

Former ASLer meets the President and the Prime Minister



When Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bill Clinton visited Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Md., Elizabeth O'Brien '98, now a senior there, had the privilege of introducing the President. Beth was an ASL student from 1993 to 1997.

Beth, and classmate Nikole Benders, met the Prime Minister and President before the speeches. "We were joined by various governors and senators," says Beth. "I got to hear lots of behind-the-scenes talk among the senators, about how they were going to come together on such-and-such a point, so as to get this act passed. I liked hearing all the political talk."

After Beth and Nikole presented the two leaders with sweatshirts and baseball caps they sent an e-mail to a British

school in Bristol. "Then we — the President, Prime Minister, three White House people, two of Tony Blair's staff, and Nikole and I — hung out while the President and Prime Minister went over their speeches.

Prime Minister Blair asked me about my connection with England and soon after, President Clinton joined the conversation. I was in such shock! Here I was carrying on a conversation with two of the most important people in the whole world about England and the beautiful art at Winfield House. Soon we had to end our conversation and go out to meet the cheering crowd."

After opening with a joke about the British weather, Beth gave her introduction. "I am familiar with the

British weather because I was born there, and have spent the last four years living in London. Winston Churchill once wrote that the United States and the United Kingdom, 'are two nations divided by a common language'. As someone who has experienced the richness of both our cultures, I believe we are not divided but united by a common vision of the future. We both believe that ordinary people can change things positively, and we believe in the power of education to prepare us to face all challenges."



ASLers party

in the British Embassy in Washington, D.C.

On 2 May 1998, ASLers from the Classes of 1973, 1978 and 1988 celebrated their 25, 20 and ten-year reunions in Washington, D.C. They organized separate gatherings for each class on the Friday evening or Saturday afternoon and on Saturday evening over 100 alumni from all over the world came together at the British Embassy to reminisce and reconnect.

The Class of 1973

By Maryjane Sutherland Stout '73, Emily Gaul Reh '73 and Robert Ehringer '73

The Class of 1973 met for lunch on Saturday at The Hawk and The Dove, a pub on Capitol Hill.

We chose it partly because the name captured the scope of political issues back in the US during our time in London. We had an un-airconditioned room to ourselves. In attendance were Emily Gaul Reh and her husband, Maryjane Sutherland Stout with husband and two-year-old, Robert Eringer, Robert Martin, Jeff Preston and his wife, Steve Wilson and Ernie Whittle.

The big surprise was a person who walked in wearing a court jester's cap — Don Jesse! Why is it that he hasn't aged and was immediately recognizable by all, while we could barely remember one another? We had various memories of him: sociology teacher, English teacher, art teacher — it wasn't possible to be at ASL in those days and not have taken at least one class with the irrepressible Mr. Jesse.

Mr. Jesse regaled us with tales of the trip to Russia, our outing to the play *I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet*, the time he shaved one side of his beard and head to see if students would notice, and more contemporary stories of his dinner with Princess Margaret and his current abode in Cornwall.

Other stories told around the table included lots of catching up on fellow students and teachers, memories of Ten Years After and Elton John's concerts in



"Transformed by cocktail dresses and suits, and sans toddlers... we look forward to doing it again at the all-Class reunion in 2000."

Pictured from top to bottom, left to right:

Chris Palmer, Mandy Jackson Palmer '88, C.J. Fitzgerald, Heather Ewing '88, John Houghton, Heather Chandor '88

Warren and Barbara Coloney

Don Jesse, Amir Morgan '84 and Catherine Coloney Heffley '81

Margaret Coloney Curry '78, Kathleen Sims, Sarah Merrill Hickey '78, Tom Sims '78

Stephen Wilson '73, John Kaufman '73, Jeff Preston '73, Janet Preston



the gym, and the tale of some of us walking out of the Class of 1972 graduation, at which then Minister of Education Margaret Thatcher spoke. Students chanted, "Thatcher, Thatcher, milk snatcher," in reference to the cuts in milk subsidies for British school children.

After a couple of hours and a few British beers, the heat got the better of us, and we retired to our respective hotels for the afternoon. Transformed by cocktail dresses and suits, and sans toddlers, we reconvened for dinner at



Pictured from top to bottom, left to right:
Fred Bingaman '78 and Sarah Merrill Hickey '78
Kathleen and Tom Sims '78

Below: Rich Clinkard '88, Jennifer Wise '88,
Susan Coonley '88 and Kurt Diedrich '88

Bottom: Members of the class of 1978



the British Embassy, where we were joined by Brian Baker-Bent and wife, Steve Glover and wife, John Kaufman, Helen Von Uchelen Link and husband, Cathey Murphy, Ernie Whittle, Richard Wilson and Steve Wilson. The two 1973 tables swapped more stories, this time including tales of what we're doing today. Robert Eringer had just talked to William Moloney, Commissioner for Education for the State of Colorado, and brought us up to date on Mr. Moloney's successful career in education. After cocktails and dinner, Don Jesse's standing ovation speech brought tears to some eyes. Uncharacteristically, he was rather humble and self-effacing. He is an intrinsic part of our ASL memories. Thanks to the Alumni Office for organizing such a wonderful event, members of the Class of 1973 rekindled fond memories of their London years and became reacquainted. We look forward to doing it again at the all-Class reunion in the year 2000 and hope to see even more faces then.

Pictured above, left to right: Robert Eringer '73 and Maryjane Sutherland Stout '73; Susan Rose, Steve Glover '73, E. Gaul, Helen Van Uchelen Link '73; Brian Baker-Brent '73, Ernest Whittle '73 and Pamela Baker-Brent



Members of the Class of 1973

The Class of 1978

By Sarah Merrill Hickey '78

The Class of 1978 had a great time in Washington, D.C., celebrating our 20-year reunion. Twenty-five classmates and many spouses and guests attended the various activities throughout the weekend of 2 May. Friday evening we met at an Irish pub, The Dubliner, near Union Station. With plenty to reminisce about, we closed the pub down at 3 AM. Many of us were surprised we could still stay up that late, let alone get up the next morning.

Saturday found us scattered throughout the city sightseeing, shopping and visiting with old friends. That evening, at the reunion dinner at the British Embassy, I believe that the Class of 1978 had the biggest turnout — and certainly the loudest one. The dinner was delicious and we enjoyed more conversation with our class members and others. The class gift chair, our own Tom Sims '78, welcomed everyone to the evening's festivities. We were especially thrilled to see Don Jesse! After the reunion dinner, we continued

our celebration at another Irish pub, The Four Provinces, on Connecticut Avenue.

Our group was huge, so we filled the outside patio and toasted the evening into the next morning. Another late night, but we managed to meet for breakfast to chat a bit more before everyone headed off in their own directions. The weekend was fantastic and the Class of 1978 can't wait for the next reunion. We aren't as old as we thought we were!

The Class of 1988

By Carolyn Yehle '88 and Mandy Jackson Palmer '88

Orange and black balloons marked our meeting spot at the Music City Roadhouse in Georgetown on Friday night. Carolyn Yehle, Mandy Jackson Palmer, Chris Takonis, Alec Young, Nicole Moss, Holly Holland, Jameela Geiger, Jenn Wise, Susan Coonley, Vicki Seawright and Kurt Diedrich were there to kick off the reunion weekend festivities. It was an evening filled with laughter and reminiscences of our time at ASL. In addition to the class members listed above, Jennifer Kubin Alexander, Kerrie Hickman Donovan, Bruce Mygatt, Ramie Egan, Heather Chandor, Heather Ewing, Jeff Hill, Stephen Morrison, Chrissy Maloy, and Matt Planer also attended the Reunion dinner Saturday night. The evening progressed in ASL style — the party continued to the local bar and finished with some great late night club dancing. Hats off to all of the class members who were able to attend. I hope to see more classmates at the all class Reunion in the year 2000!



Kerrie Hickman Donovan '88, Jennifer Kubin Alexander '88,
Jameela Geiger '88, Susan Coonley '88, Holly Holland '88,
Jennifer Wise '88 and Victoria Seawright '88



“Why is it that Don Jesse hasn't aged and was immediately recognizable by all, while we could barely remember one another?”

IN MEMORIAM

James Patrick McGovern 1941-1998



Members of the School community were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of James Patrick McGovern, an ASL High School English teacher since 1974 and the father of James '83, Andrew '84 and Catherine '85. Mr. McGovern suffered a heart attack during a Sunday run in the park on 29 March 1998.

On the day after his death, Head of School Dr. Judith R. Glickman spoke of the loss to his students. Mr. McGovern's students "simply loved him," she said, "for the time he spent with them individually, for the confidence he had in them as people, for the way in which he taught. Jim was very much his own person, not one to be swayed by position or politics. He called the shots as they are, never losing sight of our primary responsibility to students and their learning. He was one of the brightest, most perceptive people with whom I have ever worked."

Born in 1941, Mr. McGovern attended St. Peter's Preparatory High School in New Jersey. He earned his BA in English and

American Literature from Boston College and an MFA in creative writing from the University of Oregon. In 1974, after teaching at the university level, he came to ASL. In his 24 years at the School he taught and developed a wide range of English courses, including mythology, world literature, Russian literature, Asian Literature, European Literature and the Irish Renaissance. Head of English Anthony Linick said, "It is fair to say that he had no rival among his peers in the number of individual English course offerings at his command. That he also found time to sponsor student clubs and the School's literary magazine, to coach a variety of sports, and to serve with distinction on schoolwide committees testifies to his supreme commitment to the School and to the life of the mind." Mr. McGovern took two sabbatical leaves from ASL, in 1985-86 and in 1993-94, to do post-graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley and at San Francisco State University.

He played many important roles in the life of the School, as head of the English department, president of the Faculty Association, member and chair of the Steering Committee for the School's recent re-accreditation and as the faculty advisor to *Jambalaya*, the literary magazine. The Class of 1993 awarded him the honor of 'Teacher of the Year'; since his death, this honor has been renamed the James P. McGovern Distinguished Teacher Award. Mr. McGovern also served as head coach of the wrestling team, the cross-country team and the girls field hockey team and as assistant coach for the track and field team.

"It was one of Dad's greatest pleasures in life to coach," recalls son Andrew McGovern '83. "He'll be remembered by many as a track, field and wrestling coach during the 1970's and 1980's, and more recently as a coach of field hockey. To him sports were first and foremost a preparation for what the world might dish out. It wasn't enough that his students should read and discuss great works of literature; push-ups and laps around the pitch were every bit as essential to the work of the soul."

High School students were informed of Mr. McGovern's death in a short assembly. All English classes were canceled for the day, and flowers and hockey sticks were left in Mr. McGovern's room. The School's counselors were on hand to help students grieve, and large pieces of paper were set out for students to write on. The following day, a special assembly was held. The orchestra played, and several students and faculty members spoke and read.

Mr. McGovern was remembered by family, students and colleagues, who spoke at the Service of Thanksgiving for his life St. John's Wood Church, on 2 April. On the next day, the McGovern family held their own private services, a Catholic mass, followed by an Irish wake in which the family celebrated his life with music, drinking and dancing.



Colleagues and students speak

A nearly fatal pancreatic failure in the summer of 1983 caused Mr. McGovern to live a vigorous life differently. "He took stock, clarified his values and set about rebuilding his life. From that moment on, Jim regarded every day as a bonus," Head of Athletics John Lockwood said in his eulogy. In order to control his health, Mr. McGovern embarked on a strict fitness and diet regime; his enormous salads at lunch were legendary. Mr. Lockwood observed that "while his lunch never contained meat, his thoughts always did. They were provoking, philosophical and beautifully constructed. He was an unselfconscious speaker. The poet, the philosopher, where it exists in most of us is buried deep. For Jim, words, phrases, sentences and ideas, which for most of us would represent our Sunday best clothes, were his workday apparel: he wore them like a comfortable, old, tweed coat."

Mr. Linick recalled how Mr. McGovern "engaged his students in a dialogue that pushed them to find, in the literary materials under consideration, contemporary and personal parallels that would bring the texts to life. His vast reading and his willingness to venture far beyond the orthodox literary canon made him a fascinating source of new information and experiences. He was also profoundly concerned with improving student writing, and willing to spend endless hours in the one-to-one conferences needed to assist students in sharpening their writing skills."

Several of Mr. McGovern's students spoke as well. "As I was writing this," said Marc Mewshaw '98, "All I could think was, where is Mr. McGovern's literary critique when I most need it? The one thing he always told me was to cut the introduction. I guess he felt that too much of life is wasted on small talk and small-mindedness. Too much time spent becoming, not enough actually being.... The true magic of Mac's teaching lay in his ability to forge and fuse connections between such distant authors and works as Lao-Tzu, *Crime and Punishment*, Carl Jung and

Apocalypse Now. For us, he wove the loose ends of art and life into a coherent tapestry inlaid with gems of wisdom. His synthesis of ideas would have remained hidden had he not been able to communicate it understandably to us. What was truly inspiring about this communication was that Jim McGovern lived what he taught. In his own person, he provided us with the living embodiment of his philosophy."

Eben Harrell '98 rushed into school on the Monday after Mr. McGovern died to tell him that he had been accepted to Princeton. "I was shocked to find that, for the first time, he was not there. I had so many questions I needed to ask him. 'Chief, what should I do?' 'Where should I go?' 'Who should I be?' Mr. McGovern's final great lesson for me was that the answers to all my questions lie within me."

Raul Biancardi '80 echoed the sentiments of current ASL students. He met Mr. McGovern in the fall of 1977. "He was my Writer's Workshop teacher and my introduction to life at ASL. I went on to take almost every course that he taught, and he coached me every track season. We had many, many stimulating and far-reaching conversations after class, on the track, on buses to meets, at tournaments, and of course, occasionally, clandestinely, at pubs. That conversation continued throughout my years at university, when I was an ASL counselor, and even into my new career."

Former High School Principal Clayton Lewis sent a letter which was read out at the memorial service. In it he recalled the first time he had received news of Mr. McGovern's death — in the summer of 1983. "So now the telephone call has come again. Jim is dead. I feel for those who are left behind, who would have wanted to say good-bye, or to hear his thoughts one more time. Yet, I sense that the end was never supposed to be that way for Jim. It just doesn't fit. I want to believe that when death came, Jim was in full running stride, lost in his musing and grateful for all those extra years."