course that integrated literature, philosophy, and ethics in a similar way. The course, *Man and His Measure*, was launched in 1983 and became an alternative to *Civilization/Culture & Values* for seniors. Inspired by the "Great Books" curricula at Columbia University and the University of Chicago, the course included works by such writers and thinkers as Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Shakespeare, Kant, Blake, Marx, Thoreau, Conrad, A. Huxley, and Solzhenitsyn. Classical and thought-provoking movies such as *A Man for All Seasons* and *Judgment at Nuremburg* supplemented the readings. For many years the course was taught by Karl Christiansen, a veteran of TASIS Hellenic and TASIS France. A few years ago, the course was folded along with *Culture & Values* into a single course, called *Senior Humanities*.

In developing *Man and His Measure*, we focussed mostly on the interdisciplinary content, not the teaching methods. In both Humanities courses, we used slide shows and movies and conducted round-table discussions, debates, and student presentations, but in general, the pedagogy was quite traditional. This seemed suitable for 17 and 18-year-old students who were learning to reflect on how past wisdom and current knowledge might affect their actions. But what would be the best teaching methods to use with younger students learning something really difficult, like Latin?

Latina Vivit

In 1994, there were four students enrolled in Latin at TASIS England. By the end of the decade, there were 40, and numbers stayed like that through the early years of the new millennium. The reason for that 1000% increase was simple: a new course, and a new way of learning Latin.

Latina Vivit ("Latin lives"), the new course at TASIS England, was a product of a collaboration between me and the remarkable educator Anne Ludlow (full disclosure: we were married at the time). Anne created the instructional materials, assessments, and

supplementary materials, while I programmed everything into a computer application. The course was structured like a computer game, with immediate feedback along with clear progress markers toward a goal, not to mention a variety of sounds, graphics, and video. The students sitting at their computers would progress at their own pace through the course, and we monitored the quality of the learning by administering the annual National Latin Exam (NLE), a standardised, objective test from the American Classical League. We were always delighted at the strong correlation between the students' NLE results and their progress through the course.

We found that the playful aspects of *Latina Vivit* boosted the motivation of these young Latin learners, usually aged 13-15. Many students were so intent on their learning that we often had to shoo the students out of the classroom when the class period finished! Another discovery was that the teacher, no longer the focus of the class, could move about the room and become a personal coach to each student. The beneficial consequences of this daily personal interaction cascaded as the teacher came to know each student's strengths and weaknesses directly.

The course really became a model for how content and pedagogy could merge in a mutually supportive way. We probably should have sold the course to Microsoft for a few billion dollars; instead, life happened. By 2005, Anne had moved on from teaching, and I had become more and more absorbed in a TASIS England Summer School course.

ShakespeareXperience

I had taught a few different courses in the TASIS England Summer School over the years and was even the Summer Program Director in 1983. In the late '90s, I became the teacher of *Shakespeare and British History*, a course that had been a staple in the Summer School for a number of years. As I prepared for the course every year, I tended to choose plays to read that we could also watch onstage at Shakespeare's Globe, other London theatres, and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Trips to Windsor, Hampton Court, and castles further afield complemented our study of British history. By 2005, I had been co-teaching the course with Karl Christiansen for a few years, enrolment was good, and the students seemed to love it. But that was *Shakespeare and British History's* last year, because at the 2005 Summer School's closing banquet, we decided to kill it.

For some time, I had sensed that the course was missing something important. Of course, it was wonderful to study Shakespeare's poetry closely, to attend terrific performances at the Globe and at Stratford, to learn something of Medieval and Tudor English history, and to visit picturesque historical sites. But really, Shakespeare's words were meant to be spoken, not read silently; they were intended to express meaning through action. I became convinced that a better version of this course would include a performance dimension. And, as it happened, we had the right talent and energy on the Summer School faculty to make this a reality.



David Jepson and Lyle Rigg

During the years that I was teaching *Shakespeare and British History* in the Summer School, Kay Hamblin was teaching *Ensemble Theatre*, and Nancy Chism was teaching *Theatre in London*. Kay is a legendary former Theatre Director at TASIS Switzerland, and Nancy had been involved in the TASIS England Summer School for many years. At that final banquet in 2005, we began sketching ideas on a napkin (really!) that would signal the end of what we had become comfortable with and the beginning of something genuinely new.

The *ShakespeareXperience* course, introduced in the 2006 TASIS England Summer School, was something that probably couldn't have existed anywhere except TASIS, due to the talent and energy of the teachers, the support of the administration (especially Fernando Gonzalez and David West), and the freedom to "imagine better" that was part of the culture. Students from all over the world, many of whom had little or no exposure to Shakespeare or acting before, came to Thorpe to read and study several Shakespeare plays; watch productions onstage in London and Stratford; visit historical sites related to Shakespeare; and perform a full Shakespeare play in public. All within four weeks!

Kay and Nancy did most of the directing; Karl and I did most of the classroom teaching; but we all collaborated on everything. By the end of the first week, students were auditioning for parts. In the second week, while students were learning their lines and studying their characters, they would be given expert instruction in onstage fighting (including sword fighting) and dancing. In the third week, we would go to Stratford to watch Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) plays, visit the Shakespearean sites, and rehearse outdoors in the park next to the Avon River. In the final week, we would get our costumes, which we rented from the RSC; enjoy our traditional pancakes-and-mustard breakfast (see *As You Like It*, Act 1, Scene 2); attempt a dress rehearsal, where everything always seemed to go wrong; and then give

the performances. The first night of the show was at the TASIS England Fleming Theatre for the other Summer School students, and the next morning, we would head into London to give a public performance at the Globe Cockpit Theatre (one of Shakespeare's Globe's rehearsal theatres) or, beginning in 2009, at the nearby Southwark Cathedral (Shakespeare's parish church when he lived in the area and London's oldest Gothic cathedral).

ShakespeareXperience lasted for eight years, during which time we performed these plays:

2006: Twelfth Night2007: As You Like It

• 2008: A Midsummer Night's Dream

• 2009: The Tempest

• 2010: Much Ado About Nothing

• 2011: Romeo and Juliet

• 2012: A Comedy of Errors

• 2013: Love's Labours Lost

This course was an unforgettable experience, both for the students and the teachers. The performances at the TASIS theatre and in London went extremely well, every time. Several students returned summer after summer throughout their high school years. Technology played almost no part in the pedagogy, which focussed instead on "embodied learning," bringing together memorizing, understanding, speaking, movement, and teamwork. For those eight years, there was really nothing like *ShakespeareXperience*.

It is said that we never forget our favourite teachers, and that thought can be consoling during the long hours that teachers devote to their craft and to their students. But what is the real purpose of teachers' improving their content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical-content-knowledge, and of teachers' using this knowledge to design better learning experiences in new courses? The goal of all this is surely to transform students' lives through the power of learning. All the rest "shall dissolve / And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, / Leave not a rack behind" (*The Tempest*, Act 4, Scene 1). The courses may be finished and the teachers retired, but learning and the love of learning, we firmly believe, will not fade away.

David Jepson started his career at TASIS England in 1979 as an English and Journalism teacher. From 1983-89, he served as Academic Dean. After a three-year break to earn a Master's degree and teach at a boarding school in New York, David returned to TASIS England as Assistant Director of Development in 1992. In 1998, he assumed the role of Director of IT. He took a two-year break to teach at a day school in San Francisco in 2007 and then came back in 2009 once again, this time as Head of Upper School. He became Director of Technology and Learning in 2013, and since 2015 he has held the post of Director of Studies.

Constants and Variables: Two TASIS Noblemen

Michael D. Aeschliman

TASIS has always been an exciting place, and in its early years under Mrs. Fleming perhaps something of a three-ring circus, with lots of variables and comparatively few constants. The original pioneer-founder herself, MCF used to ask teachers in a talk at the faculty banquet at the outset of each year, "Will you be a TASIS person?" She probably meant in those early days whether the individual teachers would have the adaptability, energy, and multitude of skills and competencies necessary to thrive at TASIS and serve the School's mission – or develop them. Among the challenges in those days and since were the number of variables in the dynamic life of the School: different languages, different nationalities, different curricula, different academic-year and summer programs, and different talents necessary for teaching, coaching, tour-guiding, residential life, extra-curricular activities, administrative responsibilities.

Some people burned out at TASIS, and departed, but others thrived and stayed, and among the longest-serving "TASIS people" have been **Bill Eichner** and **David Jepson**, both of whom have been in recent years promoted to important new positions, Bill as Director of Institutional Advancement at TASIS and David as Director of Studies for both TASIS and TASIS England. Both men have extensive experience in TASIS schools, going back in each case a third of a century. Both worked closely with longtime Headmaster Lyle Rigg for decades; indeed, both Lyle and David started their TASIS careers at TASIS England in 1979, and Lyle hired Bill in 1983.

Bill Eichner was educated at Ohio University and Syracuse University, including the Florence Fellowship at the Syracuse University Program in Florence, where he did an M.A. in Art History. He also completed an M.A. in Teaching and Curriculum with Michigan State University. He started out at the American School of Florence, and subsequently he and his wife Melissa have served in various capacities at TASIS schools in Cyprus and France as well as Montagnola: Bill taught Art History, served with Melissa in residence, was Academic Dean for a decade and subsequently Director of Admissions for many years, becoming not only a professional collaborator with Mrs. Fleming and her daughter Lynn Fleming Aeschliman but also a close personal friend and adviser. Having recruited Emily McKee to work with him in Admissions, Bill has been gratified at her and her husband's contribution to TASIS, and Emily has taken on Bill's

old title as Director of Admissions and is doing a most competent job. Bill's new post as "Director of Institutional Advancement" gives formal recognition to the fact that for many years he and his wife Melissa have been increasingly important "constants" in the whirling TASIS world of exciting but sometimes disconcerting variables, innovations, growth, and change. Chairman of the Board Lynn Aeschliman felt the need for Bill's indispensable role at TASIS to be recognized by the School community, students, parents, and alumni. As Director of Admissions Bill presided over an enormous increase in the enrollment of the School, including the success of the elementary school and the accompanying growth of the day-student population. Bill's and Melissa's son James '07 is a TASIS alumnus.

David Jepson served most of his TASIS career at TASIS England, to which he has returned now as Director of Studies for both schools, resident there but visiting Montagnola on a regular basis. He spent the last two years in the USA nursing his parents, both of whom have recently died. David was educated at Wheaton College (Illinois), the University of London, Boston College, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and has taught English, Latin, philosophy, and computer programming in both schools. He was one of the key figures on the TASIS England faculty and staff, serving as Academic Dean and Head of the Upper School as well as chief publications writer for both TASIS schools and Director, with TASIS veteran theater director Kay Hamblin, of the "ShakespeareXperience" summer program at TASIS England. David returned to TASIS England twice from high-ranking administrative positions at schools in the US, in upstate New York and in San Francisco, proving himself to be a true "TASIS person." Recruited anew by Interim Headmaster and old friend and colleague Lyle Rigg to help him in his recent two-year tenure as TASIS Headmaster, 2015-2017, David has helped focus and coordinate the School's academic efforts, also serving as both a senior colleague and model for younger TASIS administrators and teachers. Over the years, David's regular written essays on educational issues for faculty have given guidance and inspiration, as well as knowledge of the TASIS aims and ethos that he has done so much to make realities. Two of David's children attended TASIS England, both going on to study at Harvard after graduation. [Visit www.tasis.ch/Jepson to read his perceptive and eloquent reflections on education and TASIS – ed.]

TASIS Board Chairman Lynn Aeschliman has felt increasingly the need to insure that the impetus, trajectory, and momentum of the TASIS approach to education, developed also by the unique personalities, styles, and contributions of the people who have most sympathized and helped to shape it with their unique contributions, will not be lost. The excitement of liberty and innovation, the newness of the world to every new student and teacher, and to every new generation, is part



David Jepson and Bill Eichner

of the beauty of the world, perhaps especially of the world of TASIS. But an educational institution also needs steady direction, ballast for the long sail in shifting seas, and clear-eyed, far-seeing officers and educators who know the longer-term values and virtues that good schools should serve: constants, not just variables. Mrs. Fleming liked to quote the saying, "Times change; values don't," and along with their many competent colleagues of dedicated goodwill, Bill Eichner and David Jepson have helped to assure that the TASIS schools survive and prosper as instruments of the good and the true.

(Adapted from **TASIS Today**, Fall 2017)

M.D. Aeschliman, Ph.D. (Columbia), is a member of the TASIS Foundation Board and a writer. He has been associated with TASIS since 1971.

Personal Admissions

Mary Hart Danby

My experience at TASIS was one which was overwhelmingly associated with people, marvelling at the personal qualities and talents of individuals at all levels, and the way teachers, students, administrators and support staff from all kinds of backgrounds could meld together, build relationships, create a learning community, live their lives under one 'boarding' roof, and make it feel like 'family'. Life at TASIS is intense, can be all-consuming, incestuous even (not literally), and friendships forged last a lifetime. For many students, the TASIS community was a home-away-from-home.

Mrs. Fleming often asserted in her annual opening addresses to her team that TASIS's greatest asset was its people. The beauty was that one was given a job and left to get on with it, with warm praise delivered on completion. People remember not what is said about one, but how one is made to *feel*. And the culture of TASIS was always to make one feel welcomed, valued, and included, often with little regard for hierarchy.

Thus, as an institution, TASIS benefited from considerable loyalty from administrators and support staff alike. Consider those top men and women who left the School for a period, only to return time and time again. Lyle Rigg, Peter Stevens, DeHaven Fleming, Chris Frost, and David Jepson come to mind. Even Fernando left for a year to complete his Harvard studies. 'Promotion from within' was also a highly-effective retention strategy adopted by the Flemings and Aeschlimans in the absence of a formal personnel function. Consider the small team of ex-TASIS (Lugano) administrators who took up the gauntlet to get TASIS England on its feet in 1976, and subsequently others were the advance guard to get TASIS Hellenic, TASIS Cyprus, TASIS France, and the summer programs in Salamanca and France underway in the style of the 'mother school'. Everyone had a vested sense of those projects being 'their babies' in part.

It was on assignment in the TASIS office in Manhattan in 1974 that I first met Lynn and Michael, before their marriage. It was through their introduction to Betsy Bigelow (whom Mrs. Fleming often referred to as her honorary third daughter) that I found 'lodgings' in a triplex on Park Avenue and 98th street, home to a financier (Wall Street) and an opera singer (NY Met) and their three children, in exchange for the occasional baby-sitting. They had a basketball court on the roof. The TASIS office was on East 69th and 3rd, in a brownstone, and Gai Fleming, Mrs. Fleming's eldest daughter, helped part-time. We had a telex machine – one had to type live to transmit messages back to Lugano – and the mail had to be delivered to the post office in person at the end of the day. A real 'Girl Friday' of a job – good experience for multi-tasking! The Flemings had taken this 25-year-old from Yorkshire under their wing.

I remember when TASIS England came into being in 1976. Mrs. Fleming was 'choosing' between a central London location and the leafy glades of Surrey. A small nucleus of administrators met at both sites in the fall of 1975, and by the following February, Headmaster Ken Blessing and his wife, Sue, were installed in Shepherd's Cottage in Thorpe. I lived on the ground floor of Pax House, and Mrs. Fleming's abode was Tudor House. Lynn was project manager extraordinaire, converting the old nunnery into a boarding school ready for the 1976-77 school year. We worked all hours. It took me two months to venture forth into nearby Virginia Water. I was 28. A family of 4 who were interviewed by Mrs. Fleming personally, the Altmanns, and two children whom Ken was tutoring, the Bradys, were the first families to enrol. Preparations for the opening of school were so up-to-the-wire that we all, Headmaster and Director of Admissions alike, ended up making beds ourselves the night before the students arrived. But we made it! We always made it. We excelled in crisis management. Ken had recruited a good team of new faculty, but they were led by a core team from Lugano: Ken as Head, Bob Bruno as Assistant Head, Karen Ballard as Sports Director, Max and Marcia Page leading the English and Art History departments, respectively, and me as Director of Admissions. Others would follow in the due passage of time. We were re-inventing the wheel; these were exciting challenges, heady times, and the outcome was a starting enrolment which exceeded all expectations.

Fernando Gonzalez was – and still is – an *indefatigable* human being. *Creativity* is his middle name. And he has the ability to inspire others in his team to do his bidding. He toiled summer after summer to restore the hamlet in the Ardèche known as Les Tapies, which is now home to an *Art and Architecture* summer program. He spotted the opportunity to expand not only into Puerto Rico and create a new school in the centre of a new development, but more recently to research, propose, and instigate the establishment of TASIS Portugal. Lateral thinking 'outside the box' and ambition are his hallmarks. 'No' is not in his vocabulary when he is a man on a mission. Where there is a will there is a way. He learned much from his boss, our own legendary Mrs. Fleming.

I salute you, Fernando, on your loyalty and dedication to the TASIS Schools. You are a rolling stone which gathers no moss; long may your TASIS journey continue.



Mary Danby (née Hart) joined TASIS in 1973, training as Admissions Secretary in Lugano and Florence, and then working in the New York office and in Lugano. In 1976 she became Director of Admissions at TASIS England, in 1980 Associate Director of Development and in 1990 Director of Marketing for TASIS Schools (Switzerland, England, Greece, Cyprus, France). From 2000 until her retirement in 2012 Mary was Director of Marketing at TASIS England.

Mrs. Fleming's Legacy: Beauty and Duty

Nilda Lucchini

When I first joined TASIS in 1986, I immediately realized that TASIS was not just an ordinary school: TASIS was something more than that. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Mrs. Fleming, its beautiful surroundings and its spirit of warm hospitality made it an outstanding school.

I am one of those lucky people who had the opportunity to know Mrs. Fleming and to learn about her deep appreciation of beauty and the value she placed on hard work in pursuit of a worthy goal. She strongly believed that beauty can defeat ugliness, and that is no doubt the reason why she insisted that her schools and programs not only be located in beautiful settings but that the cultivation and appreciation of beauty be part of a TASIS education. At the same time, Mrs. Fleming was determined that everyone at the School--faculty, staff, and students--commit themselves completely to accomplishing the goals that were set out for them. I know from personal experience that to live and work--as demanding as that work was--in a place of beauty--both natural and architectural--is deeply rewarding; indeed, it is a privilege.

Although working at TASIS was a privilege for me, it was never an easy task. Indeed, to work there was not just to have a job, but to follow a vocation. Enthusiasm, energy, and flexibility were a must when it came to getting things done.

At TASIS, things often have to happen right away, and sometimes with daunting deadlines. Don't ask me why or how, but I have seen first-hand that at TASIS certain things seem to come about as if by magic. Here is a typical example: at the end of every academic year, the Palestra is transformed into a vast, elegant, and festively decorated dining room for the Senior Banquet, and the following morning, in a matter of hours, that same space is miraculously transformed yet again for Graduation. It all seems to happen by itself, but behind the scenes, of course, there are people feverishly at work. Such is the connection between Beauty and Duty at TASIS.

During all my years working at TASIS, as teacher, advisor, Modern Language Chair, Day Student Dean, Administrator, Associate Academic Dean, and Accreditation Coordinator, it was my pleasure to help students, parents, and colleagues to engage with the beauty that TASIS offered to all and to understand the degree to which duty played a vital part in the daily life of the school.

In the early years in particular, I appreciated the dedication that teachers, administrators, staff, and everyone in the community put into continuously improving the school. Everyone was committed to offering the best education possible to the students, an

education which not only involved academics, but also encompassed the pursuit of sports, the arts, and languages; the celebration of such memorable events as International Week; and participation in assemblies, advisory meetings, family-style dinners, weekend travel, academic travel, and many more. Students admired and respected teachers for the different roles they performed. Sometimes, for example, a math teacher was also the basketball coach as well as a dorm parent or study-hall supervisor. Such versatility on the part of the faculty, along with their genuinely enjoying working with young people and wanting to help them to succeed, played an important role in creating that family atmosphere which so many TASIS graduates look back on with fondness.

For me, TASIS was not only a school–it was not only about academic excellence, it was something more. We worked to make TASIS The Best School Possible. We followed Mrs. Fleming's dream.



Nilda Lucchini joined TASIS in 1986. During her 35 years at the School she worked as a Spanish teacher, Advisor, Chair of Modern Languages, Day-Student Dean, Accreditation Coordinator, and Associate Academic Dean. Long married to a Ticinese, she retired in 2021 and was honored by a volume of tributes from TASIS colleagues.

"Aimer la beauté, c'est voir la lumière" *

Marie-Josée Breton

Beauty calms and provides comfort, hope, inspiration, and light. Beauty is necessary for all of us, in all aspects of our lives. Beauty resonates, particularly with those of us who know TASIS.

Mrs. Fleming made a deliberate decision to create communities where beauty is fundamental to existence. From the natural environment to the aesthetics of buildings, from the emphasis on the arts to practicing loving-kindness, beauty on our campuses echoes in many ways each day.

In my three decades with TASIS I've seen how beauty affects our students, teachers, and wider community. The ambience of the School creates an environment for improving, learning, and stretching, as an individual and as groups. This is particularly impactful for our students. Beauty calms and creates a safe space for students to explore their inner souls and minds. They learn what they are drawn to and what is challenging for them while cradled in an atmosphere that is nurturing and rewards creativity, consideration, and understanding.

This understanding also extends to cultures. Mrs. Fleming's pioneering travel programs focus on experiential learning, perhaps the most important way to learn about the world. Students may forget who taught them 8th grade math but they will often remember the trips they took with TASIS and the customs of their roommate from halfway across the world. The beauty of experience is critical in the vision of our Founder.

As educators, we are privileged to inspire students to embrace the beauty of life, and this means accepting the variations, too. We are there when things go right, but we're also there when things go wrong, guiding them through the challenging times and giving them space to find their own paths. Our goal is to cultivate adults who hold beauty as one of the highest ideals while knowing that the concept isn't limited to what is in a mirror; rather, it is also an attitude, what is in a heart, in a soul.

The noble virtues TASIS aims to instill each day—kindness, care, tolerance, integrity, service, commitment, perseverance, appreciation—lead to creating beautiful minds. Knowledge of languages promotes empathy for others and an appreciation of the importance of cultures unlike one's own. An appreciation of the arts extends throughout the lives of our students. The warmth that comes from our service program transforms our students to become more considerate and loving human beings. TASIS students leave with a complex understanding of what makes the

world beautiful, which they then take into the world, creating their own microcosms of beauty in everything they go on to do. It is their duty, and ours, to create a world where beauty matters.

But perhaps most important, and most beautiful, are the connections that are made through TASIS. The reach of our global community is mighty, and we can see the resonance of Mrs. Fleming's vision in everyone who has spent time at one of her schools. We pursue the true, the good, and the beautiful. The beautiful sparks that are lit at TASIS impact the world.

Marie-Josée Breton joined TASIS in 1992 as Language teacher and Summer Program Counselor (CDE & MSP), and then Activities and Travel Director (MSP) until 2007. From 2008-2013 she served as Summer Program Director in Château d'Oex, and from 2008-present as Head of Middle School and Head of Student Affairs.

* Victor Hugo, Les Misérables



M.J. holding Mrs. Fleming on her lap with Betsy behind.

What Makes TASIS Distinctive and Valuable as an Institution?

Yvonne Procyk

In January 1994 I set foot on the TASIS campus for the first time and it made an immediate impression. By the time my interview concluded and I had been made warmly welcome by every person I encountered, I knew that I wanted that job!

TASIS was a wonderful discovery for me, and nothing like the places I had worked before. I immediately related to the student community, many of whom had multiple nationalities and passports. The School's name itself indicates a dual identity, being both American *and* Swiss. In the early days, it was clear to me that we were doing a good job of being American, and in recent times I feel that we have done a better job of being Swiss as well. Symbolically, the Swiss flag has joined the American flag in the center of campus.

This varied and international community grew out of the charismatic personality and farsighted vision of the Founder of TASIS: Mrs. Fleming's entrepreneurial character is a great example for us all. Just stop and think about an American woman opening a school in 1956 - in Switzerland, where women only achieved the right to vote fifteen years later in 1971! She was a long way from the familiarity of home and from the rights accorded by citizenship, but none of this stopped her from following her conviction that there was a place for an American school in the European educational landscape of the time, a school which would provide an opportunity for young Americans to discover a world literally foreign to them, outside their past experience. In the coming decades, as enrollment grew larger and the world grew smaller through more regular travel, her vision evolved to embrace growing internationalism with the school becoming "a microcosm of what the world could and should be." These days, TASIS provides a home-awayfrom-home for around 60 nationalities, creating a family atmosphere and secure environment where Russians and Ukrainians, Jews and Arabs, Armenians and Turks, to cite just a few examples, can live together and get to know each other as equals, with the same struggles and joys shared and recognized by teenagers around the world, perhaps leading to a realization that the stridently nationalistic movements back home may be politically motivated and not telling the full story. It is of vital importance that the world has such a school for life!

TASIS has another very distinctive and, yes, valuable characteristic, which might seem banal at first mention, and that is the importance given to beauty in all its aspects. I sometimes wonder: what image do people form in their mind's eye when I tell them I work in a school? Most likely a rectangular, box-like structure, certainly not the TASIS campus with its classically-styled buildings beautiful landscaping, the presence of artworks in dorms and flowers in salons and on dinner tables. Although Mrs. Fleming loved beauty in its most traditional form and claimed she would probably even decorate a phone booth if she were in it for more than ten minutes, more importantly, she also believed in its broader, inspirational value: the way beauty lifts the soul and lifts aspirations, encouraging students and adults alike to take extra care, to strive toward excellence and nobility of purpose. What an astute action, to set the bar high in this way by surrounding herself and the whole community with beauty!



TASIS is special; its compelling character comes directly from its Founder's vision and manifests itself in an international community, a family really, steeped in beauty. TASIS alumni remark on this again and again, especially when returning to campus, and appreciate anew the privilege they had as teenagers growing up in such a rare environment. A privilege that I share and acknowledge wholeheartedly.

Yvonne Procyk grew up in the UK in a Polish-Dutch family, and made the move to Switzerland in 1979 to try it "for a couple of years." 43 years later, after wrapping up her working life, she is about to move to Vienna to sample the many delights that glorious city has to offer. Yvonne has called Lugano and TASIS home since 1990 and 1994 respectively. At TASIS she was Headmaster's Assistant for close to ten years." She subsequently worked coordinating events and publications, and also assisted Lynn Fleming Aeschliman for a year in 2005-06. After living in the US for two years to work with Foundation Board member David Hicks, she has headed the Alumni and Development department since her return to TASIS in 2008.

Preparing Young People for Their Future

Dennis Mellang

TASIS is what education should be, it occurred to me. It occurred to me when I was with my fifth-grade class examining life in tidal pools on the Devon coast during our annual five-day spring trip for environmental studies. I thought of it when I was sitting with my students in front of a Leonardo or a Michelangelo or a Titian listening to a docent at the National Gallery teach us about Renaissance art. I thought of it as my students were learning to extract DNA in their lessons with the specialist science teacher. It occurred to me when I was with my boarding students during the week of the annual school International Festival. These are but a few of the many instances when this occurred to me in my time teaching and living at TASIS.

During my initial interview with Lyle Rigg I knew that TASIS was the school for me. Located in a place of beauty and culture, with buildings of tradition and architectural significance, welcoming students and families and teachers from tens of countries, it seemed the ideal setting in which to teach. The curriculum, based on a Western Civilisation education and with a world view, coincided with my idea of what children need to learn to become world citizens as well as representatives and fans of their own countries. During my years at TASIS I was fortunate to be able to teach and live in that setting, and I was encouraged to be able to see daily, in my classroom and in my boarding students, the fruits of the philosophy and teaching at the school.

It was Mrs. Fleming's vision of education that inspired her to found TASIS, with such a setting and philosophy and population. Under her inspiration and determination, as well as with Fernando Gonzalez's carrying out her vision in the development of the campus and the school, I was able to see daily that I was doing something important, beyond the routines of teaching and dormitory work. We were helping to create responsible people who would know themselves and their world, citizens for the future. Always important, contemporary events show that this vision, and bringing it to realization, are ever more vital. TASIS prepares young people for their futures with an awareness of the world and with learning about themselves and their places in it, so that they will be able to participate effectively, for themselves and for their fellow citizens, in our increasingly close world.

Not every school or community is fortunate enough to have the setting or the resources of TASIS, nor the vision with which it was founded. Every school, however, would be able to work and teach with a similar inspiration of mission and goals, using its own environment and people and families. The TASIS community has been able to do that, and I was fortunate to be able to be a part of that for twenty-five years.

Dennis Mellang taught at TASIS The American School in England from 1991-2016. He taught fourth grade for his first three years and then fifth grade for the remainder of his tenure. He was also the dormitory parent for the Thorpe I Dorm, working there with students from the ninth through the twelfth grades. By many accounts, he was one of the great teachers in the School's history.

An Essential Part of a TASIS Education

Carolyn Heard

When I was fourteen years old, I found myself a student at a Department of Defense school at R.A.F. Lakenheath, an Air Force base in Suffolk, England, where I quickly seized upon the idea that I was receiving a sub-par experience as a high-school student.

As my high-achieving friends from earlier school days were getting into some of the best New England boarding schools, I longed to join their number. At the same time, I was excited to be so close to the European continent and wanted very much to immerse myself in the study of European languages, art, architecture, music, and history.

One day I happened upon a brochure for a boarding school in Switzerland, which I found out later was one that shared some features similar to those of TASIS. I begged my parents to send me there, envisioning a dreamy four-year high school experience not only filled with stimulating academic courses in a spectacularly beautiful setting, but also with all of the culturally enriching opportunities that being in the heart of Western Europe would make possible. Alas, going to such a school was not to be, and this was a crushing disappointment. Little did I know at that time, however, that my dream would eventually be realized one day far in the future, not as a student, but as a teacher at TASIS.

So much can be said about TASIS and the experience it offers to its students. One need only read the School's mission statement and Paideia; hear a beginning-of-the-school-year welcoming speech by the headmaster; attend an assembly; stroll around the lovely campus; visit a class, a theatrical performance, or an art exhibition; watch the little ones at play during recess; or listen to the reflections of graduating seniors, to mention only a few aspects of school life that reflect the impressive commitment TASIS makes to the intellectual development, personal growth, and general well-being of every student, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Indeed, it is difficult to pinpoint one particular aspect of the TASIS student experience that best showcases its unique desirability. After all, it boasts supremely qualified, enthusiastic teachers who deliver a wide-ranging and rigorous academic curriculum; a gloriously beautiful campus that provides inspiration and strength to all who study and work there; an international student body; and programs designed to build knowledge, character, self-reliance, empathy, values, and skills so that students are well equipped, upon graduation, not only to succeed at in their future endeavors, but also to make positive contributions to the world.

If I had to pick, beyond all of these, one particular feature of TASIS that really makes it stand out, and one that I myself would have been most excited about as a teenager, I would say that it was the Academic Travel program, in its earlier years known as "In-

Pro." In all my years here, I have seen it grow from being a collection of sight-seeing trips around Europe put together by individual teachers eager to visit certain places to a more intentionally thought-out, academically-oriented program aimed at providing students with a particular kind of learning experience, one from which they would benefit not only in terms of opportunities to see, up close, important monuments, celebrated buildings, masterful artwork, scientific inventions, or sites of historical or archaeological significance, all the while learning about the human endeavors behind them, but also in terms of opportunities to make connections with new cultures, other languages, and different ways of life.

The impact of these opportunities on a young person's personal development cannot be underestimated. They are truly life changing in that they invigorate, inspire, and give young people a new view of the world. Students return to the campus revived and enriched in ways that only such trips can make possible. Long after having left their school days behind, TASIS alumni carry with them vivid memories of what they have seen on their travels, forever shaped by what they have learned.

As one for whom the study and appreciation of Western European cultures has always been exciting and rewarding, it is indeed a privilege to be part of the delivery of the TASIS experience to our students, not only in my capacity as a teacher, but also as a leader and chaperone in the Academic Travel program.

That TASIS gives its students, year after year, the chance to discover the joy of learning through travel and exploration of other cultures—something I would have so relished had I attended school here—is truly a standout achievement, one of which TASIS can be particularly proud.

Carolyn Heard joined TASIS in 1984, teaching French and Italian. She has been Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages (1985-1986) and since 2000 she is the Chair of the EAL Department. During her long tenure at TASIS she worked in a variety of TASIS Summer Programs in Lugano, England, France, and Spain. From 2002-2008 she has been Academic Dean for the Middle School Summer Program in Lugano. Carolyn is the recipient of two awards for Excellence in Teaching, one of which was the TASIS Kahn-Page Teacher of the Year award in 2009.



The Secret Sauce

Berkley Latimer

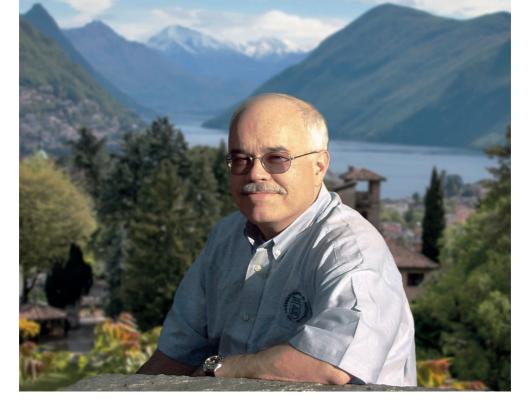
Some years ago the centerpiece of an advertising campaign by a fast-food company was the slogan "the secret sauce," whose recipe, it asserted, created a superior offering. This concept of uniqueness coupled with value can also be applied to schools. What, might one ask, is the "secret sauce" of TASIS?

The TASIS distinctive does not lie primarily in the generic "ingredients" of a school. Rather, the TASIS difference is the harmonious blend and synergetic character of its vision, content, and pedagogy, which collectively address the purpose of education, the course of studies, the methods of delivery, and the ends to which it is directed.

In terms of vision, TASIS is grounded in its *Paideia*, a guiding statement of educational and cultural values based on Judeo-Christian and classical norms. As the School's lodestar, it reflects the vision of founder Mary Crist Fleming. Fixed and constant, it is not subject to the gusts of educational whim and social fad. At the same time the School's entrepreneurial DNA is not so rigid as to forego new ventures or resist needed change. But it insists neither contradict its core values. Moreover, the *Paideia* affirms the purpose of education is the formation of humane individuals who manifest good manners, appreciate beauty, exhibit moral character, demand excellence in thinking and action, and have a deep and abiding respect for the natural order, their fellow humans, and the God who created them. Such lived values as these are boldly emblazoned on the facade of the School's library: *Truth - Goodness - Beauty*.

The working out of the *Paideia* occurs in the curriculum and the pedagogy informing it. Clearly the School's European location inspires a focus on Western history and culture, from which so many TASIS values derive their origin, enduring power, and cogent expression. At the same time, because TASIS is both a day and boarding school, students as world citizens are exposed respectfully to other traditions and cultures. The hallmark attention to the teaching of humane letters (history, literature, and the arts), though not to the exclusion of science and mathematics, is an acknowledgement of their critical role in the transmission of wisdom to students and stands in stark contrast to the thrust of much "modern" educational theory, especially with its transactional and largely ahistorical bias.

A lofty vision and a curriculum lacking effective delivery would be of little value. Fortunately, in pedagogy broadly understood TASIS excels. Without neglecting proven strategies of classroom teaching, a TASIS education affords students additional experiential benefits. As part of an international community students have the opportunity to learn from classmates, both as discrete persons and as emissaries of the diverse cultures they represent. Further,



school culture nurtures individual interests and personal responsibility. Likewise, stress on independence, self-reliance, and resilience contribute to the American "flavor" of TASIS. In this effort, inspiring teachers play a critical role by promoting and modeling the values of the School. In particular, strong mentoring relationships develop through the School's important travel programs with their recreational, intellectual, and service components, which are designed to instill ethical habits of mind and heart. Through them, TASIS students are steadily encouraged to explore and internalize the significance of great art, beautiful architecture, and service to others. This utilization of both the human and built environment reflects the Founder's belief that as much education is caught as taught.

In summary, the TASIS "secret sauce" is its unwavering commitment to the humane values of the *paideia* and the formation of individuals who live by them.

Dr. Berkley Latimer has served on the TASIS Board of Directors and as Board Secretary (2005–2020). He is a retired career educator and graduate of Davidson College (summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa), where he majored in French before earning Master's and Ph.D. degrees in European History at Duke University. His long career spans teaching and senior administrative appointments at prominent independent schools across the United States, including 19 years (1994-2012) at St. Paul's School (Concord, NH), one of the country's leading boarding schools. His love for TASIS stems from his 1999 to 2004 tenure as Director of the TASIS Summer Language Program in Lugano. Particularly interested in international education, Dr. Latimer has traveled widely, leading both service and educational trips to China, Russia, Poland, Greece, and Germany. He has served on accreditation teams across the United States. A former member of the Test Development Committee for the Advanced Placement Examination in European History, Dr. Latimer also served as an AP Examination reader. He and his wife Peggy now reside in Pennsylvania.

We Were Transformed

Michele Bett

English parents of a certain age will be very familiar with the A.A. Milne poem that begins:

Where am I going? I don't quite know.

Down to the stream where the king-cups growUp on a hill where the pine-trees blowAnywhere, anywhere. I don't know.

No matter how old we are, there are times when we're sure of neither our direction nor our purpose. That's how it was for me in the summer of 1996 when my path took me to TASIS England. Little did I understand at the time just what a transformative experience coming to TASIS would be for me and my family.

A teacher for more than 10 years, I was thrilled when Headmaster Rigg invited me to chair the History Department. In those heady first years, I also taught AP European History and was the Model United Nations Director. It was not too long before I realized just what a special community of learners I had been privileged to join. TASIS England with its signature Humanities Course, its emphasis on truth, beauty and goodness, its noble interpretation of teaching, and its dedication to an examined life through a commitment to the liberal arts and humanistic inquiry, offered me and many others the golden road to flourishing. I remember when, in 2005, on a hilltop retreat in the south of France, the then-interim Headmaster, Fernando Gonzalez, reminded his leadership team that schools like TASIS England were preparing young people to lead good lives, lives enriched through a profound sense of meaning; and schools like TASIS England taught students the timeless values needed to lead in a global world.

As the longest-serving Academic Dean in TASIS England's history, I was part of a team responsible for the school's curriculum and educational programs, the teachers' growth and development, and the students' well-being and academic success. I worked closely with Upper School colleagues to promote enhanced pedagogical engagement in the classroom. Together with the likes of Dennis Manning, Akbar Khan, David Jepson, John Tudhope, John Smalley and many more, I learned that students flourish when they find passion and relevance in their studies and that teachers must create space and time for imagination, curiosity and wonder in their instruction. Our superior AP examination results and growing success in the IB Diploma programme were markers to the outside world that our approach at TASIS England worked.

The classical Greek philosophers remind us that whilst we must live our lives looking forward, it is only in looking back, in examining our lives, that we can understand them more fully. And when I look back at my time at this extraordinary school (1996-2016), I realize that our students were not just being taught formulas or how to conjugate the imperfect subjunctive; instead, they were taught to read critically, to think coherently and to write effectively, which are the very skills, alongside the ability to engage in critical conversations, that help young people to navigate and understand the world beyond the school gates. Schools like TASIS England understood the need to nurture intellectual curiosity. Curiosity encourages you to ask why and what if? It's curiosity that drives you to seek answers, solutions, and truths. It is the unmistakable sign of a genuinely intelligent person, and we encouraged our students to focus on the issue of knowledge and authority: Who gets to decide what is true and what is not? In the past, the answer might have been priests or princes, but today, the answer is *no one*: that is, no one single person or institution. Instead, validating the truth requires the testing of a hypothesis by many qualified people. It requires evidence and proof. Our students were trained to seek out and treasure that truth.

During those early days, I came to understand that teaching is successful only insofar as students are learning. This means that well-crafted lesson plans and even charismatic personalities are not the measure of excellence in the classroom. Teachers must care about the learning of each of their students and must pay attention to each individual's strengths and weaknesses; and that's just what many teachers did at TASIS England. They cared, and not just within the classroom.

In 2005 my husband, Michael, had taken on the role of Dean of Students, and in 2008 he took charge of the boarding programme. After more than 21 years of classroom teaching, this much-loved teacher of mathematics decided to turn his attention to residential life. Throughout his tenure, the boarding programme thrived in the safe hands of a humane and reflective culture. Our boarding students were not isolated in dorms and left to languish in loneliness far from home. Evenings and weekends were filled with rich co-curricular experiences, and relationships were based on extraordinary care. This was a community where every student was known, loved, and valued. It was through the lens of the newly introduced boarding curriculum that students focused upon well-being activities, emotional management, and coping skills, through which they developed healthy habits and positive goals, and also learned to develop resilience.

The American biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin published a book several years ago called *Leadership in Turbulent Times*. In her account of the struggles and triumphs of four US presidents, a common theme was the way they faced adversity and potential failure. The success of these leaders was not due to their wealth or powerful friends; it was due to factors such as courage, perseverance, insight, and wisdom. Qualities of character like this are nurtured in one's home and family, but they were turbo-charged within the TASIS England boarding school during this time. To this day, we enjoy enduring and authentic relationships with members of our extended boarding family.



Students living in our boarding programme soon came to regard TASIS as their home away from home. I can recall a great many ways how this micro-community at the heart of the school became like a family, but I shall mention two episodes. In the Christmas Break of 2010, a large number of our boarding students found themselves stranded by a snowstorm that suddenly closed Heathrow airport. As the students were unable to travel home, my husband collected them all from the airport and returned them to the safety of TASIS. By this point, many of the staff, faculty and administration had already left. With a few remaining dorm residents, we commandeered the school kitchen and prepared a seafood pasta dish and several other meals. We helped our students forget the disappointment they no doubt felt by their delayed return home, and for that evening and until they could safely resume their travel, we were their family. The second example I'll mention concerns a student who in his junior year experienced an accident and was left with life-altering injuries. For close to a year, my husband travelled quietly, without fanfare or attention, to north London every Friday to ensure this young man was able to continue his successful study of math. Not only did he pass the course, but he returned to school accelerated in his accomplishments and graduated with Highest Honours. On this occasion and many others, time and time again, it was my husband's devotion to his students and a deep sense of duty and service to others that guided his every action. When he was awarded the Akbar Khan Award for Excellence in Teaching, the administration and his peers acknowledged this selfless devotion to his beloved students and school.

In the spring of 2016 and just before leaving TASIS England, I was fortunate enough to come across the work of Robert K. Greenleaf, an American businessman, who in the 1970s presented the idea of "The Servant Leader." His advice so resonated with me that I used it to form the basis of my last speech at the Upper School Awards Ceremony at the end of the year. Greenleaf concludes that service learning is in effect service *leading*. The qualities of a servant-leader include listening, healing, trusting, and being exceptionally aware. These may not be the characteristics taught in business-management courses, but they are the ones that emerge from a focus on service, from the concept of "caritas," and from the voices of those artists and leaders in the past who have truly made a positive difference. In our time at TASIS England, Michael and I were taught to model our own leadership on this premise, and it continues to be very important for us to be part of a community that requires of its students to reflect on the experiences of service and the essential lessons of leadership.

I often think about that path, the one that took us to TASIS England. Some might call it destiny or karma. But I would say, with the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, that it is "Pamor che move il sole e l'altre stelle": that very Love which moves the sun and the stars. Whenever my mind wanders to those leafy and winding roads of Thorpe and that beautiful campus with its historic and enchanting buildings, I am reminded of a time when so much of what we accomplished was through passion, purpose, and love. In Sir Ken Robinson's highly regarded book, Finding Your Element: How to discover your talents and passions and transform your life, he points out that one's "element" is the convergence of natural talents and personal passions, and that finding one's element is the most important quest that any of us can have. This road to self-fulfillment involves both an outward and inward journey. The outward journey is the discovery of the place; the inward journey includes the revelation of one's purpose. It was at TASIS England that we learned the greatest of all lessons: we learned to accept our unique purpose; we found ourselves. In this unique place of beauty, like so many before us, we were transformed.

Michele Bett started at TASIS England in 1996 as Head of the History Department, later (2000-2001) she worked as Assistant to the Headmaster and Assistant Academic Dean, and from 2003 to 2016 she was Academic Dean and Curriculum Director (Pre-K–12). Michele is currently Deputy Head of Ridley College in St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada.

Michael Bett joined TASIS England in 1987 as a Math teacher and varsity basketball coach. In 2005 he became Dean of Students and in 2010 Dean of Boarding, and he continued to teach Math and coach basketball until 2016, when he left TASIS.

The Lady Had Spoken

Paul A. Zazzaro

Of the countless meetings I had with Mrs. Fleming over the many years I spent at TASIS, I can't remember many where the subjects of style, character, quality, standards and discipline didn't come up. Her dedication to delivering the highest standard of education in a beautiful setting was her 24-hour motivation.

I was at TASIS from 1981 to 1998, and for those who remember those years TASIS was in an expansion phase and much was happening, it seemed daily, that required meetings with MCF who, as many of you remember, wanted to move at warp speed. This was prior to the formation of the TASIS Foundation and Board, but they did little to slow her down.

During that period, a part-time list of proposals and current operations included, besides TASIS England and TASIS Lugano, TASIS Hellenic, TASIS Cyprus, TASIS France, Geneva, and several summer programs. MCF applied her filter to all these programs and none would proceed without seeking the best headmaster, the best teachers, the best facilities, the best staff, the best curriculum, the best location, and a campus to be proud of.

No campus would have a second-rate theater, theater being a passion of MCF. The facilities had to include not only a theater and a theater program of excellence but a beautiful campus, solid academics and the arts.

How important was this triple minimum? Let me give you a good example.

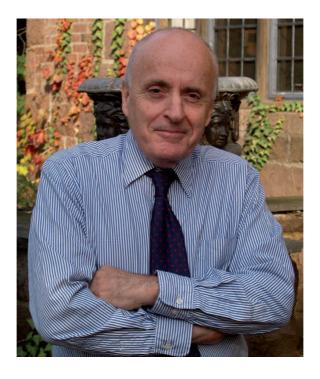
During the eighties there was at TASIS in Lugano, mistakenly, the feeling that Lugano was too isolated and removed from the international scene to grow and prosper and to have an elementary school. There was an offer from Geneva of a large K-12 school, well regarded, for sale. The owner had health problems. MCF, a Francophile, loved the idea of being in a French-speaking canton. We set out immediately and were greeted in a suburb of Geneva by a charming owner and headmaster. This man had developed a fine school and Geneva was a prime location for an international school. And there was a lower school. The school was big and well maintained. I was enthusiastic, as were several TASIS staff members who were with us. I thought we had landed on an ideal situation. That was until I had dinner with MCF the next day.

I am paraphrasing now, but when I asked her what she thought of the campus and the possible move to Geneva, this is what she said. The campus was well run but charmless. The buildings were all functional and serviceable but drab. This is not a TASIS school.

I said that our market would be Geneva. She said I don't see this as a TASIS school. Yes, the location was good, but we have a standard and this just doesn't meet that standard. Case closed: the lady had spoken.

Let me return to my comment about how mistaken we were about the future of TASIS in Montagnola. TASIS was in an absolutely beautiful setting. The old buildings and facilities needed an upgrade. But what it needed most was a market. And that's where Lynn stepped in and performed the jewel that now sits on the Collina d'Oro. Through all of this talk of Geneva, Lynn was adamant that we were mistaken about our assessment of Lugano.

Lynn, who had the same commitment to Beauty and Duty that her mother had, turned the TASIS Lugano campus into the splendid village it now is and, to boot, built a prosperous lower school. Her mother, MCF, would rejoice if she could see the campus now. A jewel of a finished campus which can justifiably claim to be the most beautiful campus in Switzerland: academically top rated in a jewel of a setting. May we all have such standards.



Paul Zazzaro was Administrative Director at TASIS from 1981 to 1998 and a close personal friend of Mrs. Fleming and the Aeschlimans before, during, and after that period.

With Great Freedom Comes Great Responsibility

Mathias '95, Veronika '97, and Tobias Mühlhofer '98

The beauty of TASIS consists in affording its students great amounts of freedom, whether it be exploring the picturesque Collina d'Oro, visiting lovely downtown Lugano, or touring around the historic cultural capitals of Europe on weekend trips or during academic travel. In parallel, each student has a duty towards the TASIS community, to treat this freedom with great responsibility, both on and off campus, paying testimony to the well-raised, educated young person he or she is becoming. That is the unwritten social contract, lived, trusted, and adhered to, with very few exceptions, by the entire TASIS community, which makes the institution really unique.

It is thanks to this unique setup, that during our time at TASIS, we were able to study the Renaissance in Mark Aeschliman's AP Art History class, and the following weekend to take a train to Florence with a group of fellow students (and no adults) and see the breath-taking art from our books come to life on the canvases and in the marble statues at the museums of the Medicis' Tuscan city. Likewise, during our TASIS days, Horst Dürrschmidt could teach us the principles of portrait photography, and two weeks later we could travel to the Carnevale in Venice and come home with film rolls full of breathtaking portrait impressions of carnivalesque characters. And for Arts Festival, as a student, you got to organize and perform in a musical review without any adult supervision.

On the rare occasions when students break the social contract and abuse the freedom they are granted in TASIS, by acting in a manner less than responsible, they personally must learn to carry the consequences, but the community's fabric still holds tight: During our own tenure at TASIS, some students abused the trust placed in them by sneaking out of theirs dormitories and causing trouble off campus. TASIS understood this to be a serious incident and considered grave consequences such as putting bars on the windows. It was Mrs. Fleming herself who reminded the entire TASIS community of the fundamental strength of the pact binding them together. She informed the school assembly that TASIS would not curb the freedom it places in its students' laps by building bars on the windows or erecting fences. Instead, she reinforced her unshaken trust in the student community's ability to prove they were deserving of the beauty of such freedom, and of fulfilling their duty of using it responsibly.

This is the essence of what makes TASIS truly unique: its real beauty runs far deeper than renaissance buildings on a beautiful campus. Its true beauty lies in the freedom it entrusts to its young people, and in the dutifully responsible way with which they learn to deserve it, a lesson they carry in their hearts for the rest of their lives.

Mathias '95, Veronika '97, and Tobias Mühlhofer '98 are all three TASIS alumni. Mathias and Veronika graduated as Valedictorians, Tobias as Salutatorian. Mathias is a real-estate developer living in Vienna and a member of the TASIS Board of Directors, Veronika is a sports events manager and currently lives in Paris, and Tobias is a professor of finance at Miami University.











Belonging

Sara Rosso Cipolini, Filippo Cipolini '19, and Michele Cipolini '21

Our family and TASIS first crossed paths in 2006. Filippo and Michele enrolled in the first cohort of the nascent Elementary School at TASIS in Montagnola and went on to complete their studies at TASIS, being among the first TASIS 'lifers'. Sara joined the Board of Directors at TASIS Switzerland in 2012 and has served on the board since.

There is no single instance that appropriately captures the magnitude of the TASIS mission and the influence it continues to have on our family. The emotional bond that ties us to this magic campus and every other member of the community transcends the idea of TASIS as 'just' a school. TASIS is – for us as for many others – a home. It is a sense of belonging that you feel from the first moment you are welcomed to campus and immersed in its beauty. But TASIS also has a more profound effect. From the first moment you become part of the community, you are encouraged to dream. The unshakeable belief in one's potential permeates the community and gives students, from the first day, the confidence and strength to start building the life of their dreams. Students are challenged to pursue their passions with the reassurance that there will always be someone that cares in their corner to support them.

"TASIS has many strengths, but its deepest, most abiding strength is something hard to see at first. It eludes any label, any name; but I should like to call it a strength of heart, for certainly the TASIS dream would not have its counterpart in reality without the emotional attachment which so many teachers and students have formed, in one way and another, for this school." (Mrs Fleming's Yearbook message, 1976)

It is this strength of heart of each member of the community that powers the TASIS dream. Intrinsic to this dream is the challenge to go into the world and pursue a life of service, to preserve and contribute to the beauty of this world. TASIS empowers you to believe that not only is it within your power to exert a positive influence on the world, but it is also your duty to do so.

During International week, it is tradition that one student from each grade is chosen to be torch bearer for the class. In this ritual of passing the torch between grades is the belief that only together will the students and the community be able to keep the TASIS light shining. And it is the youngest student, the one that still has the most to take from – and give to – the TASIS community, who lights the

fire. It is a special moment where the community comes together to celebrate its accomplishments and renew its commitment to the TASIS mission.

From the first day, we knew we had found a place that would take our heart and change the trajectory of our lives. We are fortunate to have found belonging in the TASIS community.



The Cipolini family: husband and father Carlo Cipolini, Sara Rosso Cipolini, a member of the TASIS Board of Directors since 2012, and her two children Filippo Cipolini '19 and Michele Cipolini '21.

The Essence of TASIS

Marco Ornaghi

TASIS is in the heart of many and surely is in mine too. It has shaped my two sons, teaching them a deep appreciation of beauty, a certain sense of humor, and a unique entrepreneurship.

TASIS has also shaped me. I started serving the institution as a board member in 2015 and it is fair to say the school has faced some significant challenges in the time that has since passed. Covid has surely represented one of the most taxing tests for our school. In the matter of a few weeks, nothing was certain any longer. Would we be able to give lessons, would we be able to hire teachers, and perhaps, the most existential question of all, would we be able to have enough students to run the school?

So many, incredibly arduous decisions needed to be taken rapidly and so much hard work, analysis, and thinking was required in order to take those decisions. At times, almost inevitably, I found myself struggling to find the energy to continue serving the school, and asked myself why I was putting myself through this.

The answer I found was not in the, perhaps self-centered, sense of gratitude I surely feel towards TASIS for how the school contributed to my sons' education. The true answer is that it is worth fighting for TASIS because it is a truly unique institution.

TASIS strives to be and stay principled and honorable in times when being so is perceived, at best, as a sign of naivety, at worst, a show of weakness.

TASIS strives to teach each and every one to be the best possible version of themselves. I have seen so many kids being transformed after a few years at our school and becoming cosmopolitan, compassionate, and caring individuals.

TASIS strives to teach not what is fashionable or commercially appealing, but what is right, just, and needed by our students, regardless of what the fashion of the moment may dictate.

TASIS strives to embrace its diverse and international community through kindness, respect, and love, feeding each and every one with the beauty of its campus, with the very best our civilization has to offer, and with the vast European heritage of its surroundings, a heritage the school embraces with profound gratitude towards the good and the great that have come before us.



Marco and Lorenza Ornaghi and their boys – TASIS alumni.

TASIS is all this and more and this is something surely worth fighting for, worth spending sleepless nights for, worth devoting time and energy to preserve and enhance the ethos of this unique institution.

From Mrs. Fleming to Lynn and Tom, from Michael to Fernando and Lyle, so many exceptional, inspiring, hard-working women and men have contributed to establishing TASIS as a bastion of values and fortitude in a world that is, more often than not, unashamedly brutal.

The legacy of TASIS will continue and the school will last as a unique, special, endearing institution, and those that will come will follow in the footsteps of those that preceded them.

Marco Ornaghi has been a member of the TASIS Board of Directors since 2015 and Chairman of the TASIS Finance Committee since 2019. His two sons Alberto '21 and Mario '22 attended TASIS from grade 4 to 10 and grade 3 to 10, respectively.

The Wellspring of TASIS Is Love

Michael Ulku-Steiner

Having fallen head over high heels for Europe, our Founder envisioned a school overflowing with the compassion-deepening, narcissism-conquering, world-expanding power of love.

Mrs. Fleming also loved parties and road trips and picnics and interesting strangers. Most of all, she loved students and the thrilling distance between their current and future selves.

Every Christmas, she insisted on reading Paul's letter to the Corinthians aloud to every student and teacher. With the music of TASIS in our ears, those words still ring powerfully true:

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

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

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

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

In English, defining love can feel impossible - like trying to hug a thunderstorm. Writing in Koine Greek, however, Paul could pull his Corinthian readers beyond self-interest by drawing on their understanding of love's multiple dimensions – each of which remains vital and pervasive at TASIS:

Xenia (hospitality or ritualized friendship) is a smiling Proctor greeting new students at the gate. It is the fireplace in Casa Fleming and the flowers on the banquet table. It is teachers and students dining on a sunny terrace or dancing on a moonlit lake.

Storge (natural affection, what parents feel for their children) runs similarly deep at TASIS. Three of the first six students in 1956 were the children of the Founder. Teachers are still called to rise to the immense responsibility of in loco parentis care. Even in its boarding programs, the School honors the authority of parents, recognizing - and then striving to match - their devotion to their children and their investments in the future.

Eros (passion, desire and longing), while perilous and unpredictable, plays its role at TASIS too. Even at age 99, Mrs. Fleming was telling risqué jokes. Like Plato, she realized that eros is initially felt for a person, but with contemplation becomes an appreciation of the beauty within that person, or even the appreciation of beauty itself. To be sure, dormitory curfews and rules against mixed company are purposely anti-erotic. But it's no accident that TASIS has such a high proportion of intercultural marriages among alumni and faculty. Those who came to Lugano, fell in love with Switzerland, and kissed someone with another passport fulfilled at least a part of Mrs. Fleming's dream.

Philia (virtuous and loyal friendship) abounds on our campuses. The School has always thrown students from around the world together to live, study, laugh, travel, suffer and celebrate together. It's hard to imagine a school better suited to helping young people create and cement friendships that span continents and last for decades.

Agape (often translated as "love of the soul") capture our noblest ideals and highest hopes. It is a passionate and selfless commitment to the well-being of others. TASIS teachers give their humane best to foster intellectual and moral virtue. They push students to transform their privilege into service. Mrs. Fleming and her family gave their School and their inheritance to the world – not for profit, but for the well-being of young people and – when their loving recipe works its magic – the well-being of the world.



Michael Ulku-Steiner served as Dean of Students at TASIS Lugano from 2000-2003 and as Headmaster from 2008-2013. Since 2017, he has served on the TASIS Foundation Board. Michael is currently Headmaster of Durham Academy in Durham, NC.

Universal Respect for Our Common Humanity

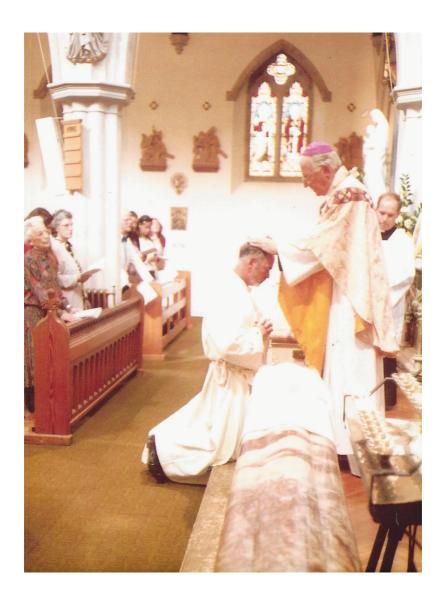
Rev. Rick McGrath

We live in an "interesting" age. The world is waking up to age-old injuries and prejudices, but sometimes with the slightly groggy sight of awakening. Humanity's problems have been vaguely similar all through history, and fairly evenly distributed, but as Queen Elizabeth II said recently, "recollections may vary." I have childhood memories of 1950's America that are very much "rose-tinted": a lovely, happy, simpler time, I always think, but I can also remember my mother's anxious Augusts when it was thought that polio was spread by lake algae, or by too little rest, and our banishment from the lake and enforced, if unrestful naps – until the Salk polio vaccine came along. I still have a faint scar from my smallpox vaccination, a disease now confined to a couple of laboratories. Only later did I become aware that "even in America" there were people discriminated against, often brutally, because of the colour of their skin, their race or religion. We have, in many places, faced some of these problems and done something about them, but have created in some ways a new threat with "cancel culture" and the "tyranny of the weak." Is there a happy middle ground? Is it possible? I don't think I would want to live in a world where I thought it was impossible to have free speech and opportunity coupled with universal respect and opportunity, however difficult it might be to find.

It seems to me that I did find it at TASIS (England, in my case, but in every location reflecting Mrs. Fleming's ideals). People from every part of the world, every race and culture, living and learning together, on a foundation of Western culture in a Western country, but with that universal respect for our common humanity that made every culture, every religion, every race, welcome. I was privileged to be able to preside at Mrs. Fleming's memorial service in England (having by then become a Catholic priest) at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church in neighbouring Englefield Green. I remarked, quite accurately, that Mrs. Fleming was a New England Protestant to the bone, but that her funeral service in Switzerland and memorial service in England were both in Catholic churches. She would have seen no contradiction. It was the measure of the woman and her vision.

One of my "jobs" at TASIS was looking out for boarders, and for the upper-year boys, assigning rooms. It was well into a new term when one of the staff, doing the study rounds, noticed the fact and shared it in the staff room, that in one senior room "Jesus" and "Mohammed" were sharing, and so they were: an Egyptian boy and a Spaniard. Nobody had noticed, nobody cared. Only at TASIS. It was a

magical time and place for me and helped bring me to where and what I am now. I am forever grateful to TASIS, most particularly to Mrs Fleming, and to so many other faculty, staff and students, and certainly, in this special year to Fernando Gonzalez, who has been so much a part of that. Ad multos annos – Fernando, TASIS, and Mrs Fleming's vision.



Rev. Rick McGrath worked at TASIS England from 1987-1995; he taught history and economics, and was a librarian, a dorm resident, and head of residence in the last few years. From 1995-1998 he worked on the maintenance crew during summer holidays. Rick is a Catholic parish priest in the South of England.

On Great and Confident Leadership

Vincenzo Campanale

I joined TASIS in the fall of 2015 and right from the start I felt like I have been here forever. These years have been exceptional, and my experience has been incredibly intense from the beginning, when I immediately realized that TASIS is a unique place.

In my first weeks at TASIS someone quoted to me a phrase of Mrs. Fleming which impressed me a lot: "Education is service." At TASIS I learned that service is learning and joining TASIS is a life-changing experience for everyone: students, parents, employees. The multicultural environment of the organization encourages proactive collaboration, open and constructive thinking, which is extraordinary, in my opinion, if compared to other organizations, especially in these times. Working and living with people who relate in many ways but have different opinions is incredibly stimulating: and anyone with a positive attitude at TASIS can be an active part of the creation of something special, and consequently, to evolve and become a better person.

This positive energy has been fundamental during the last few years, when the organization was challenged by the COVID pandemic, the OFSTED issues in the UK, and the restructuring of the schools. Yet I think nobody has ever felt alone in these tough days, thanks to the incredible leadership team that we have. Lyle Rigg, Headmaster of both TASIS Lugano and TASIS England for many years, said in a faculty banquet in 2016: "Fortunately for TASIS, many years ago Lynn Aeschliman has taken on the challenge and hard work of forwarding and strengthening Mrs. Fleming's vision and mission." Lynn has been an illuminating guide in these years, as Fernando Gonzalez and Tom Fleming also have been, for the entire organization: I have never heard any pessimistic word from them, even in tough times. Without their optimistic spirit, TASIS would never have considered to continue the project of starting a new school in Portugal during the first weeks of the COVID pandemic, in a moment when several schools around the world were taking the decision to shut down permanently. Such entrepreneurial spirit transformed an interesting idea of launching a school in Portugal into one of the fastest-growing schools in Europe in the last two years: this is what I mean by saying that TASIS is an extraordinary place! And this was possible only thanks to extraordinary people and leaders, like Fernando, who led England out of the OFSTED debacle and guided the TASIS Portugal project, together with David Hicks, from the start. Great, confident leadership: this is the secret of TASIS success.

I am a curious person and in the last months I have been trying to understand the source of that spirit, which characterizes TASIS history and Mrs. Fleming's life. She once said: "I have had a few setbacks, of course, but I never lose any sleep over them. I just go on to the next project." She was tireless and always optimistic about the future. While I did not have the privilege to meet her, I think that Lynn, Fernando, and Tom embody Mrs. Fleming's positive attitude and strive to create something extraordinary in life, which makes me grateful to serve the TASIS organization.



Vincenzo Campanale has a master's degree in Engineering and an MBA from the Polytechnic of Milan. Before joining TASIS in November 2015 as TASIS Group Financial Director, Vincenzo has been CFO and COO for a Swiss high-tech start-up, and previously Project Leader for BCG (Boston Consulting Group) after several years at Microsoft and Swisscom. At TASIS Vincenzo is the organization's overall Financial Director, supporting the TASIS Foundation in the definition and supervision of the long-term group financial strategy, managing the financial priorities of the entire TASIS group, developing new processes and reporting systems to support the schools, and supporting the launch of TASIS Portugal. At TASIS Lugano he has conceived and developed a new Human Resources position, defining the processes for the development of a top-class human-resources department to support the Headmaster and the faculty.

Yes, It Was Soul

Peter Stevens

When I first arrived in Lugano as the Headmaster-elect sometime in the winter of 1974-75, I was greeted by an unlikely and rather startling combination of a heavy wet snowstorm and an accompanying growling chorus of thunder and eerie green-yellow lightening. Somewhat disoriented, but certainly curious, I was taken to a faculty reception in Casa Fleming where I met the equally curious faculty. And thus, with the elements crashing around us, began an extraordinary seven-year career as a TASIS Headmaster (both Montagnola and Thorpe) and a 24-year run as an independent school head both in Europe and in the States.

The TASIS distinction was (and remains) for me best characterized by *soul*. Not all man-made institutions have *soul*. In fact, most don't. And certainly most schools don't, at least in my experience. As my own TASIS years wore on, I came to understand what it was that I felt, sensed, way back in New York in 1974 when I first met Mrs. Fleming. She had *soul*. It drove her; it emanated from her; it was contagious. Mrs. Fleming sold, taught, and shared *soul*: for her, this was a remarkable *mélange* of vision, creativity, reverence for beauty, love of travel, respect for learning and knowledge, personal drive and determination, genuine connection with others—students, faculty, friends, artists, musicians, actors, architects, parents—and a sixth sense, a sense of place, and how very special *place* is in people's lives.

TASIS Montagnola was a place of unparalleled beauty. Sure, it was hard to find beauty in those old pavilion classrooms adjacent to Hadsall House, and hard to think positively when our iconic blue VW's broke down or someone neglected to clean them out after a trip. But then there was Villa da Nobili, Casa Fleming, mighty Hadsall itself, the old library, the intimate theatre, and the extraordinary and always invigorating view out along Lake Lugano (did she in fact create that? Might have...). *Soul* lived there. When I traveled with Mrs. Fleming to locate a suitable venue for the founding of TASIS England and then again for discovering an appropriate place in the Geneva area for that school in a French-speaking environment that she always wanted, beauty came first, practical use came later. What an education I was being treated to!

And *soul* infused people, too. During my seven years with TASIS, we were able to attract to the campuses the most remarkable collection of women and men any school would wish for. I've not seen its equal in my subsequent years in schools. Fernando Gonzalez, one of the first faculty members I met, was but one of a long line of talented, committed colleagues, a list too long to cite here. Bonds among



faculty members were born, nurtured, thrived, and today, all these years later, I still count TASIS colleagues among my closest and most admired and loved friends. These were people who, like Mrs. Fleming, cared about young people, about teaching and learning, about style and creativity, culture, travel, excellence, loyalty, integrity, and the beauty in hard work. It was the caliber of its faculty then (and I am sure today) that ensured that *soul* thrived at the heart of the school, and thus assured TASIS of its rightful leadership role in American international education.

And in those beautiful surroundings on the Collina d'Oro and in the tiny village of Thorpe in Surrey, great learning took place: marvelous theatre, creative

and challenging art, Advanced Placement and IB courses, language study, history where history had been made, educational travel, cultural experiences for lifetime enrichment. We were proud in Lugano when we gained permission to offer the International Baccalaureate in the late '70's, and in England when TASIS England earned the first accreditation offered jointly by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (USA) and the European Council of International Schools. We were proud, too, when our graduates went off to excellent higher education opportunities across the world, and then came back to tell us how well prepared they were by TASIS for further study, and for life. TASIS reunions today remind us of the extraordinary creative and lasting power of *soul* and of the giants on whose shoulders TASIS thrives.

My own life was forever enriched by my seven active years with TASIS, and my innumerable friendships and connections in the decades since. I am grateful every day to the unforgettable Mrs. Fleming, who engendered all that has followed in the TASIS world, and who made a significant difference in my life. And, yes, it was *soul*.

Peter Stevens served as Headmaster of TASIS Switzerland from 1975-1979 and TASIS England from 1979-1982, as well as of schools in the USA.

Our Best Selves Through Beauty and Duty

Christopher Nikoloff

A unique and noble characteristic of humans is that we sometimes seek to become our best selves. That humans even have a concept of "a higher or best self" is a miracle in itself and found nowhere else in nature. We tell our children, "you could have done better" or "that's not you" when we believe they fall short, and we tell ourselves the same things when we believe we have fallen short. While we might say of a tree, "that tree could look more symmetrical," trees don't think this about themselves as far as we know. I have seen a dog display shame when she has done something wrong, but I haven't seen one enroll in a self-improvement program.

Another miracle is the existence of institutions and social structures completely dedicated to the common good, such as schools, hospitals, charities, nonprofits, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, local associations, museums, concert halls, art galleries, and even family, friends, and neighborhoods. A simple law like driving on the right side (or left side) of the road is established to promote human flourishing.

Of course, this is not to say that individuals or societal structures always work towards human betterment. In fact, a cursory glance at history will show that much of the time they do not. Alexander Pope reminds us of this: "To err is human; to forgive, divine." What does Pope's famous line mean? As human beings, we make mistakes, which is constitutive of the human condition. As imperfect creatures, this is to be expected.

What is unexpected is that we occasionally recognize mistakes as mistakes and know we can do better. How do we even know what "better" is? How do we recognize a "mistake," literally a mis-take? But somehow we do. We recognize, by some mysterious standard, that we have "missed" a "take." On top of this, we occasionally learn from mistakes and even forgive them in ourselves and others. We do not have to forgive, and doing so may not even be in our interest, yet once in a while we actually forgive nonetheless, a divine act, according to Pope.

TASIS as a school aspires to serve as a call to our best selves. "Educare" means to instruct, rear, and lead forth, and Mrs. Fleming said that "Education is man's best hope to defeat chaos." TASIS calls us to our best selves through the concepts of beauty and duty, the twin themes of this book's tribute to the school and its great figures. **Beauty** and **duty** are TASIS's distinctive call to *our best selves*.

TASIS understands more than most schools that **beauty** is a calling to something beyond the finite boundaries of ourselves. "Kallos," the Greek word for beauty, is related to "kalein" — to call. TASIS is in a beautiful, nearly magical setting, and has pain-stakingly sought to infuse its campus with equally stunning beauty. The entire campus calls all of us who step onto it towards our highest and best selves. This is true not only of its physical beauty but of its conceptual beauty too.

For instance, the words "Truth, Goodness, and Beauty" over the Mary Crist Fleming Library are a calling. The quotations from Rumi around the Sahenk Fine Arts Center, such as "Let the beauty we love shine in what we do," are a calling. The renderings of the cardinal virtues in the Snack Bar — prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance — are a calling. But what are we called to?

To answer that we need to move to the second distinctive characteristic at TASIS, the other central theme of this book, which is **duty**. We do not seek to be our best selves only for the sake of reaching our potential, which is a necessary but not a sufficient goal of education. At TASIS, we are called to be our best selves to be of some good in the world.

This tradition started with our founder, Mrs. Fleming, who said that "Caring is TASIS's greatest strength" and reminded students that "Even small steps, but taken daily, start producing results -- a kind word, a helping hand, an effort to speak another language, an offer to help someone small, weak, hurt, or sad."

It occurs to me that in the age of smartphones and social media it is easy to slide from the lofty goals of self-realization to the small and cramped cell of self-absorption. When TASIS asks us to realize our potential, we are not to stop there, lest we engage in self-absorption. TASIS calls us to our highest and best selves ultimately to serve others. Developing the self and serving others are like the closing of an electrical circuit. "Self and other" need to connect, and self without other is only navel-gazing, like an open circuit that has nowhere to flow but inward towards itself. Our best selves cannot be realized without serving others.

TASIS seeks to promote the best in its students and community as an important but not ultimate end. Beyond reaching our own potential, TASIS hopes that we all will be of service in the world, and begin right here on campus in the small but significant acts we can take towards each other. TASIS looks at all of us and says, "I see your best self and will help you find it, but I have a surprise for you. You will find it in the most unexpected of places – outside of yourself."

¹ See the Introduction to *Awakening Wonder: A Classical Guide to Truth, Goodness, and Beauty*, by Stephen R. Turley PhD, Classical Academic Press, 2014.

TASIS reminds us that we are only good when we are doing good, and that the fulfillment of our potential only means anything when that potential flows outward, closing the circuit with others. It is the great hope of TASIS that its graduates will, through beauty and duty, find ways to serve others.

This service does not have to bend the arc of history. It can take simple forms such as holding a door for someone or giving someone our undivided attention when that person is in need. TASIS's great distinction is its ability to inspire in all of us the desire not only to find our best selves, but to give our best selves to others, as a privilege and a duty, in our own unique and beautiful way.



Christopher Nikoloff has been the Headmaster of TASIS since 2017. A summa cum laude graduate of Boston University, he worked at the Harker School in California for eighteen years, twelve of which were as Head of School. His three sons attend TASIS.

What Makes TASIS Schools So Distinctive and Valuable

Bryan Nixon

"The reason I founded the TASIS schools was my belief that our best hope of defeating chaos was through good education. I hope that you have indeed found that TASIS has helped you become the kind of strong, skilled, healthy, open-minded, wise and committed citizen that...the world so desperately need[s]." (Mary Crist Fleming 2003)

As I considered what makes TASIS schools so distinctive and valuable, I was drawn to these words of our founder, Mary Crist Fleming. The beauty in her reflection comes from the seamless connectivity of the academic, personal, and social realms of a "good" education. Her concept for the TASIS "family of schools" was to ensure we not only provide skilled and reflective leadership that will enhance our future but that we also facilitate the development of curious, principled, open-minded, and compassionate students who will gain much from and contribute to TASIS. This bond, and the enduring relationships it creates, is the "beauty" of TASIS.

Through our association with TASIS schools, we are blessed to live and work on beautiful campuses in wonderful locations. We are blessed with dedicated and passionate educators who share their love of learning with students and colleagues alike. We are blessed with inquisitive students who explore multiple pathways within and beyond the classroom to promote and challenge their learning. We are blessed with supportive parents who trust in a "family" of schools to prepare their children for the future. The intertwining of all these blessings results in engagement and connectivity and creates that focus on relationships. We belong to a community that holds true to our founder's vision and is unapologetically idealistic. Together our schools play their part in creating a better world for our and future generations.

Through the development of respectful and trusting relationships with our students and each other, we can model and impart the values that Mrs. Fleming invoked throughout her life, "... a love of beauty, a search for knowledge ..., truth, honesty, a belief in work, a serious concern for our planet and what we are doing to it, and mostly a compassion for all human beings..." (MCF 1995*) As you walk through each TASIS campus and witness the warmth and connection shared by the community, you enjoy and engage with a real and palpable sense of the strength of these relationships and the values they are based on.

Adhering to the concept of education as service, we embrace the collective duty to foster these traits in our students, to encourage them to live by these principles, and to inspire them to be the leaders who will, in their turn, take on the mantle of responsibility. Far from being an obligation, this duty is our joy as we witness the personal growth of our young people and our colleagues and embrace their influence on future generations. And that is truly a beautiful thing.

Bryan Nixon has been Headmaster of TASIS England since 2017.

* The Wit and Wisdom of MCF, ed. Lyle Rigg, p.82



TASIS England Headmaster Bryan Nixon with students

Joining the Classical and the Contemporary

Keith Chicquen and Aimee Gruber, TASIS Portugal

Even before we joined the TASIS family as the headmaster and director of enrollment management and marketing for the planned TASIS Portugal campus in August 2019, we were aware of its reputation as one of the best international American boarding schools in the world. Having spent many years working in schools, we knew there was something special in its tradition and unique history. The entrepreneurial spirit (and sheer audacity) it took for someone to start an American boarding school in Europe in the 1950s fascinated us. The fact that this founder was an American woman, in a time when women were not typically doing such things, made it even more extraordinary.

Because we did not have the opportunity and pleasure to know Mrs. Fleming, we immersed ourselves in the school's history—and its family—to channel her enthusiasms, her passions, her beliefs, and her fidelity to the values of Western civilization. Her memory inspired our new school in Portugal; though each TASIS school has a personality of its own, each transcends the ordinary in the quest to be a truly life-changing place for children to learn and grow. Mrs. Fleming would have expected no less.

In creating this new school, we drew heavily upon the ideals that have made TASIS schools distinctive from their founding: truth, goodness, and beauty. From the challenge of chess to the beauty of the violin, from the philosophy of Aristotle to the quests of the Knights Templar, our rich curriculum and our exceptional faculty imbue in every child an appreciation for the diverse cultures of the world, the transformative genius of those who have come before them, and respect for the ideas of the past as they explore the possibilities of the future. This emphasis on the classical and the contemporary, of substantial, directed, and focused learning, and the development of strong character and empathetic leadership, are what set TASIS schools apart.

TASIS Portugal began life as a shopping center, and it will soon be remembered for its own unique journey to becoming the most beautiful school in the country – transformed, from beast to beauty. Although not a boarding school, TASIS Portugal has in just two years become the most international of international schools in the country, enrolling students from 55 nations who speak 39 languages. Our students come to know others who are unlike them in many ways, and TASIS Portugal inspires them to respect those differences while finding common ground and developing strong friendships.

It has been our unique honor-and our duty-to create and fill this beautiful school for TASIS, and it is well on the way to becoming the finest school on the Iberian Peninsula.



Keith Chicquen is founding Headmaster of TASIS Portugal. He holds a B.Sc. in math and a B.Ed. from Queen's University, Ontario, Canada, and also an M.Ed.. He has taught and held high-level administrative posts in secondary schools and universities in Montreal and Vancouver in Canada, and in Singapore, since 1987. Aimee Gruber, his wife, is Director of Admissions at TASIS Portugal. She holds a B.A. in Communications from the University of New Hampshire and also an M.Ed.. For thirty years she has held high-level administrative and executive positions in admissions in boarding and day schools in the USA, as well as in nonprofit educational associations, travelling widely throughout the world as an expert on K-12 independent education.

Moving from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance

Alexander de Bruin '87

My mother had given me the choice at the formative age of 13: "Would you like to continue in the British system at a Public school or go to TASIS, in Switzerland?" To be honest, the choice wasn't too hard. Having started my English boarding school experience at 7 years old, the option for more of the same at an all-boys school in dreary Britain, or TASIS, in gorgeous Lugano, co-educational, a ski term in St Moritz, and in the center of Europe. It didn't take me long to make that decision despite the protestations of my English headmaster, "but think, my dear boy, do they have Rugby and Cricket; if not, why would you go?" Why indeed!

I can't say everything was bad about the English boarding school system, but it was as traditional as one can get, strict, sparse, awful food. And we won't mention the weather and lack of central heating.

The transition to TASIS was like moving from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and then on to the age of Enlightenment. Both figuratively and in practice. The humanist root of the Enlightenment can be found in the Renaissance. Under the influence and inspiration of the classics, humanists developed a new rhetoric and new learning. Some scholars also argue that humanism articulated new moral and civic perspectives and values offering guidance in life. Mrs. Fleming, one of the grandest old dames I ever met, and will probably ever meet, (although her daughter is certainly a chip off the old block), founded her school on this very philosophy. Represented clearly by the TASIS crest: the tower stands for culture (humanitas), the lamp for wisdom (sapientia), the sun for truth (veritas), and the book for knowledge (scientia). One might be inclined to say "hogwash, marketing nonsense," but no, from the ground up, Mrs. Fleming had built her school(s) brick by brick with this philosophy. And having spent four years at TASIS I can say unequivocally this was no mere marketing gimmick. The school oozed these elements from its very foundation to the heights of the Collina d'Oro – on which it is built.

The accent on the humanities entailed a travel program that took me to Yugoslavia (I'm dating myself), Venice, Florence, Pisa, Verona, Vienna, Salzburg, Amsterdam, Berlin including East Berlin, Rome et al. The school organized the trips with precision. In these magnificent towns we visited the great museums, cathedrals, castles, WWII sites. We attended concerts and operas - we literally lived the history of Europe. Granted, as teenagers we were not always as focused as we should have been, but we absorbed it all. The memories of these trips, the art and music, are imprinted on my brain as well as any Instagram picture of today.

The one element that maybe is missing from the TASIS crest is diversity. In my English boarding school, the student body was uniform, which unfortunately can lead to certain prejudices. Despite being brought up to respect all people and faiths, subconscious biases inevitably creep in, especially when everyone looks and sounds the same. At TASIS, the student body was exceptionally diverse, with people from all over the world. This brought different viewpoints and open discussions about everything from cultural and religious differences to economic and social models. These were not theoretical textbook topics, but rather real-life experiences exchanged amongst friends. When your roommates are from Iraq or Iran or Azerbaijan you quickly take more interest to find them on the map and learn about their culture. My two roommates and dear friends for my last two years were a Trinidadian/ Italian with Indian heritage and Michael Jordan, and yes, like his famous namesake, he was the school's basketball champion. Whatever subconscious biases that had taken root in my psyche were quickly challenged or expunged.

Why indeed? There is no question I made the right choice. I have sent two of my five sons to TASIS, with more to follow, I hope, so they can experience a school in one of the most beautiful settings in the world and with an all-encompassing approach to nourish their young minds academically, culturally, and philosophically, as mine was. If we can understand our differences and realize we are all in this world together, we can work hand in hand with our fellow citizens to make a better world for tomorrow. (Sotto voce: It's also my guilty pleasure to accompany my sons back to my Alma Mater!).

Finally, in a world where the moral compass sometimes feels like it is spinning out of control, I'll close with one of my favourite quotations from Mrs. Fleming: "Times may change, but values don't."



Alexander presents his son Alexis his TASIS diploma.

Alexander de Bruin's ('87) two sons attended TASIS for their senior year, Alexis graduating in 2012 and Alois in 2016. Alexander's brother Martin de Bruin '71 attended grades 10-12, as well as ARTE in 1971.

The Transformative First Year of TASIS

John Gage '60

TASIS made a wonderfully transformative impact on my education and my youth. I was a student during the first year of TASIS in 1956-1957. The School's contribution to my development was very personal, as would be the case for any subsequent student, but our small group of 12 were keenly aware that we had embarked on a new experiment, and, fortunately, we were focused on thriving rather than suffering through the inevitable growing pains of a new institution.

My memory is that there was a significant change in the faculty during the Christmas break, and numerous components of the program experienced abrupt alterations, but we had terrific esprit and looked on all changes as being part of a grand experience, forging fond memories of resilience and adventure. In addition to the most demanding academic curriculum of my education, we skied in Andermatt and traveled to Spain as a large family for Christmas and to Greece for Easter. The cultural riches of Europe were breathtaking for a kid from a small town in Michigan, and Mrs. Fleming became both a mentor and something like a second mother to me. My relationship with TASIS and the Fleming family has now endured and increased in richness over 60 years — nearly a lifetime.



John Gage, a graduate of Columbia Law School (1967), had a successful career in Real Estate Law and Property Management. After a lifetime in Marin County, California, he and his wife Amy relocated to Ventura County, west of LA, where they live close to family.

My TASIS "Family"

Sarah Di Lenardo

What a joy it was to receive an email from Lynn Aeschliman inviting me to join as one of the "long-term or prominent TASIS figures" being asked to contribute to the literary project "Beauty and Duty: Persons, Accomplishments, and Events in the Making of the TASIS Schools," in honor of Fernando Gonzalez's fiftieth year with the TASIS Organization. I am definitely in the "long-term" category!

"Beauty" overwhelmed me from the first, early autumn morning in September 1968. I walked from Lugano-Paradiso, past the San Abbondio Church, between tall trees on both sides of the road, and then I turned to see the view of Monte Bré and Lake Lugano before I entered the main gates of TASIS. I was met and ushered into the Casa Fleming garden with the welcoming words of: "Mind the fish pond, my dear, your office, of course, is in the Tower." I was starting my first day as Mrs. M. Crist Fleming's personal secretary. If I remember rightly, four years later, Fernando's first office was also in the "Tower" in the tiny room above mine. We were short of office space in those days!



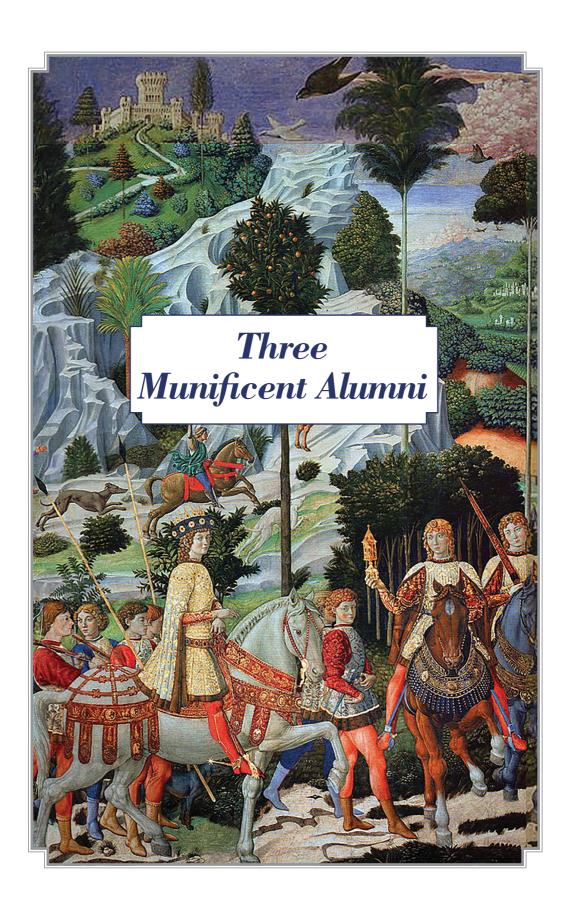
"Duty" towards TASIS was natural due to my Convent education and traditional English-family upbringing. However, I immediately realized that when working for Mrs. Fleming, speed, accuracy, confidentiality, and trustworthiness were the norm of the day. A TASIS education integrates duty within its rules and regulations regarding behavior, respect, and comportment.

I would now like to add the word "Family" to "Beauty and Duty" because without "The TASIS Family" I would not be the person I am today! The word "family" is of great significance to me personally, and I find it easy to compare my own family with TASIS. Defining the actual word, I find that a "family" should perform various valuable functions for its members such as emotional and psychological security, warmth, and unconditional love. When parents decide to entrust TASIS with the care of their precious children, they believe that in addition to a first-class international education, their children will be surrounded by warmth, love, and companionship, creating all the support they need during the time that they are away from their homes.

My own family was started when I arrived at TASIS. I met Gino, we married, and had Marcus and Giorgia. Marcus spent a year boarding at TASIS England, which resulted in his passion for traveling, and he ended up running his own travel agency. Giorgia (TASIS '98) continued her education and received two Masters' from Webster University in Geneva. We, as a family, have all benefitted from the amazing, life-enriching gifts that TASIS has given to us.

Today, writing this, I realize how blessed I am, having had the opportunity of 50 years of association with TASIS.

Sarah Di Lenardo (née Rushbrook-Williams) was personal secretary to Mrs. Fleming (1968-2009), and she did Library duties, English Language Tutoring, and ESL Department support teaching from 2009 until her retirement in 2019.



A Lasting Legacy

Kristin Pedroja

The Opsahl Global Service Program Mission Statement

The TASIS Opsahl Global Service Program transforms lives by providing every High School student with a unique opportunity to connect across borders—whether geographic, economic, or social—through comprehensive experiences that build empathy and encourage personal responsibility. The Program awakens students to humanitarian needs, inspires them to build enduring, mutually beneficial relationships, and leads them toward a life of active citizenship and committed service.

Arne Jan Opsahl '68 (TASIS Board, 2010-2017) has twice made history at TASIS. Arriving in Lugano in 1965, the young Norwegian became the School's first international student; today TASIS welcomes students from sixty nations.

In 2010, when Jan was asked to join the Board of Directors, he thought it would be a perfect fit; he had no children and no experience with school administration, so he must have all the answers, right? But on a serious note, Jan was aware that his time at TASIS altered his life, and the chance to help guide the School was compelling.

Soon after joining, however, Jan was having difficulty grasping the essence of the School and what set it apart from other international schools. He knew what TASIS had given him and others, and he knew the atmosphere, the ethos, and travel were paramount. As was the School's commitment to ensuring *verum*, *bonum*, *pulchrum* were present in daily life. But for Jan, these were tricky to tangibly convey to those who had not experienced them firsthand.

Jan's late mother, Aase Opsahl, was keen that some of their family legacy was used to benefit children. Jan looked into giving to large organizations, but felt this was giving money away for the sake of it. His thoughts returned to TASIS, but he wanted to do more than fund a building. He reached out to Headmaster Michael Ulku-Steiner and they began to consider things that would make a difference in the lives of students and, importantly, help TASIS to stand out as a school.

They soon landed on the concept of service learning. Jan found his own service experiences in Norway rewarding; for seven years he was involved in sports administration for a club with activities for children and he was president of the Rotary Club, where he funded cataract clinics in rural Nepal. He and Michael envisioned a program that placed students in the developing world, working hand-in-hand with local partners, ultimately giving students the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the world's needs.



Jan Opsahl '68

Jan's and Michael's vision was to provide students with a tangible experience which would help others in the short term and plant seeds for the future. Jan knew that many TASIS students would find themselves in fortunate positions financially. Remembering their experiences helping others might spark philanthropic ventures, evoking a sense of obligation—of duty—to those less fortunate.

The result is the Opsahl Global Service Program, which celebrates its first decade in 2023. The Program's goal is to provide "every TASIS high school student with a unique opportunity to connect across borders—geographic, economic, social—through comprehensive experiences that build empathy and encourage personal responsibility."

The initial response from the Board of Directors was enthusiastic. Most large donations come in the form of bricks and mortar, and a donation such as Jan's forced the board to refocus on investing in the student experience, not just the campus. The pioneering program was set up with major support from Jan and his family in the form of the Global Service Trust along with support from the TASIS Foundation.

The program begins in ninth grade with an introduction to the core philosophy of service along with the themes and topics that the Opsahl Global Service Program

seeks to address: education, water and sanitation, poverty, gender equality, the environment, and marginalized populations. Weekly meetings include discussions, guest speakers, readings, films, simulations, and other activities that drive students to begin thinking about global issues from a basis of knowledge and curiosity.

Tenth graders build on this foundation by experiencing firsthand how service can influence others in the Lugano community. The School partners with a number of local organizations that help refugees, the elderly, the disadvantaged, and the environment.

The final two years of the program continue the principles and experiences of the first two years and extend outreach globally. Each group dives into the mission, ethics, and outcomes of the partner organization. Crucially, and because of Jan's vision and generosity, students travel to the organization to work directly with the partner, sharing the experience together as well as witnessing the impact. This final stage of the Program hopes to awaken students to global humanitarian needs and lead them towards a lifetime of active citizenship and a commitment not just to volunteering, but to service.

The cultural element of the program is also important. Inspired by events such as Howard Stickley's annual trip to Botswana and Zambia, the Opsahl Global Service Program also aims to plunge students into completely different cultures. Jan recalls the cultural immersion he experienced when first at TASIS, with all of its discomfort, fear, challenge, and awkwardness, and how immersion leads to eye-opening, life-changing experiences. In Jan's mind, there are many ways of looking at the world and cultural understanding takes away the fear of differences.

TASIS mathematics teacher Danny Schiff has been leading the Global Service Program since 2018 and has witnessed the impact of the program:

The Opsahl Global Service Program has been fulfilling its mission of changing lives since its inception. Students return from their service experiences more empathetic, more passionate, more cosmopolitan. Any commencement or Senior Banquet ceremony is proof as graduate after graduate shares the life-changing connections made during their service trips around the world. The TASIS community is simply a more just place thanks to the experiences gained through the Program.

Not only has the Opsahl endowment transformed the lives of students for the last decade, our partners around the world have benefited from TASIS students and teachers coming to their communities each year to help with infrastructure projects, education in the classroom, connections, and innovation. We hear from all of our partners that the weeks when TASIS comes to visit are highlights of the year in Ethiopia, India, Mongolia, and other places.

As I share the structure of our global education model with colleagues around the world, they are awed and impressed in the ways that Jan and the TASIS Board of Directors have made

such a contribution to this program to ensure that every single student has his or her own unique experience, which has become as central to the TASIS mission as the arts, academics, and sports. Having seen firsthand the long-term benefits of global community support, I know that this program will continue to be aspirational and transformational for all constituents.

The ripple effect of the Program's projects seems a perfect result for a man whose goal was to find something that would help TASIS stand out as a school. Juxtaposing the myriad opportunities available at TASIS—excellent academics, a cultural melting pot, the Opsahl Global Service Program—results in an education that goes beyond reading books and taking exams to experiencing real-world challenges and exploring solutions. Students take ownership of global issues when they become personal.

From Jan's perspective, whenever people talk about doing extraordinary things in the world, it always comes with some sort of dramatic revelation. What students do with this experience is up to them, but he believes that it will stay with them for life because our students will understand how good it feels to give someone hope.

Originally from Hamar, Norway, Jan came to TASIS at the age of 15 with limited English skills. Within three years he had received the History Award, achieved AP credits in a number of subjects, and was accepted to Dartmouth on a five-year, two-degree program which included an M.B.A. from Tuck Business School. He went on to work for the Singer Company in New York and then Helsinki before joining his family business in Norway. In 2007 he and his wife Birgitta moved to Lugano.

Kristin Pedroja is a staff writer and editor for TASIS publications.

Success as Reciprocity and Coordination*

Ferit Şahenk '83



Ferit Şahenk '83 with daughter Defne Şahenk '16 and wife Dianne Şahenk

TASIS is a miniature reality that we all would have loved the world to have. But unfortunately, it's not like that. This should not be a sad speech, but we must also talk about realities. Recently, in the southern part of Turkey, two bombs blew, and 40 innocent people died and 100 people were wounded. Why?

This is the future of the world we are living in today.... a world that talks about differences. Different Bibles. Different backgrounds. Different religions, different everything. But, in this school, we learned to love people with their differences, and we found common ground together.

So my friends, this is one reason why the Arts are very important. And I have to thank two beautiful people. **Mark Aeschliman** has carved a lot of things into my life. He may not know that. And also **Horst Dürrschmidt**. I am in the media business today, and sometimes I look at the screen and then I call the television station and say, 'There's something wrong about this perspective.' It's because of Horst Dürrschmidt.

Mark Aeschliman got me going about leadership. He gave me courage about leadership. Now I always say this: successful people do not lead, they coordinate. They have to have good people around them, whom they trust. Some of them are here with me tonight from our group as well. Success doesn't happen alone. We have to thank God, whatever our religion. I come from Istanbul, where we can be Christian, we can be Jewish, we can be Muslim, we can be nothing. We are treated equally.

And I am very happy that God gave me the fortune and the capability to show my classmates of 1983 my home country, and I'm proud of my country. I am proud to be a part of TASIS. Thank you very much for honoring me.

I have given speeches in Davos, I have given speeches in many places. But this is the most sincere, the most transparent conversation. Thank you very much for this night, for this event. Class of '83, we will be back.

Ferit Şahenk '83 is the owner and CEO of Dorgus Company in Istanbul, Turkey. He is the most generous donor in TASIS history, having funded the Şahenk Fine Arts Center. His daughter, Define, graduated from TASIS in the Class of 2016.

*Excerpts from a talk Mr. Şahenk gave at the Ferit Şahenk '83 Fine Arts Center Opening Gala featured in **TASIS Today**, Fall 2013, which also reprinted his Commencement Address to the TASIS Class of 2013.



The Ferit Şahenk Fine Arts Center

Lighting the Way: Curtis McGraw Webster '75

Kristin Pedroja



Curtis McGraw Webster '75 first stepped onto the TASIS campus in 1966—he recalls having his eighth birthday in Lugano. He and his family were visiting his half sister Debby who was attending TASIS. And less than a decade later, after attending the Princeton Day School and the Lawrenceville School, he found himself back at TASIS as a student.

TASIS in the 1970s was a very different place from now, though Curtis remembers meeting Fernando Gonzalez, who was the art teacher when Curtis was a student. Curtis was fascinated by Fernando, who grew up in Saranac, NY, a town close to Lake Placid where Curtis's family has vacationed for over 100 years. For Fernando to grow up in Saranac, then go to Andover, then on to Harvard, was inspirational to a young Curtis.

Even as a student, Curtis was interested in School operations. He wanted to know why things were as they were, how the budgeting worked, and how decisions were made. He remembers speaking to Fernando about why the school was only 250 students at that time, and how this might limit cash flow and diversity in the student body.

Mrs. Fleming, in her letter to the Class of 1975, wrote of the TASIS faculty: "...they have given you the critical tools to judge what is good and bad, and the developed awareness to appreciate the richness of the past, the fullness of the present, and the potential of the future." So perhaps it was inevitable that Curtis would eventually be a member of the TASIS Board of Directors for nearly two decades and also become one of the School's most benevolent donors.

Another of Mrs. Fleming's lasting lessons for Curtis was her remarkable ability to remember names. He recalls an African extended family at TASIS that included over twenty children; Mrs. Fleming memorized every single child's name. Curtis eventually learned about Mrs. Fleming's "face book"—created (and named!) decades before the founders of the social-media giant were even born—which included the names and photos of every student. Mrs. Fleming would study it meticulously, and Curtis admired this dedication to knowing the students.

Curtis took this tactic into his professional life. To this day when he meets someone in a new situation, he writes down the person's name and takes notes in a steno pad to study, memorize, and recall when needed. It's a particularly effective technique when working in sales and in the music business to make everyone feel like a valued individual—of course, one of Mrs. Fleming's superpowers.

Since Curtis graduated, he has made an annual donation, always on behalf of the Class of '75, with his generosity through the years having grown to reach over a million dollars in total. He has always felt a sense of ownership towards TASIS. In the early 2000s, when he was approached by the development director, Dr. Frank Klein, Curtis concerned himself with how the School was approaching development. He visited the campus to spend time with Dr. Klein and renew his relationship with Mrs. Fleming. At the time, the School was transferring ownership to the TASIS Foundation, and in 2005 TASIS reached out to Curtis to be a founding member of the Board of Directors. Curtis graciously said 'yes'.

From 2005 to 2021, Curtis and the Board helped steer TASIS through a number of transitions, world events, even headmasters (Curtis served on several Head of School searches). And while Curtis doesn't connect the stewardship of his gifts with his time on the Board, his commitment of both time and money is worth celebrating. The work that the trustees of schools do is critical, and the hours that Curtis put in throughout the years have most certainly resulted in a more robust position for the School.

Curtis feels the travel program is a key asset for the school as an educational tool that opens up students' minds. Indeed, when he returned to the U.S. after graduation, he felt he was the world traveler when compared to his parents! But even more important for Curtis is the service-learning programs. When Curtis was involved with the



Curtis Webster with fellow alumnus donor Robert S. Perkin PG'66

Development Board in the early 2000s, Dr. Klein asked him to join a service trip to Romania with TASIS students. The experience resulted in a five-year-plus commitment to chaperoning student trips to Romania to meet abandoned children living with HIV. This flows into his philanthropic interest in youth services, and his work with Dr. Klein's Assisting Children in Need non-profit dedicated to improving access to education, medical care, and independent living for children around the world.

Curtis also has a passion for music. He owns a state-of-the-art recording studio in New York called the Vertical Corporation which has hosted global chart-topping artists. He has written original music for the theater and worked

on sound design for productions in New York City and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. He continues his involvement in the performing arts by serving on the board of the Blue Curtain Foundation, which supports young performers, international artists, and new music.

As President of the Curtis W. McGraw Foundation, Curtis oversees the non-profit's support of the arts, education, medical research, and social services programs, working with over a hundred and thirty groups annually. Of particular interest has been HIV/AIDS outreach and research in addition to educational and environmental causes, along with youth outreach programs. He is also the President of the Lisa McGraw Figure Skating Foundation which supports individual figure skaters and figure-skating professional and arts organizations. He has also served on the boards of the Princeton Hospital Foundation, Patriots Theater Foundation in Trenton, New Jersey, and currently, the Blue Curtain Foundation.

For Curtis to have such an intimate history with an institution and giving to it regularly for so many years is a testament to his belief in TASIS. One of the fascinating and unique points of the School is the dozens of nationalities and how the School community faces world events as united global citizens. The coming together of personalities and cultural history results in a uniqueness that is unlike any other American boarding school, as TASIS is nurturing the future leaders of our planet. We are immeasurably grateful to Curtis for his exceptional commitment to TASIS, which has helped light the way for our School in ways that will echo for generations to come.

In Memoriam Horst Dürrschmidt 1942 - 2022

Horst Dürrschmidt: A Sense of Excellence

Mark Aeschliman



As I ponder over Horst Dürrschmidt's lasting legacy, it occurs to me that it will be his innate sense of excellence. His discernment showed itself in his aesthetic decisions, his painstaking attention to detail, his celebration of artistry and craftsmanship. He put his imprimatur on the TASIS visual and performing arts, more than once recollecting in my hearing the story of his first experience of opera as a school boy. As a colleague, I benefitted greatly from his generous mentoring and guidance, and from his humane and encouraging approach to teaching. As a department member I always felt a strong sense of direction imparted by his decisions. As a friend and ally he was always trustworthy and steadfast, even in times of turbulence.

We had many affinities, from food to photography, from Herman Hesse to Expressionist painting, from Anselm Kiefer to Joseph Beuys. Horst often admitted his lack of intellectualism and his preference for the object over its verbal justification, and for the hands-on approach to making things over erecting theoretical scaffolds. His thinking reflected the Bauhaus curriculum, which intended to eliminate barriers between artisanry and fine arts, and emphasized a deep acquaintance with materials and a valorization of technique in its Preliminary Course. When I began teaching studio art under his guidance, I had to acquire skill at pottery-making on the wheel, hand-building, glazing and running the kiln, candle-making, and oil painting, or I was not welcome to occupy the position. We spoke about this as recently as a month ago when I complimented him about the range of techniques he introduced. At that time Horst told me his understanding of Bauhaus principles was largely intuitive. Sure, Intuitive excellence.

Most impressive to me, as I'm sure it was to other novice art teachers when I began, was his refusal to express negative judgments about students' artworks. Encouragement replaced judgment, reward for effort was forthcoming, nobody who honestly tried was down-graded. He would work with students to identify and strengthen their approach and understanding. At the same time, he was free to celebrate the ablest students and to help them develop their work.

Nobody needs to say goodbye to you, Horst, because your legacy will live on at the school and beyond its walls.

Addio, amico mio.

Horst Dürrschmidt served TASIS from 1974 to 2009, as photography and art teacher as well as Arts Department Chairman. He inspired thousands of students. Mark Aeschliman, FCF '75, TASIS Master Teacher, was his colleague and friend for forty years.



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