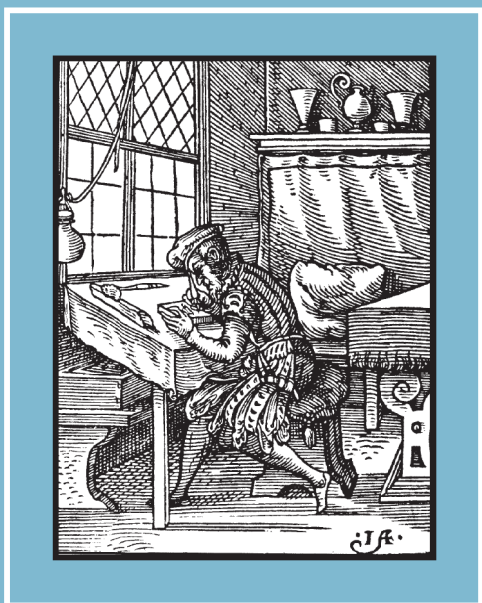


# FRIENDS' CENTRAL



# FORUM

FALL 2011/WINTER 2012

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*\*the state of being in a place*

*Those who educate children well are more to be honored  
than they who produce them. For these only gave them life,  
those the art of living well.*

— Aristotle

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# FORUM

*Forum* is our community's educational journal. Faculty, alumni, board members, parents and students are encouraged to contribute opinions, ideas, innovations and observations about any aspect of their lives relating to educational experiences.

Marilyn Lager  
Editor, *Forum*



## READERS' REFLECTIONS

Dear Ms. Lager:

The article in the spring/summer issue of *Forum* by Padraig Barry and Rachel Bradburd piqued my curiosity.

If I'm not mistaken, the pecan is a native North American tree. If so, how could those pecans get into those European Middle Ages delicious sounding pies and bread?

Questioningly yours,  
John S. Carson, M.D. (Class of 1944)

*The editor passed this letter on to Padraig Barry, who answered in a most generous and lengthy letter which is excerpted here.*

Dear Dr. Carson:

Thank you for your letter asking the question as to how pecans could end up in European Middle Age recipes. It seems that the Spanish were the first to introduce pecans into Europe, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The common consensus amongst historians and scholars is that the Middle Ages lasted about 1000 years, from 500AD-1500AD, so technically the pecan may well have found its way into a pie recipe, whether Apple Pecan Bread or not, during the late Middle Ages. However, this seems unlikely, since the earliest pecan reference in scholarly tomes dates to 1722 (Colonial times).

\* \* \*

In any case, thank you for your letter. It reminded me that I should do a better job of researching sources before I put pen to paper. I also learned much about the humble pecan, and for that I also thank you.

Padraig Barry  
Sixth Grade Science Teacher



## **Finding Your *Himmel, Liebe and Lied*:\* Friends' Central Commencement Address 2011**

By James Davis

*Jim was head of the arts department at FCS and taught music history, music theory and directed the choral program for thirty-nine years. He retired this past June and will serve as the school archivist.*

Along with you all, I'm thinking of the seniors. Their accomplishments and histories here at FCS, the coming separation which brings sadness, excitement, anticipation and a little fear. I'm thinking of them because I always do at commencement, but I hope they will not find it too presumptuous for me to claim some solidarity with them as I too prepare to leave and share some of the same sadness, excitement and anticipation. You and I are both seniors today.

First, a fable. It was my first week of teaching in the Radnor School District in the spring of 1969. Tensions were high as war was raging in Vietnam, and civil unrest was raging at home. Mirroring the clear beauty of the day, I was feeling pretty fresh and optimistic, full of promise, and, of course, full of answers. I was certain that I was going to like this teaching thing and was confident I was going to not only teach the students, but also bring enlightenment to my fellow teachers. Ah, the arrogance of youth! Suddenly an alarm sounds. No problem; I am young, I am confident, I am fresh and I am full of answers. I line up my second-grade charges-and make sure each one is holding his or her buddy's hand as I march them out the door into

**Do I ever have this job down pat, thought I,  
more smugly than I care to remember.**

the sunshine. My class is outside before anyone else's. Do I ever have this job down pat, thought I, more smugly than I care to remember. Who said teaching was hard? I am still relishing my triumph when I notice the principal at the front door. He looks pretty agitated – perhaps he is really happy to see this new but oh-so-competent kid on the

\* Heaven; Love; Song

block. But no, I notice that he is clearly screaming and waving. His flailing arms call to mind some out of control, demented windmill. It finally dawns on me that he wants me and the class to come inside. Why, I wonder? The answer is eventually apparent and humiliating. It was not a fire alarm, as I had supposed, but an air raid drill. Instead of basking in the congratulations I felt I so richly deserved, I had endangered each and every child by making them the most obvious target for any stray bomb that might find our street. Ah, the shame. The next day we had another drill so that Mr. Davis could learn the difference between fire alarms and air raid sirens.

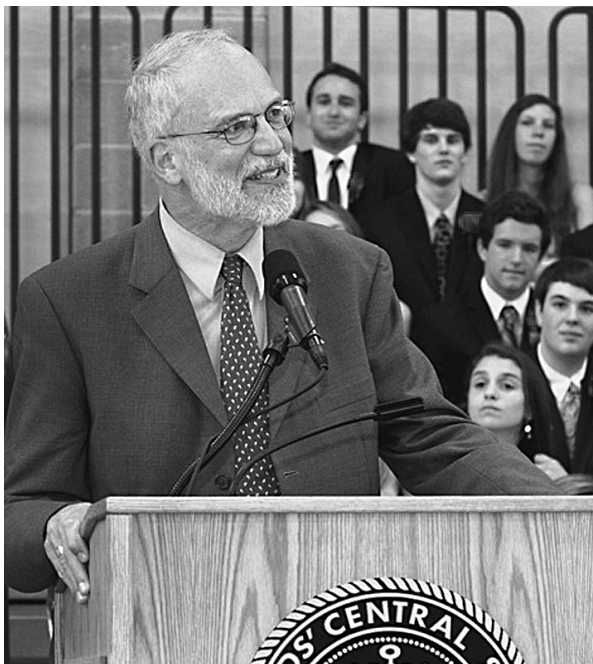
The moral of this fable? There are several. One, you don't know everything, and you don't have all the answers, even though you're pretty sure you do. Two, it's vitally important to know what air raid sirens sound like. Third, and most significant, I learned that even though I was prepared to talk in my new role of teacher, I gradually saw I needed to develop some listening skills that were different from my musical training. To listen for the differences between fire and air raids, surely, but really to be prepared to do the work of listening to others, to discern nuances in what is both spoken and unspoken.

**...to be prepared to do the work of listening  
to others, to discern nuances in what is both  
spoken and unspoken.**

Listening, it turns out is hard. Stravinsky spoke of this difficulty when he said, "To listen is an effort, to hear is no merit; a duck hears also." Indeed. But the effort has to be worth it. Teachers, and certainly schools, if we want to avoid the air raids and bombs that might come our way, must cultivate active and acute listening.

But assuming we listen with care, how do we then assess what we are listening to? How do we distinguish and sort through the sounds that come our way? Which ones do we attend to? Which ones can we ignore? Where can we find guides in discerning the various sirens in our life? I offer two possibilities. Both examples spring from music—the first a piece of music and the second a composer.

I end every year in my music history and music theory courses by playing a song of Gustav Mahler. It is a setting of a Friedrich Rückert poem, "*Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen.*" The final two lines are the ones that I highlight for them. "*Ich bin gestorben der Weltgetümmel und ruh in einem stillen Gebiet. Ich leb allein in meinem Himmel, in meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied.*" I am dead/numb to the distracting bustle of the world; I live rather in my heaven, my love and in my song. *Himmel* is that which is eternal and brings us spiritual solace; *Liebe*, that which



Jim at graduation.

brings us solace through those whom we love, and *Lied*, that which brings us solace through art/music. These words have been a sort of touchstone, a creed for me. To find, and then cling to that which is beyond *getümmel* (noise/static/busyness) to find and then cling instead to *Himmel, Liebe and Lied*. I wish I could play a bit of the song for you now: the aching, plangent, beauty of the English horn. The tentative opening phrase of only two notes, the addition of a third, and then the flowering into its full, yearning nature. The (surprising for Mahler) delicate orchestration and sensitivity of the word painting create musically for me, the presence of God. John Whittier, the Quaker poet and hymnist, called this presence “a still small voice of

**However you define your *Himmel*, your *Liebe*,  
your *Lied*, find them and anchor yourselves there.  
Shut out the *getümmel*.**

calm.” However you define your *Himmel*, your *Liebe*, your *Lied*, find them and anchor yourselves there. Shut out the *getümmel*.

Do we have any models for this quest? We each need to find our own guide, but I offer Verdi as an example. Who, besides Mozart, has ever drawn such sympathetic, human characters through their

music in opera? Think of Rigoletto, Violetta, Simon Boccanegra or Rodrigo. Think of them. Get to know them; you will be better for it. Happily, these characters are not his only noble creations. His life was one of nobility. Seeing to the needs of his workers on his farm, remaining true to the woman he loved in spite of social antipathy and ostracism, enduring the unrelenting censorship of the bureaucrats of his day, or endowing a rest home for aged musicians in Milan (Casa Riposo) which still exists today, Verdi was someone who knew much getümmel in his life, but by integrating his humanity into his art remained true to his Himmel, his Liebe and his Lied. He was more than just a composer.

### **I've tried to be more than a music teacher...**

I've tried to be more than a music teacher, and I thank FCS for helping me (us) grow. How lucky am I—are we—to be able to find that which helps us integrate our skills into our characters. Or is it the other way around? FCS has allowed me to be who I am—a gay, Anglo-Catholic, opera loving, Flyers fan, Miss America devotee and cook who has had a chance to teach that which I love to those whom I love. You might be a straight, Muslim, jazz loving, fancier of fast food—ok, maybe not that!—who finds a cure for Alzheimers. What do I wish for us as fellow seniors and leave-takers of FCS? For one, I wish you forty-three years of the kind of professional satisfaction that I have had the privilege to enjoy. Be like Verdi. Be great musicians, scientists, lawyers, whatever, but not just those things. Second, whoever you are and whatever you do, make the effort to listen. You don't want bombs falling on you.

### **Be like Verdi.**

You do not have all the answers any more than I did that day of the fire, I mean air raid drill. But you can find your Himmel, your Liebe and your Lied. They will provide enough.





## An FCS Journey: My School, My Job, My Home

By Robert Folwell

*Bobby has been at FCS for twenty-five years, working in Lower School and then in the Physical Education Department.*

I was adopted at two weeks old by a forty-nine-year old white couple who were intelligent, loving people and, incidentally and significantly, ACLU and NAACP members. It was an open adoption, unheard of in the early sixties. If not adopted, in two weeks, I was on my way to an orphanage. My adoptive parents instilled strong values and morals that I live by and teach with today. My

**My adoptive parents instilled strong values and morals that I live by and teach with today.**

dad had a deep connection with Quakerism: his background dated back to a historic Quaker family in the 1700s from Mullica Hill, New Jersey. He had many Quaker connections, was a member of the Cherry Street Meeting and on the Board of Trustees at Friends Select. He graduated from Westtown Friends and Haverford College. (This gave me a stint in middle school at Friends Select.) I was raised in the liberal Powelton Village in West Philadelphia, a neighborhood that was family oriented with many home owners.

However, after the divorce of my parents, I moved to my dad's house, an inner city lower income neighborhood riddled with gangs and drugs. I decided I wanted to be with my friends and attend University City High for ninth and tenth grades. This was a predominantly Afro-American school during a time of bussing relocation of Asian students. This caused many clashes among races. The school had a thousand students and sub-standard education. The security guards locked us in after homeroom by chaining the outer doors, because of the great number of students trying to check in and then cut out for the remainder of the day. Here I met my best friend on

the soccer field and was happy with some of the “homies.” However, I realized that this school was not a place I could excel in.

I was fortunate to have the chance to switch schools. My special journey began in 1977, as a sixteen-year-old bi-racial inner city kid entering a very foreign environment: Friends’ Central School. It was

**...entering a very foreign environment:  
Friends’ Central School. It was not only a  
school transfer; it was a culture shock.**

not only a school transfer; it was a culture shock. My first experience with FCS was an interview with then Admission Director Joe Ludwig. He was very welcoming, gave me a tour, testing and interview. I put up an outward cold wall, hiding my real personality for protection from predators who could use any weakness and take advantage. I had learned to adapt in those inner city streets and schools. I remember walking the FCS campus with an umbrella as a cane to help my cool stroll on a sunny day.

The first mentor I experienced was Joe, the true and outgoing professional, able to quickly put me at ease and pull out some of my positive character traits. My early experiences of fitting into the daily Friends’ Central community was challenging both academically and socially, but the students, teachers, coaches and administration were so welcoming and friendly. I couldn’t believe how beautiful and green the campus was. I came from a concrete jungle

Enter Headmaster Tom Wood. “*How are you, dear boy,*” he would affectionately say on many of our meetings. I attended a night Shakespeare class he taught in his cottage on campus. The transition remained challenging, with me coming from a predominantly Afro American low income neighborhood and school. There was a lot of

**There was a lot of ground  
to make up.**

ground to make up. The students were so outgoing and academically motivated. This community was relaxed, learning looked fun, and teachers smiled and were dedicated: Mr. Clint Ely with his deep voice; Mr. Cederstrom, the art teacher, always had a unique but interesting message to relay; and Mr. Davis, who took our music theory class to NY to the opera, *Madame Butterfly*. Of course one of the most bonding moments was when Mr. Davis lost a contact lens in the middle of a Broadway intersection island, and the whole class was on all fours searching.

These memorable experiences, academic or otherwise, helped speak to the whole person in me. Life lessons came from the classroom, the arts, socialization, and of course, my passion for the athletic fields and courts. I was able to transform myself into a competitive teammate, committed to team and winning. Enter Keith Bradburd

**I was able to transform myself into a competitive teammate, committed to team and winning.**

(soccer) coach) and Mike Mersky (basketball coach). These two were not only fine role models and solid coaches, but they had my full attention. I excelled in sports, and in my senior year, I became captain and co-MVP of the basketball team, one of my first stabs at being a leader.

I was a fierce competitor and gained many life lessons through sports. Respect and sportsmanship came the hard way, in a basketball championship loss where I refused to shake hands with the opposing team at the end of the game. My dad came out of the stands, and Mr. Mersky had me go to the opposing team locker room to shake hands. To this day that stays with me, and I've shared the story with many of the student athletes whom I have coached. Good sportsmanship is one of the highest regarded principles and rules of all the teams I coach. As much as I have learned and grown as a student at FCS, I have always wanted to share and give back.

**Good sportsmanship is one of the highest regarded principles and rules of all the teams I coach.**

I also was President of the BSU (The Black Students Union), another chance to be a positive leader. Probably one of the most memorable things I helped accomplish was organizing and joining a march with BSU students in Center City Philadelphia to protest that Martin Luther King's Birthday was not a national holiday. He was one of my heroes; my father had taken me to see Dr. King speak when I was four. I remember being on my dad's shoulders and observing the dead silence of thousands of people listening to this man who spoke of peace, love and soul, words I use today in many greetings and goodbyes towards my students.

I quickly made many friends at FCS of various race, gender and socio-economic levels, and some of my fondest memories are in those two fleeting years in eleventh and twelfth grade at FCS. One of the final experiences was my senior project, working as an intern at a Montessori school. Yes, even then I knew I wanted to teach and

give back some of the wonders that I received at FCS and through my life as an adoptee. I've been truly blessed!

After graduation, I attended Drexel and majored in Early Childhood Education. I worked at the Drexel Early Childhood Center to help pay the tuition while gaining valuable experience from graduate students and my colleagues. Unfortunately I was still not ready to fully commit to the academics. I transferred to the Temple night school program and after a few courses, I took some time off to join the work force. I became an Emergency Medical Technician and drove ambulances for a small family-owned business in Overbrook. Although some days I drove fourteen hours a day, I learned the city like the back of my hand and was able to do real service for people who were in dire need of support because of various illnesses. What a way to humble your self. Anytime I looked in the mirror and felt

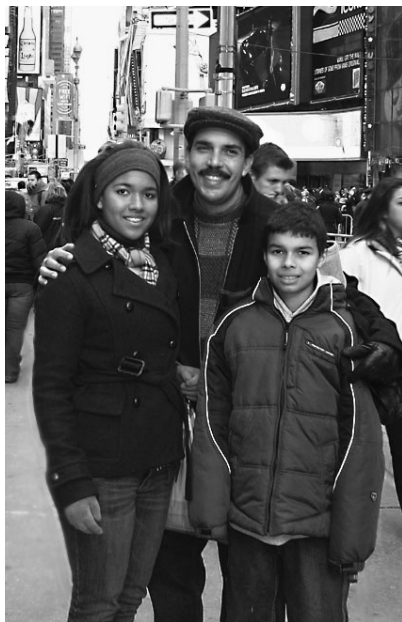
**Anytime I looked in the mirror and felt sorry for myself, I would think of the courageous people who function and live happily with major illness.**

sorry for myself, I would think of the courageous people who function and live happily with major illness. The following year I took a related job as a vehicle inspector at Wheels (a medical assistance transport company).

At about this time, I received a letter from Tom Wood asking if I was interested in rejoining the FCS community, teaching. I accepted and became an assistant teacher in first grade under a master teacher, Anne Ewing, another mentor. In 1990, FCS purchased the Montgomery School campus in Wynnewood on Old Gulph Road. I applied and received faculty living in an apartment on campus with my former wife Aqueelah. After three years in first grade, I transitioned to the Pre-K classroom with yet another mentor and master teacher "Mrs. D" (Louise DeLeonardo), a wonderful robust teacher and traditional Italian woman. We taught Italy as a theme to the class curriculum. Mrs. D led, and I put into action the Italian way of life such as gondola rides up and down the hallway, with gondoliers in full dress and wagons decorated colorfully. Of course the feasts were "to die for." Her cooking was magnificent.

**I was soaking up all of these skills and interactive teaching styles.**

What cultural experiences for the children and their parents... and I was soaking up all of these skills and interactive teaching styles.



Bobby in Times Square with  
Briana '13 and Steven '16.

Two years later I moved to kindergarten, and before you know it, it was B Week and the birth of Beautiful Baby Briana. I brought her in, and the lesson was a tangible first for many of the K students. What a beaming proud daddy I was...and still am. Two years later Aqueelah and I got the surprise of our lives, a handsome son Steven. (Briana is now a student in the eleventh grade, and Steven in the eighth.) The school graciously let us move into a house, a more spacious area on the Lower School campus.

Along with the great sense of community and sharing of knowledge, the benefits were tremendous. Campus living, future tuition remission for Briana and Steven and soon the

grand opening of my party business, *Bob's Best Birthdays* – a new hat to try on as an entrepreneur. During these years I got much joy from coaching various sports—Junior Varsity Basketball, Varsity Basketball Assistant, Varsity Soccer, Junior Varsity Baseball, Assistant Varsity Baseball and Lacrosse—and today coaching Middle School sports. The many life lessons I received as a student were just waiting to burst out in the thrill of each season. This caused a transition to the Physical Education Department. Although I was very

**Although I was very passionate  
as a classroom teacher, coaching  
was my true calling.**

passionate as a classroom teacher, coaching was my true calling. The coaching had taken me out of the classroom too often, and now as a member of the Physical Education department, I could take full advantage of coaching three seasons. I believe I contributed to a struggling basketball program that turned around into a championship caliber program that flourishes today. My strong morals and values were passed on to young athletes: Respect, teamwork, sports-

manship and work ethic. Once again I was reunited with my mentor and coach Keith Bradburd, now the Athletic Director.

Life has come full circle. Now my teachers and coaches are my colleagues, still offering great advice and mentoring. They constantly reiterate passion, networking, continual growth...and keep

**Life has come full circle.  
Now my teachers and coaches are my colleagues,  
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it fun. FCS has been my school, my job and most importantly a place I have called home for a long time. I have put on yet another hat as I watch my children grow through the benefits of an education from marvelous and dedicated colleagues in Lower, Middle and now the Upper School. Lower School Principal Joe Ludwig, yes, the same man who began my journey thirty years ago is my boss and friend. He still is able to bring out the best in people, the students, teachers and parents. Retired Headmaster David Felsen often mentored me with many school matters, especially with his knowledge and passion for basketball.

In college I did a research paper on Quaker Education. One of the questions I was to answer was how did the Quaker philosophy thrive in a school (FCS) that only had a very small percentage of Quaker teachers and students? The answer was that the community lived it. The community bought into the morals, values and Quaker

**The community bought into the morals,  
values and Quaker testimonies of peace,  
simplicity, equality and service.**

testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality and service. The Meeting for Worship is the center where all sit in silence and share that light of God in each of us. The rich benefits that FCS gave to me and my family and many families through a wonderful balance of academics, arts, athletics and values shaped me into a happy, productive, passionate adult, a father, educator, coach and entrepreneur.



## Borneo

By Peter Grove

*Peter Grove has been teaching science to Lower Schoolers for twenty-four years. He was awarded a Fannie Cox Hendrie stipend for science and technology last summer.*

I was able, this past summer, to use the Hendrie stipend to travel extensively in the two Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak in the north and northwest portions of the island of Borneo. Borneo is the world's third largest island, lying due east of the Malayan peninsula and Sumatra. It is smack north of Java and due west of Sulawesi.

No, we, my wife Nancy and I, did not lose our heads, thank you, and neither did we come back victorious with heads.

**No, we, my wife Nancy and I, did not lose our heads, thank you, and neither did we come back victorious with heads.**

Why Borneo? Because we knew it to be rich beyond belief in sights and experiences and that it would provide me, as a teacher, with so much to share with my students. Thirty-five years ago, Nancy and I took a year-long trip around the world. Our airline tickets had fifty-six flights on them. For whatever reason, the Djakarta-Borneo leg was unavailable at that time, and for thirty-five years we've dreamed of going back.

But how best to present our experiences in Borneo to you?

Shall I tell you that we scrambled through endless limestone caves and that that was fun? That we labored long and hard to climb Gunung Kinabalu, the highest mountain in Southeast Asia, and that it was fun? That we spent days forging our way through jungles, up impossibly shallow rivers in native longboats and that that was fun? That we hiked the famous "Head Hunter Trail" infested with leeches and mosquitoes? That we crossed numerous rivers on delicate suspension bridges? That we saw orangutans, crocodiles, bats, and proboscis monkeys, rafflesias and one-leafed plants that exist nowhere else in the world? No, because how boringly *National Geographic* that would be.

Perhaps I should sing the joys of traveling with a group of mostly young and extremely adventurous people, exploring, hiking, wading and paddling, climbing, sleeping, eating together day after day, becoming one with them, picking up their energies and finding ourselves swept along with their ways of seeing and engaging with the world.

Perhaps I could write about how we really thought that by travelling to Borneo, the third largest island in the world, we would be traveling back in time, surrounded constantly by immensely curious natives, mud-daubed and with huge plugs in their ears against a backdrop of beautifully intricate bamboo longhouses, nestled in jungles. Are you kidding? How about jeans, T-shirts, plastic flip flops and cell phones clamped on ears. And how about the longhouses? The ones we saw were half occupied structures of rusted corrugated iron sheets and sawn lumber surrounded by car wrecks and trash piles.

**But surely, you will say, there were jungles?  
And indeed there were... but further back  
in the hinterland, not near the roads.**

But surely, you will say, there were jungles? And indeed there were... but further back in the hinterland, not near the roads. Jungles near the roads, we were told, were designated as “secondary” and therefore expendable. Ask the indigenous Iban who, years ago, set up blockades in futile attempts to stem the destruction of their environment. Of course, the battle continues.

No, near the roads, were endless plantations of palm oil – palm oil as far as the eye could see – rows and rows of monolithic, ostrich fern-like things marching over the hillsides, interlaced with miles and miles of exposed orange-brown soil. The earth was ripped by heavy machinery into gullies, ridges and access roads or leveled for processing plants. Despite some effort toward contour planting, the erosion boggles the mind, and the rivers run thick. Be quiet! We all use and depend on palm oil for lotions and soaps, ice cream and cooking oil!

But further back (and for the time being) there are, of course, jungles with their precarious inhabitants: pigmy elephants, hornbills and barbets. As we forged our way by longboat up rivers, the jungles hemmed us in – vines and epiphytes trailing to the water’s surface, roots glistening and fantastically knotted, grasping tenaciously to the banks. In two UNESCO World Heritage sites we climbed into the canopy of jungles. Through yet another jungle, we got momentary glimpses of Kinabalu as we labored doggedly toward its summit. “Do not be tempted to pull yourself up by the undergrowth,” warned our guide. “There are too many plants and animals that will harm you.





Peter and Nancy, at Ranau Memorial, site of Japanese prison camp.

See!" he said one day and, pointing, finally got me to focus on the Wagler's Viper neatly coiled, but in the defensive mode, on a branch not two feet from my face.

**[He] got me to focus on the Wagler's Viper neatly coiled, but in the defensive mode, on a branch not two feet from my face. "Venomous?" I asked. "One hour," he replied.**

"Venomous?" I asked. "One hour," he replied.

But shouldn't I write of the lovely people we met and stayed with in Borneo, for in that regard, we had indeed stepped back in time. Many still retained a simple graciousness and a dogged stalwartness, and there was little of the cynicism one meets within our own society today. With a host family I planted pineapples and knelt beside them on the back deck of their stilt house washing my clothes in a spackle bucket of rainwater. With others we learned local dances and with yet with others, we replanted a jungle clearing.

And then, there was Egin, our old guide, who gently shepherded us the 8.7 kilometers back down the flank of Kinabalu. And Kate, our young Malay guide, who stalwartly carried three days of breakfasts, snacks and dinners for the entire group, all the while steadfastly

refusing our offers to lighten her load. And we all knew she was suffering something akin to the flu. And how we were drawn into the life of a longhouse community when our boatman of only forty-nine-years died quite suddenly in the middle of the night. Our first indication of the tragic loss was the commotion up and down the veranda of the longhouse, and then the air filled with wailing. In the morning, when all was calm, we paid our respects to the body surrounded by candles and to the wife who sat in silent vigil. From the longhouse veranda, we watched as the men built the pavilion and as the women prepared the food that would celebrate his life and mark his passing. The universality of life and death, of bereavement and of the need for support to cope and move on, was once again manifest.

You see, there was so much of magic in Borneo—the magic of mystery and spirituality and the magic of sheer wonder.

**You see, there was so much of magic in Borneo—  
the magic of mystery and spirituality  
and the magic of sheer wonder.**

There was the unearthly magic of getting up at 2 a.m. for that final ascent of Kinabalu and crouching between the rocks on the summit in near freezing winds, 'til the light of the rising sun turned the Sulu Sea first to silver, then gold.

Kinabalu, the awesome mountain that dominates Sabah, is said to be the spirit home of the thousands of Australian and British prisoners who died at the hands of the Japanese in the Ranau camp at the mountain's foot or died in those terrible forced marches to it from Sandakan. Those prisoners at Ranau, it is said, came to hate the mountain and the timelessness it represented.

There was the magic of the huge limestone caves of Niah with needle stalactites and stalagmites millions of years in the making, deep underground where no one saw, and magic in the seemingly never-ending skein of five million bats emerging from Deer Cave and spiraling like a prayer or a plume of smoke into the amber sky. How did each bat know its proper time to join the exodus? And the magic (for us at least) of really seeing insects—incredible insects of every shape, dimension and color imaginable—caterpillars, centipedes, millipedes, lantern bugs, and stick insects measuring nine inches or more.

The magic of the birds calling both day and night but hidden from view in the thickness of the jungle growth, the butterflies that lit on the trunks of trees and shone in the light. The crocodile that would be a log, waiting for a thirsty but unwary macaque. The magic of a tribe of proboscis monkeys swinging and crashing through the trees at the

river's edge as they foraged for food. The magic of seeing one rafflesia, largest and quite possibly the ugliest of the world's flowers, during its one-day-per-year bloom.

And what of the magic of the waterfront in Limbang, during Ramadan, where, at the end of the day's fast, the whole town, it seemed, converged in the open air market to buy and eat the tantalizing array of deliciously smelling cooked foods—meats, vegetables and sweets.

**And, of course, the peaceful magic of the orangutans of the Sepilok Refuge with their gentle, tactile ways.**

And, of course, the peaceful magic of the orangutans of the Sepilok Refuge with their gentle, tactile ways. "Oh yes," you say. And you remember the article you recently read where orangutans snap I-pads in half when they can't get back to the picture they best loved. Well, so would I. But how different are the orangutans from the mean-spirited, thieving, lip-curling macaques. Orangutans are the gentle people of the forest. "Orang-utan" means just that.

And what of the magic of the sunset across the sands of the Kinarut seashore?

And the absolute magic of being with people you have never met before and may never meet again: Carol, the renowned marine geologist whose projects take her worldwide; Johanna, the bat specialist whose dream was to see the micro bats of Borneo; Maggie, the college science professor with whom I shared so much; Corrine, whose life is devoted to helping disabled children; Liz, now somewhere in Mongolia, who, when she needs more money, will go back to being a buyer for one of the big fashion houses in London; and Mark, recently laid off and divorced, but with no intention of letting that get in the way of his seeing more of the planet. For as long as we can, we will

**For as long as we can, we will  
always travel with younger people.**

always travel with younger people. How many beers did we drink, how many curries did we sit down to, how many arduous miles did we walk through jungles or drag longboats up rivers?

Borneo is at a cross point in time. Rapid development has exposed Borneans to new cultures, new values, new aspirations and for the most part they are embracing this. Their country will change at a pace not seen before, but they will be equal to it.

One afternoon the thirteen of us rented a boat to visit an offshore island. The crew produced an amazing barbecue on the beach. Only one thing marred the scene. The beach was littered with trash of every description washed up from the sea. I rallied the group to clean it up- to put the trash into piles at least. I solicited, with two bottles of beer, the help of two locals, and together we soon had the job done. They loved the beer, shook our hands smilingly and waved. But as we pulled away, we saw them toss the bottles on the newly cleaned sand behind them.

Our trip to Borneo was both rich and enriching beyond words. The stories and pictures will always be there for me and, for some time, to share with my students.

*(My thanks to the Fannie Cox Hendrie Fund and to Gardner Hendrie for his support over the years.)*



## The Power of Words

By Dottie Mazullo

*Dottie has been working as a learning specialist  
with FCS Middle and Upper Schoolers  
for three years.*

I remember the day I decided to be a teacher. I was in second grade at St. Albert the Great School in Huntingdon Valley, PA, and the classroom was abuzz because we were getting our school pictures back. My classmates and I were seated on the rug in a semicircle, and our teacher was looking at each picture, making a comment, and then showing the picture to the class: "Look at Susie's beautiful blonde ringlets! Tommy has such beautiful brown eyes. DIPPY DOTTIE LEFT HER BUTTON UNBUTTONED!"

What?!! Did my nice, young, Marlo Thomas look-alike teacher just make fun of my picture? I guess so, because everyone was laughing, pointing and calling me Dippy Dottie.

It was, in fact, true that one of the pearl buttons on the beautiful yellow dress I was wearing was not buttoned. It didn't leave a gaping hole that revealed anything; it was just unbuttoned. Why didn't she say anything about my new haircut or about my smile? Thankfully, this insult-slinging session occurred at the end of the day so I didn't have to endure the Dippy Dottie comments for long, or so I thought.

On the bus, I sat staring out the window, my older sisters seeing that I was going to cry, willing myself to keep it together until I got home. As soon as I crossed the threshold my mom stopped what she was doing and turned to me. She did this every day; so happy that we were home and anxious to hear about our day. But this particular

**I was sobbing uncontrollably. I ran to my room,  
threw myself on the bed and cried and cried.**

day, she didn't get a chance to ask me how my day was because I was sobbing uncontrollably. I ran to my room, threw myself on the bed and cried and cried.

My mom was alarmed. She had asked my sisters what happened but they didn't know. She thought maybe I was sick or hurt. It took a long time for me to calm down enough to tell her what happened. I could see that she was angry right away. Did she think I was making a big deal of this? Didn't she understand how embarrassed I was? Luckily, the anger was not directed at me.

She asked to see the picture, but I refused. She rubbed my back and told my sisters to go away and give us privacy. It was hours before I would show her the picture. She stayed with me, gave directions—to turn off the oven, set the table and get my brother out of the crib—to my sisters. She left my side for all of three minutes when my dad knocked on the door trying to find out what was the matter. She didn't tell him, at my request and continued rubbing my back. She didn't talk unless I did. Finally, I spoke. I said "Mom, I'm going to be a teacher, and I'm NEVER going to talk to kids like that." I still remember her smile.

**"Mom, I'm going to be a teacher, and I'm NEVER going to talk to kids like that."**

It took a while, but I convinced my mom to allow me to hide the picture under my mattress so that no one would ever see it. She wasn't happy with the idea but she agreed. We strategized about what to tell the rest of the family and finally decided that honesty was best. I could see that my dad and my sisters were REALLY worried when we descended the stairs. We had been in my room for four

or five hours. I looked a mess and started crying all over again when my dad picked me up to hug me.

My mom started the announcement: "Everyone is different. Some things hurt some people while other people can ignore them. We are going to support Dorothy's feelings and show sympathy."

I told everyone what happened and my sisters ran to me to hug



Dottie, with tenth grader, Maureen Donavan.

*Picture taken by Bobir Atakhanov.*

me. They couldn't believe how cruel the teacher had been. My dad looked angry, just like my mom had, but comforted me and said just what I needed to hear. Of course, they asked to see the picture but I refused to share it. Believe it or not, it was about ten years before I showed it to anyone!

**I never gave up on my idea to become a teacher. Actually, I never even thought of another career.**

I never gave up on my idea to become a teacher. Actually, I never even thought of another career. In high school I had to take an 'occupation test,' the results indicated that I would make a good dental hygienist, occupational therapist or speech and language therapist.

I immediately ruled out dental hygienist. I didn't want to spend my day with my hands in the mouths of people I barely knew. I made an appointment at our local hospital to observe an occupational therapist and quickly ruled that out too. Finally I tagged along with my sister's fiancé, now husband, to Hahnemann Medical School and stumbled upon the Speech and Hearing Clinic. There were small therapy rooms with two-way mirrors so I could view the therapy. I was intrigued by what I saw: people from the age of three to eighty-seven working on either producing sounds (articulation), trying to get their thoughts out (verbal expression), or memory strategies that would provide them with some success when following directions.

In the absence of the Internet, I went to the guidance office the next day and looked up speech and language therapy. I was excited to learn that there are two strands to the field and one component was school-based. This helped focus my college search, and soon I was enrolled in a speech correction program. I was going to be a teacher!

**This helped focus my college search, and soon I was enrolled in a speech correction program. I was going to be a teacher!**

Fast forward four years, and I am a senior in college, looking for a job. I answered an ad for a Speech and Language therapist for Head Start, a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children. Luckily, I was hired to serve the special needs population in two, then three, then

five preschools. I loved working with this age group but didn't feel that I was making enough of an impact with the limited time that I had with each child.

Soon I found myself looking for a new job and eventually ended up at The Crossroads School in Paoli, specifically for kids with learning disabilities. I spent twenty-two years of my life at that school, teaching study skills, memory strategies and so much more. The students, who ranged in age from five to fifteen, taught me more than I ever learned in college and graduate school. While they struggled to learn to read, write or do math, they were intellectually curious and

**While they struggled to learn to read, write or do math, they were intellectually curious and desperately wanted to succeed.**

desperately wanted to succeed. I became their biggest cheerleader and spent countless hours in courses and workshops trying to find out how best to help them. Over the years my position morphed into more time in administration, as assistant head of school, and less in the classroom. I missed my interactions with the students.

One advantage to my education is that in order to learn what is causing a student to struggle to learn, you first have to learn how average and above average students learn. This enables one to find the breakdown point for students and teach them, perhaps in a different way than they had initially been taught, how to keep going and how to succeed. So, I was able to bring my experience and skills to Friends' Central and fulfill my goal of working with high school students. Now in my third year, I thoroughly enjoy my time here,

**I thoroughly enjoy my time here, helping Middle and Upper School students figure out how they learn and how they can be successful.**

helping Middle and Upper School students figure out how they learn and how they can be successful. I also enjoy my collaborative work with faculty members who strive to find the best way/ways to teach each child.

I find it amazing that a truly traumatic experience in a classroom led me to want to spend each day in a school. I had to endure being called "Dippy Dottie" by my classmates for the remainder of second grade, but we moved that summer so the "nickname" faded. Even



though I made my mom promise not to say anything to the teacher, she did anyway. Without my knowledge she told her that her comment was cruel and unnecessary. It never occurred to me that my mom did this, even when the teacher seemed extra nice to me. Her changed ways didn't help though; I never spoke to her again unless she directly called on me.

And the picture? It's been on my desk for years, reminding me that my words are important, and I need to convey messages that are helpful, not hurtful. All in all, my experience was good for me and I'm fully recovered. Just don't ask me to get my picture taken!\*

*\*Dottie agreed, with good heartedness, to be photographed for this article.*



## Exploration and Ubiety:\* Six Months in France

By Rochelle Ostroff-Weinberg

*Rochelle, who has been teaching French at FCS for twenty years was awarded a sabbatical this past year.*

Before I was ready to cut the umbilical cord to Friends' Central, during the initial days when my sabbatical leave had officially begun, I continued to fervently exchange emails with colleagues on a variety of issues. And my electronic conversations with students punctuated each day unabated. But the closure of one email response from Beth Johnson, our co-principal, catapulted me psychically into the sabbatical mode. Hers was a message in triplicate: enjoy, enjoy, enjoy!

That lovely, albeit simple, word in three part harmony became the leifmotiv that nurtured me throughout the six month life-transforming experience of my sabbatical. I interpreted her message in this way: enjoy your time away from campus, away from the often mundane responsibilities; it is your time to de-stress, time to relax, time to refresh. Enjoy your time with your husband Bob, take time to explore new vistas together, take time to create memories to cherish forever. Enjoy this time in the land where you yearn to be, time to experience every kernel of life in France, from the ordinary routine of daily living to the spectacular and extraordinary moments you will have.

**...experience every kernel of life in France, from the ordinary routine of daily living to the spectacular and extraordinary moments you will have.**

I followed her instructions to the letter. Be it in the interlacing streets of an astounding perched village on the summit of a mountain, in the awe-provoking salty azure of the sea, in the crowds of fans where every head was turned stageward, at every sparkling event enlivened with song, music, lights, celebrities, flowers, oranges, lemons and smiles, the mantra rhythmically oozed from my soul: Enjoy, Enjoy, Enjoy!

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\* the state of being in a place.

The laboratory for a foreign language educator is unquestionably the target country. Language, culture and society are always in dynamic flux. In order to offer my students an authentic program that constantly moves outside the box, that provides depth, breadth and diversity in programming, I must stay in constant touch with the material of the discipline. Exchange programs, scholarly journals, professional meetings and conferences certainly provide important ways to stay fresh, as well as informed. Yet, the most effective way is

**...the most effective way is to live for an extended period in the target country.**

to live for an extended period in the target country. For each course that I teach, I must maintain a high level of familiarity with current events, with towns and cities, along with the economic and cultural reality of France and the French speaking world. For, indeed, what is the teaching of French? It is immersing the students to think and write in French, enabling them to express themselves orally and in writing. But teaching French is so much more; it is bringing the students into the realm of understanding not only another language, but another culture, another people. This objective is closely connected to one of our core objectives at Friends' Central: it strives to help the students understand, appreciate, accept and admire differences. So, I took off in February to explore and discover, to bring back to my students my findings and excitement. And to enjoy.

Everyday *La Monde*, my favorite newspaper, kept me in touch. Not only were my feet affixed to French soil, my mind was aglow with political, cultural, economic events and crises happening throughout the country and continent. The Tunisian revolution that began on January 14 engendered an influx of Tunisian immigrants on the Italian island of Lampedusa—just 185 miles off the coast of Tunis—from which they boarded trains headed to France. Ventimiglia, the last Italian trainstop before Menton (where I was living) became the crucible; and this sudden influx of immigrants into France caused president Sarkozy's government to react with ire which shook the entire continent. This imbroglio was occurring just down the road, each day in front of my eyes.

**February was acclimation: feeling at home in Menton...**

February was acclimation: feeling at home in Menton, in Italy (a stone's throw from the house) and what is known as PACA

(Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur); discovering all the towns along the coast between the Italian border and Nice. Acclimation is finding the boulanger who made the best bread, learning the train system, deciphering and taming the medical system. Acclimation is all that it takes to survive and be comfy and happy in new surroundings: supermarket (my favorite was in Latte, Italy; not only because of the amazing selection of food, but because I did my shopping in Italian!), natural food store, hair cutter, shoe repair. February was also the time to explore le Mentonnais, the backcountry off the coast with its unending maze of winding serpentine roads, with myriad hairpin turns on treacherously high and steep terrain, each visit punctuated with the return home, home to Menton, for Menton, the pearl of France as it is called – nestled between Monaco and Italy – was home for me. Home where I bought my daily bread, chatted with the neighbors, strolled at sunset and lived a regular life.

**[Menton] Home where I bought my daily bread,  
chatted with the neighbors, strolled at sunset  
and lived a regular life.**

Lemons, oranges and pomelos I enjoyed by the case. In February, trees drip with them; they are the base for sauces, desserts, candies and drinks. This seems so natural in a town whose tropical climate lends itself perfectly to their cultivation. But February in Menton is more than simply a month where the city is filled with more than 300 varieties of orange and lemon trees full of ripe fruit. February is la Fête du Citron, the Lemon Festival. The entire city of Menton, drenched in the Mediterranean sun, is creatively decorated in lemons and oranges: parks, stores, cafés, houses, fountains and statues, tabletops and rooftops. Imagine an endless array of designs and festival floats where every millimeter is covered with lemons and oranges, creating jaw-dropping and mouth watering sculptures that tease both the imagination and palette. Oranges, lemons everywhere. I was there to taste and experience it all.

**In March, I sought out a Paris that was new:  
previously unexplored streets and arrondissements.**

In March, I sought out a Paris that was new: previously unexplored streets and arrondissements. Discovering the warm, dark, invitingly romantic corner table of Chez Paul, discovering Atelier Charonne with its Manouche jazz jamming into the early hours of the

next day. Ah Paris! The air and rhythm of the city are light, bright exhilarating. With a bounce in my step, I discovered a unique bookstore at every turn. While examining a stack of used books, I spy Henri Pierre Roche's *Jules et Jim* in the hands of the man next to me. I had recently seen Truffaut's film version on the big screen at le Cinémathèque de Nice. "Don't buy it... you don't want it," I thought, aloud? Apparently he heard me, and as he moved to put it back, I snatched it from his fingertips with a smile. 2 euros. A treasure.

Another one of March's themes was war and reconciliation: I went deep underground into several forts of the Maginot Line, St Roch and Cap Martin, for example, learning about the living conditions and work of the 400 military personnel who spent months in fortified netherlands, protecting the population from enemy attack. I respectfully explored the city of Verdun, situated on the river Meuse, walking silently under a cool, crisp star-laden sky, by the Memorial to Peace, past the cafés on the cobblestoned walkways of the river banks, past lush green parks. I tried to imagine the contrasting horror of the war that ravaged this city whose emotional scars, seemingly reconciled, calls itself the Center of Peace. In the surrounding region, I was moved by larger than life memorials, perfectly manicured cemeteries, pristine sites of annihilated towns enveloped in velvety moss, noisily flowing crystal brooks and the coniferous witnesses, stately but silent. I chatted with ordinary folks about their experiences and recollections, folks who expressed their appreciation of the Americans who fought along with them.

**I chatted with ordinary folks about their experiences and recollections, folks who expressed their appreciation of the Americans who fought along with them.**

From Verdun I moved on to Reims, experiencing my first sight of the cathedral at twilight. As I walked all around the cathedral, I observed its powerful thick stone walls under the peaceful starry sky, in monumental contrast to the ruin and destruction caused by the war. Nearly 800 years old, Reims stood with unremitting force against the searing turmoil that man has engendered. And from Reims, I trained on to Frankfurt to discover its river, park and museums, remembering the impact of the Treaty of Frankfurt in which France lost control of chunks of Alsace-Lorraine, until the Armistice of 1918.

March offered the final week of *le Carnaval de Nice*, highlighted by the closing extravaganza late in the night of Mardi Gras. Lavish processions of dancing, costumed children, boisterous music, five-story

high decorated sculptures filling *la Place Massena*, towered over the worshipping crowd and ended with a lively bacchus-style dance and glorious fireworks as a crowd of thousands headed to the sea to burn the effigy of King Méditerranée.

**April's theme was discovery, for the week  
I spent exploring Corsica was unquestionably  
a remarkable experience...**

April's theme was discovery, for the week I spent exploring Corsica was unquestionably a remarkable experience, discovering diverse landscapes, rock formations, cities, architecture and panoramas new and inspiring, gasping at the incredible beauty at every curve. Prior to my departure for Corsica, I listened to the polyphonic trio *Canta u Populu Corsu* fill the holy space of *La Basilique St. Michel* in Menton with exquisitely beautiful sounds from another world, one that I had not yet discovered; it seemed to me to be a cosmic initiation to the voyage ahead.

Discovery, too, of Elie's Club, a gathering of more than 150 people from all over France and beyond who came together in Cap d'Ail to celebrate the festival of Passover where my wonderful family experienced a joyous seder among new friends from Bruxelles, Strasbourg, Zurich and Monaco.

May was richly rewarding. We will call May's theme HIGH, since the heights permeate every adventure there. The week of exploration from the sea to *les Hautes alpes* (the High Alps) and the

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region called *la Haute Provence* kept me on an emotional high. Such grandeur: its natural beauty ceaselessly swinging from verdant sweeping countryside, to snow capped rugged peaks, to a frenzy of gorgeous wildflowers.

The highlight was unquestionably *le Festival de Cannes*. Just before the opening moment of *le festival*, the crowd gathered inches from the red carpeted stairway leading to the main entrance of le Palais du festival. The anticipation moved like a gentle stream of electrical charge through the mass of shoulder to shoulder onlookers. A sea of cameras, cell phones, i-phones, camcorders, press cameras and human eyes fixated on the scene that had not yet formally begun. And suddenly the music was on, and the camera was rolling on us, swooping and

swishing into and along the crowd like a dancer at halftime, bopping and swooning to the music's rhythm. And I was there, blowing kisses into the camera's eye!

That high was followed by several spectacular days of crowd watching and *le cinéma de la plage*, an open air showing on the beach of la Croisette of special footage from the festival's archives followed by a classic movie, while we sat on beach style festival directors' chairs looking out at the sea. And what a spectacular moment for me to watch the film clip of the actor Jean-Paul Léaud, twelve years old then, who played Antoine Doinel in Truffaut's *400 Blows*, a crucial film in the French III program, talk about his experience playing the role.

In early May, a highpoint was the *Fête de la Victoire* that I experienced in Sisteron. Inspired by the oral presentation of a student in my French II class, I felt that I had to participate in this celebration. How could I have known that I would be called to the microphone to speak about my students, our two nations and the camaraderie between us that will never end.

I cannot adequately describe the culturally enhancing week I spent in Paris in early June. Let the numbers speak: four plays, five

**...early June. Let the numbers speak:  
four plays, five exhibits, three special movie  
house showing movies, three talks...**

exhibits, three special movie house showing movies, three talks, literature during the Occupation at *L'hôtel de ville*, a photo exhibit all along the outside of *le Jardin du Luxembourg*. It was addicting.

Rennes is the capital of Bretagne, and the cosmos planted me there exactly at the time of the annual city-wide happening, *la fête de la Braderie*. Imagine the entire city of Philadelphia as one gargantuan festive sidewalk sale. No, no, not just Center City, but North Philly, Manyunk, University City, Chestnut Hill, with every store participating, virtually every street turned into a pedestrian walkway with street music and street food. The next day, I left Rennes to head toward *la Haute Bretagne* to a unique floral park surrounding the castle where I stayed overnight. The castle, high and stately, is dwarfed by the lush garden created and tended by Monsieur Juno, a Parisian who achieved his dream, the creation of a huge floral garden. I spent six hours wandering the paths, meditating at the ponds, photographing outrageously beautiful combinations of flowers, grasses, ferns and trees. As I peruse my photos or the book that Juno signed for me, I am truly not certain that I can explain why I left.



Rochelle and Bob at Chateau de Chillon.

And how did June end? With the celebration of Prince Albert's wedding to Charlène Winestock. Albert de Monaco devised glittery events to include everyone. On June 29, the eve prior to the marriage, the port of Monte Carlo became the stage for a concert, light show and

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fireworks. The train that I took from Menton was so packed with people that it was impossible to fall over. More than 85,000 of us—families, couples, groups of friends, large and small, people solo such as myself, all dressed in red and white, the colors of Monaco, strolled from the train station down to the port to partake of Jean Michel Jarré's joyous festive pulsing light show and fireworks. For three hours we were transfixed by extravagant beams of light, flashes, streaks and explosions of color and music like works of post modern art splashed on the canvas of the night Monte Carlo sky. And the next night we went back again for the fireworks of love to celebrate the marriage act. And so June ended with a splash, an explosion of love, joy and fun.



July was not the time to be packing up. July was visiting every garden in Menton. July was Switzerland's Lake Geneva: *le château de Chillon*, *le Festival de Jazz de Montreux* and touring the villages along

**July was visiting every garden in Menton.  
July was Switzerland's Lake Geneva...**

the lakes, with vineyards of cascading terraces of neatly arranged vines outlined in stone walls like puzzle pieces that all fit together to create a magnificent landscape. July was *le festival Tango de Menton*. July was an outdoor Alpha Blondy reggae concert in Juan les Pins on the beach. July was *la Fête de la Bastille* all along the coast with three nights of fireworks that culminated in Menton on the beach. July was cheering at the finish line of the 16th stage of *le Tour de France* in Montpellier. July was visiting the breathtaking region of la Cévennes, making the drive, from Menton to Paris.

Every one of the 140 days spent in France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and even Scotland carries a precious memory, a unique lesson, an important discovery. I have returned to the classroom enriched by my experiences and excited to impart them to my students.



## What's Someone with a Quaker Education Doing Teaching at a Military Institution?

By Judith Rosenstein Gladshstein '94

*Judith is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Her first appointment was at West Point.*

I spent twelve of my most formative years at Friends' Central absorbing Quaker ideology and philosophy—including pacifism. So what am I now doing teaching future military officers at an institution ostensibly contrary to Quaker philosophy? Since I accepted a position as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point<sup>1</sup> in the spring of 2008, I have asked myself that question numerous times. Surprising to many, and in some sense, to myself, I have concluded that much of what I do, much of my role, is in accord with Quaker ideology. To show how I have reached this conclusion, it is first useful to describe my path in becoming a member of the “military family.”

Teaching at a military academy was not on my professional radar screen or anywhere near it until I was looking for a job after completing my Ph.D. After spending many frustrating months applying to liberal arts colleges and research universities, I saw an ad for a one-year position at West Point. I thought, “Why not? It's just another job application.” Even though I was not sure I wanted to be at West Point, I figured that it was highly unlikely that they would even consider me. After all, I not only had no direct connection to the military, but my research focused on inequality and bias, with respect to race,

**Given the U.S. military's approach to gender and sexuality, I thought that those references on my curriculum vita would be a red flag...**

gender and sexuality. Given the U.S. military's approach to gender and sexuality, I thought that those references on my curriculum vita would

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Academy at West Point has been referred to as USMA, West Point, or Army; although it is now officially West Point ([www.usma.edu](http://www.usma.edu)).

be a red flag that would immediately eliminate me from contention. I was wrong.

I was shocked to receive a call from the search committee indicating their desire to set up an interview. That interview provided my first introduction to teaching at a military academy. Two items stand out from that interview. The first is that I was told I would have complete academic freedom (I was skeptical). The second was their question of how I, as a civilian, would develop rapport with my cadets (students at USMA are referred to as cadets). I responded that although I had not been in the military, I had numerous family members who served (all before I was born), including my father who was Naval ROTC<sup>2</sup> and who therefore, like my students, received a college education through the pledge of future military service. (It turned out that I never needed to explain my family history to gain the respect of my students, but I did decide to display photos of family members in uniform in my office to physically demonstrate a connection to the military. They provided a talking point for people who visited my office.)

When I was offered the job, the decision to accept was a “no brainer.” It was a good offer, I needed a job, and, at a minimum, it would be a fascinating experience for me as a sociologist to explore a very different culture from any I had previously explored. Little did I know that it would literally change the path of my life.

**Little did I know that it would literally  
change the path of my life.**

When I arrived at West Point in late June for the FDW<sup>3</sup> I was unsure of what to expect. I spent the summer learning about the Army and West Point culture (including watching cadets at their summer basic training; sitting in a helicopter; and watching exercises where jeeps were attached to helicopters, lifted up, and carried in a circle out over the Hudson River, before being gently deposited and released), exploring and practicing teaching skills and preparing my syllabus for my course on Social Inequality. Besides having a lot to adjust to with respect to the military culture (the majority of the fac-

<sup>2</sup> ROTC stands for Reserve Officers Training Corps. ROTC programs train college students to become commissioned officers in a branch of the Armed Forces. Participants often receive a college scholarship at a participating institution in exchange for a specified number of years of service (the years of service depends on the branch).

<sup>3</sup> FDW is faculty development workshop, a time for new and current faculty to familiarize themselves with course material, practice teaching, discuss teaching strategies, and become acquainted with each other.

ulty are military; you need a military ID to get onto USMA grounds; my department, Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, is fundamentally different from departments at other colleges and universities as it includes with Sociology: Psychology, Leadership, Management, and Engineering Psychology; etc.) One of the first things to become apparent was that I would have much more freedom in what I taught and how I taught it than I had expected.

**One of the first things to become apparent was that I would have much more freedom in what I taught and how I taught it than I had expected.**

Besides specific course goals, BS&L believed that one of our most important tasks was to get our students thinking. One of the most notable ways that we accomplished this was by sometimes having controversial speakers. For instance, the leadership course for Cows (juniors) heard from Colonel Janis Karpinski, formerly General of Abu Ghraib infamy and LTC Allen West, who discharged a weapon close to a prisoner's head during an interrogation. The point of hearing these speakers was to learn from people who had made mistakes or whose behavior might serve as negative role modeling. Following the example of speakers who make students think, I decided to find someone who would push my students outside their comfort zone. My objective was to have them think about gender in a fundamentally new way—not necessarily to change their views about gender, but to change how they thought about gender. The best way I could devise to accomplish this was to bring in a transgender person<sup>4</sup> to speak about the inequality that he or she faced. I invited a transgender Army veteran and graduate of West Point. I was fully encouraged and supported by my superiors, including the head of the department, and later the Academic Dean. Before arriving at West Point, I never would have believed that I would have the freedom and the encouragement to even discuss transgenderism in a classroom at West Point, let alone bring in a speaker on the subject.

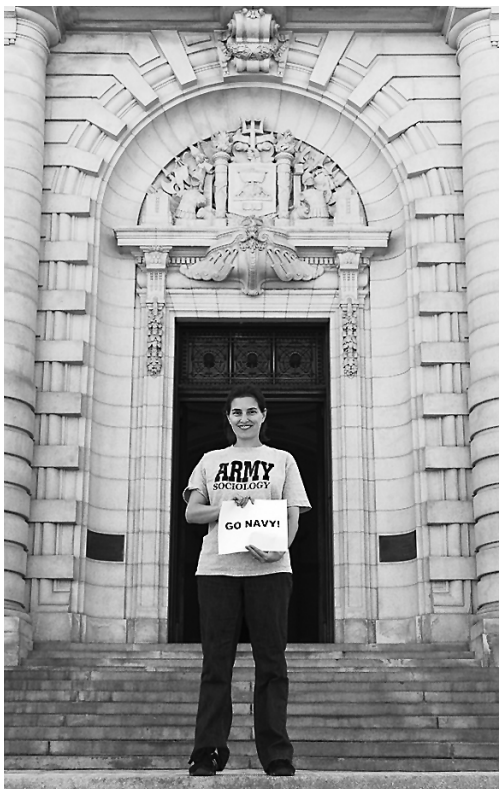
Academic freedom and critical thinking are only two ways that West Point's ideology and the Quaker ideology we were taught at FCS agree. Some of the other prime examples include service, honor and cultural respect.

Once at West Point, students repeatedly hear how they are and will be servants of the nation—they provide service to the country by risking their lives to protect people back home, by representing the

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<sup>4</sup> Transgenderism refers to people who live their life as someone of the other biological sex, regardless of whether they have had gender reassignment surgery.

U.S. overseas (hopefully positively), and by serving as role models to those serving beneath them and the population at large. They are also taught to provide service in ways not directly tied to military service. Examples include organizing and volunteering at Special Olympics, providing support to veterans and military families, teaching Sunday School, assisting in soup kitchens and helping to rebuild New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. The goal is a lifetime of service to the nation, whether in uniform or not, just as we were taught at Friends' Central. The officers, many of whom are West Point graduates, embody this ideal of service, as do their families. (The goal of the Academies is to produce "leaders of character." One aspect of being a leader of character is being a servant of the nation.<sup>5</sup>)



Judy at USNA.

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This ethic of service is reinforced by the expectation that cadets will behave ethically and honorably in all aspects of their lives. This is most obviously illustrated by the Honor Code which states, "A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do." Although many schools have honor codes that students are required to sign upon matriculation, West Point takes the honor code much more

<sup>5</sup> The others are warrior and standard bearer of the profession of arms or naval profession (for members of the Navy).

seriously than any other place I have seen. Honor violations result in a hearing and potential repercussions including hours (marching in the open area in the barracks in full uniform), turn backs (having to repeat a semester or full year), and separation (expulsion from the Academy either to civilian life or to the Army as an enlisted soldier).

Violations that might be minor or not otherwise considered violations at another institution may have severe repercussions at West Point. Cadets are involved in every level of the honor process including running the “honor boards” and sitting in judgment on their fellow cadets. By being involved in the process they learn not only how the process works, but also the reasoning behind any sanctions. Although consequences may appear draconian, the objective is to teach students how to behave ethically in a safe environment, so that when they are in the field and are responsible for soldiers’ and civilians’ lives, they make the right decision. The approach is very different from how we were taught at FCS, but the end goal is the same – to produce people who live responsibly, morally and ethically.

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One of the current objectives of West Point is to increase cadets’ cultural awareness. This is done partly through a greater focus on foreign language. But my department, Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, plays a unique role. We introduce them to the concept of ethnocentrism, discuss prejudice and discrimination, illustrate social inequality and encourage them to think from alternative perspectives. We want to make sure that when our students travel they are prepared to encounter different cultural values and expectations, but also that they are aware that their soldiers will come from various backgrounds and have a range of experiences. The former will make our cadets better ambassadors for the U.S., as they will have a greater appreciation for diversity and will be more likely to respect other cultures and their traditions. The latter will help our cadets be better officers, by having greater compassion and respect for the soldiers under their command. As a Sociology professor, this “domain” was one of my primary areas of focus.

In my year at West Point I came to see that many of the ideals that we were taught at FCS are the same ones West Point is trying to instill in its students. This has helped me to reconcile seemingly conflicting ideologies. However, I have still not come to terms with the idea that my former students and colleagues may and, in some cases are, going off to war. (This is not to say that sending people off to war is easy for

anyone or that it should be, just that it is the first time I have knowingly taught students, many of whom will be going into combat.) It makes the war more real and the stories in the news scarier—neither of which are bad things. My job is not to make my students better warriors, but to make them better people—people who are aware of others, who are compassionate, and who respect difference and diversity—at home and abroad.

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My time at West Point literally changed my career trajectory. Since then, I have moved to the U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis) where I continue to teach sociology, but where I also advise their sexual assault and prevention program. I am in the unique position of being able to actively apply the results of my research on sexual inequality and sexual violence to work towards their reduction. The desire to effect positive change, to promote acceptance, and to strive to reduce social inequalities were all instilled in me at FCS, and I am working toward achieving all of them with the support of the Naval Academy.

What I've come to realize is that the ideals taught to me at Friends' Central are very much in accord with my role of teaching future military leaders. I am proud to teach these future officers and hopeful about what they might accomplish as future leaders on the battlefields of life.

### Recommended Reading

*West Point: Samet, Elizabeth D. 2008. Soldier's Heart: Reading Literature through Peace and War at West Point. New York: Picador.*

*Transgenderism: Serano, Julia. 2007. Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity. Berkeley, CA: Seal.*



## Manifesto for Quaker Education at Friends' Central School

By Melinda Yin

*Melinda has been teaching science to Upper Schoolers since 2002.  
She is the mother of two young children.*

Vicki Abeles' *Race to Nowhere*, a 2009 independent film, documents the "dark side of America's achievement culture," barraging the viewer with the effects of a high pressure secondary school environment focused on college admittance. Apathy, boredom, cheating and lack of real mastery are some of the milder outcomes. Stress and anxiety disorders, as exhibited by her own children, depression and suicide are the worst. Parents have coped with (and fueled?) the high-stakes environment in high schools by hiring tutors (a \$5-7 billion dollar industry in the United States) and medicating children, who feel that high school is a grueling treadmill leading to college.

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What are the signs of *Race to Nowhere* syndrome? Pressure and corresponding symptoms usually appear in the high school years, but may occur earlier. They include:

- *selecting classes based on appearance, more than interest. Perhaps there is a college admissions requirement or the level of the class is more advanced than appropriate.*
- *selecting classes based on ease of earning high grades.*
- *improving grades by bargaining or cheating. A grade of C is seen as unacceptable and failing.*
- *focusing on grades, not learning. Questions like "Will this be on the test?" and "Do I need to know this?" outweigh "What does that mean?" Resentment of school, classwork and homework increases.*
- *vying for leadership positions or joining clubs because these activities "look good," not because there is real interest, ability or commitment.*



- *experiencing chronic stress and pressure, particularly in the junior and senior years.*
- *practicing extreme senioritis-that is, working very hard in the fall of senior year, but then disengaging from classes once the college process is over.*
- *developing feelings of hostility towards school, teachers and classmates. Community members are categorized as helping or hindering the college admissions process.*
- *involving parents inappropriately to enable the bargaining and competition; responsibility is shifted away from the student and externalized to "someone else's problem/fault."*

Friends' Central is not immune to this syndrome! While we have students who would not identify with much on this list, many of these behaviors are commonplace and justified as necessary for college admissions, despite being deeply troubling to the faculty and administration of our school. Many of last year's seniors looked ahead to college because it was their chance to "grow up." For some of their parents, college represented the means to having a successful career and the ability to make future choices. Other seniors said college represented "not being at home," "being more independent," and "being able to take classes you want, not classes you have to."

In the latter responses, college is seen as a reward for having endured the college preparatory process. And educational reasons for attending college are obscured behind the brighter promise of college providing an alternative to high school and home. It is no wonder that the phrase "race to nowhere" rings true; for many students, the secondary school experience is a cutthroat race to an ill-defined goal, where the word college can legitimately be substituted with "not high school."

When Friends' Central School is seen as a series of arbitrary but manipulatable obstacles to earn the reward of not being in high school, it's understandable how stressed and unhappy our students may feel. If they feel like a mouse on an exercise wheel, they're going to start resenting the wheel.

Abeles' film suggests that by subjecting young people to this exercise wheel we are overestimating their resiliency and ability to cope with the stress. A major aim of the film is for schools to reduce

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the homework load. Here we have a stark contrast to Amy Chua's 2011 memoir *Battlehymn of the Tiger Mother* which both resonated and inflamed readers. The book retells Chua's parenting experiences with

two young daughters, in which she dictated how they spent practically all of their time (music and school). Chua wrote, “Western parents are concerned about their children’s psyches. Chinese parents aren’t. They assume strength, not fragility.” Chua feels kids are resilient and want to achieve, but are too immature to understand that achievement comes from consistent hard work and practice. Therefore, she forced her children to do extra homework and practice their instruments for hours each day until they became independent at these tasks. According to Chua, many lack the courage to parent in this controlling way, and thus doom their children to mediocrity.

Neither Abeles’ *Race to Nowhere* and Chua’s *Tiger Mom* offer a sustainable, healthy solution to the “dark side of the achievement culture.” Lessening homework loads will free up time for students, but

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free time can be wasted, too. Meanwhile, formulating extra drills and practice problems may just accelerate the arrival to “nowhere” and exacerbate feelings of resentment and hostility towards schooling.

I believe a Friends’ education offers a livable, inspiring way forward. What’s missing from both Abeles’ and Chua’s observations is the reason anyone might want to work hard in school. Older students

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can have a real lack of excitement and ownership about their learning. Whole weeks of February pass by where I feel that I care more about my students’ education than they do. After spring break, my homeroom of eleventh-graders looked haggard. When asked why my five-year-old couldn’t wait to return, the reply was, “Because she doesn’t have grades.”

These are the disparate experiences of members of the same community: Friends’ Central. The younger students adore it, some of the older students are ambivalent about being here, and the adults think it’s a wonderfully nurturing, privileged place with talented and enthusiastic colleagues. If the adults are so committed to creating a positive, enriching, spiritually nourishing environment (and I think the majority are), why do so many older students experience this as a grinding, punitive, wheel? It seems that Friends’ Central should provide an alternative to the *Race to Nowhere* model.

This is why I think Friends' Central needs to renew its commitment to providing a Quaker education. We can create an experience so infused with the testimonies, that the belief and practice of the testimonies can free us from the exercise wheel. By really exploring the

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meaning of and connecting spiritually to the Quaker testimonies, we will ignite in our students a passion to live and live up to the testimonies. They will want to move their lives somewhere rather than nowhere. And as a colleague from the George School described it, although the testimonies are a cornerstone of the Quaker faith, they are affirming to all faiths.

Friends' Central can provide a reason for education by instilling a reverence for the Quaker testimonies of Continuing Revelation, Truth, Equality, Stewardship, Peace and Simplicity. Students should feel a leading in their lives to learn, because they value truth and also see education as a way to live and fulfill the testimonies to the best of their abilities. If students believe in the testimony of stewardship, they

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may want to pursue a life which allows them to take responsibility for changing the world. Once they have that passion and calling, challenges might actually be sought out rather than avoided in order to achieve the expertise to make a lifelong difference. By giving education this kind of value, students can become invested in their own education. As a side benefit, it may be easier for students and families to focus on what is important and meaningful, not just what "looks good" for the college admissions process.

Let's imagine the best outcome of a Quaker education. We start with a young girl who has learned there is something of God in her that can bring light to the world in the form of stewardship, truth and peace. In second-grade, she donated money to help earthquake victims in Chile through a class project; in fifth-grade she learned about how earthquakes occur; in seventh-grade she enjoyed working with her friends to clean up a park throughout the year; in tenth-grade she



Melinda, showing eleventh grader Bobir Atakhanov, a model of an atom.  
*Picture taken by Bobir.*

learned about Latin American governments; in eleventh-grade she went on an exchange to Peru; and in her senior year, she learned about skyscraper engineering. All along, she's experienced two important messages: 1) no matter who you are, you can act with integrity and stewardship and make a difference and 2) learning doesn't stop after a lesson; there's always more information and more horizons to reach for. These are fundamental messages of the Quaker testimonies that transform individual dissociated experiences into a purposeful odyssey.

Meeting for Worship was also a formative experience throughout that student's time at Friends' Central. In the Lower School, she begins to learn about stillness, listening to others, and the joy of sharing a revelation with friends and teachers. In Middle School, she awoke to the responsibility individuals have to each other in Meeting for Worship. By her Upper School years, she could usually center herself and reach both her own light and the immeasurable spirit that rose from the collective group. The practice of silent, group worship, became a positive weekly event. It encouraged her personal growth and exploration of the Quaker testimonies and cemented her bonds with the school community.

To that student, Friends' Central is a meaningful and cherished place because the content, skills and processes she experienced all enrich her personally. College is another place to learn skills to further

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her goals of getting earthquake-resistant building legislation passed in a particular state. As one FCS senior put this year, college could represent not just an un-high school, but "a place to further develop who I am, what I believe in, what my interests are, and what I want to do with myself." Importantly, college isn't where that process starts, but where it can happily continue.

When students feel empowered to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others, school is seen as a place to practice making a difference, and less like a requirement. Friends' Central School should feel like a place where revelation can happen at any time,

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where challenges are actively sought out because the experiences are thrilling rather than imposing. This is something a Quaker school is uniquely advantaged to do, because we have almost 400 years of Friends developing processes and testimonies that work.

Finally, emboldening our Quaker values at Friends' Central is not just about avoiding a *Race to Nowhere* or *Tiger Mom* situation during high school. We want the Testimonies and Quaker practice to nurture our students after graduation, too, for once students have left the competitive, achievement-driven race, recent studies show that the impacts of the experience linger. In the 2010 book *Academically Adrift*, sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa found that many undergraduates are not learning much at university, but are instead "drifting through college without a clear sense of purpose." It is fairly simple for students to avoid rigorous classes, and graduate without having learned much: 32% of students don't take any courses that assign more than forty pages of reading a week, and 50% of students don't take any courses that assign more than twenty pages of writing a semester. Students also spend only about twelve to fourteen hours a

week studying. One author notes that “it’s a problem when higher education is driven by a student client model and institutions are chasing after bodies... you need an internal culture that values learning. You have to have departments agree that they aren’t handing out easy grades.” Since Friends’ Central cares about the whole child, and the whole potential, we shouldn’t be content with coping with them until they graduate. We should be trying to promote a lifelong dedication to continuing revelation and the Quaker testimonies.

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