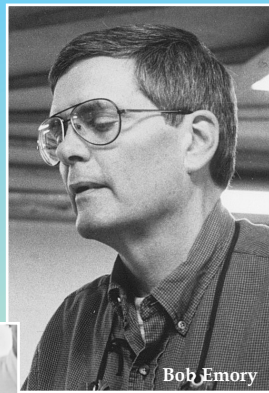


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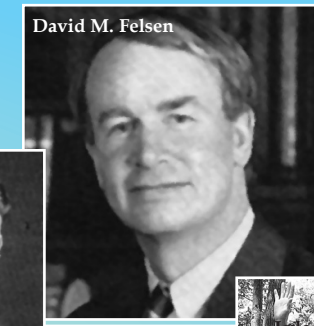
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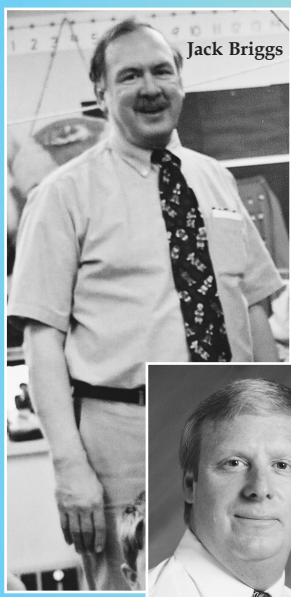
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Keith Buckingham



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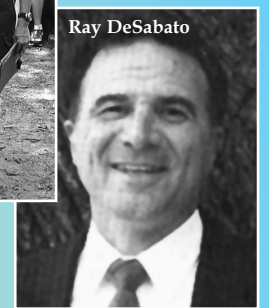
Gary Nicolai



Jim Davis



Lyise Van Pelt



Ray DeSabato



Doug Ross



Erika Harnett



Toni Sharp



Keith Bradburd



Jacqueline Gowen-Tolcott



It's All About the People: Friends' Central's Thirty-Year Folk (as portrayed in *Forum* 1988-2012) By Marilyn Lager with Jim Davis

# It's All About the People: Friends' Central's Thirty-Year Folk (as portrayed in *Forum* 1988-2012) By Marilyn Lager —with Jim Davis



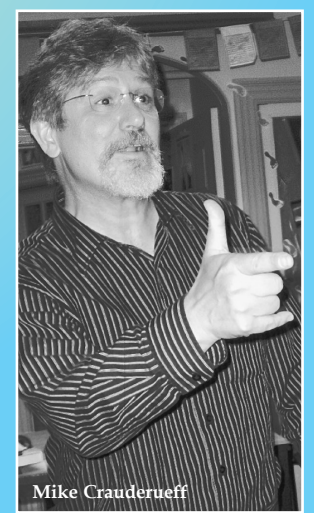
Joe Ludwig



Linda Hensel



Michi Tashjian



Mike Crauderueff

**It's All About the People:  
Friends' Central's Thirty-Year Folk  
(as portrayed in *Forum* (1988–2012))**

*By Marilyn Lager*  
*—with Jim Davis*



Marilyn Lager has been director of the Middle and Upper School Library since 1986 and editor of *Forum* since its inception in 1988. She retired in June 2012. She thanks Joe Ludwig for giving her the thumbs up about initiating such an educational journal, and Lydia Martin, Director of Development, for her encouragement in the publication of this book. Thanks are also due to Susan Kelly, without whom there would not have been forty-eight elegant issues of *Forum*.

Jim Davis served as music teacher, in charge of choral music, for thirty-nine years. He retired from that position, but serves FCS now as Archivist and representative to Alumni Affairs.



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We have compiled the writings, mostly by Marilyn Lager, that detail the lives and careers of colleagues who worked at Friends' Central, in most cases, for thirty years or more. These interviews and personal essays were published in *Forum*, our community's educational journal that was produced twice a year for over twenty-two years. These articles are snapshots in time, a chronicle of FCS folk who taught from 1988-2012. It is a history of sorts, and we hope you enjoy this particular look at Friends' Central.

— Marilyn Lager and James Davis  
*June 2012*

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## **Not on a Unicycle: A Sabbatical Experience**

By Keith Bradburd      2010

There were many parts to my sabbatical, including traveling to Scotland, taking a digital photography course, getting certified in SCUBA, watching my daughters, Rachel '05 and Sarah '08, participate in collegiate lacrosse, teaching a few classes at Widener University and compiling an athletic, sports-specific, commissioners' handbook for the Friends School League.

My photography course was extremely confusing for someone with a limited knowledge of Photoshop. I was advised by the course instructor to take an advanced class, and although I felt I knew something about photography (I had taken classes before), I soon realized that digital photography was as much, if not more, about computers and "fixing" images through technology than about capturing and composing images through the lens and printing them. I was, however, able to utilize some of my newly acquired technical skills, while taking and editing photographs, during an early spring trip to Scotland. (At this time, I have over 200 photographs I will be showing you...).

I traveled there in March with my brother, a retired drama teacher, and visited the bustling and sandstone-brown Glasgow, (where my niece is a student). Then we traveled to Edinburgh, the quaint, very wet fishing village of Oban, and then by ferry to the outer islands of Mull and Iona. I enjoyed the physical beauty of the Scottish highlands, the blue lochs, and the old farmhouses—and also the friendly people I met, not only in the major cities, but in the small villages and on a train through the highlands, where we encountered a group of nine elderly men returning from their yearly walking tour. Stories and refreshments poured forth! Moreover, every time I travel and no matter how far away I go, I never really seem to leave the FCS community behind: I was surprised by two FCS families, the first on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, the second, about two hours later, in St. Gilles Cathedral. It is always nice to say hello to students and parents from school, wherever in the world we may be.

In early spring, I had the opportunity to guest-instruct classes in athletic administration and organization at Widener University. I enjoyed my interactions with the undergraduate students, most of whom were preparing to coach in public schools. Based on reactions from a number of students, they gained a new insight into the world of independent schools, where coaches are particularly instructed to be aware of parental sensitivity, to foster sportsmanship and to become part of the (FCS) school community. Teaching at Widener fulfilled some of my desire to be involved in teaching and coaching at the collegiate level. It was a positive and enriching experience for me.

Last spring I finally decided to act on my long-standing interest to become certified in SCUBA. I have been thinking of doing so for many years, and it seemed like a wonderful time to dive right in! I took an open water Professional Association Dive Instructors' (PADI) certification course. This fantastic experience culminated in August in four open water dives at Dutch Spring Quarry, near Bethlehem, PA. I dove as deep as fifty feet in water as cold as fifty degrees. I am looking forward to continuing diving, improving my skills perhaps by taking a trip or two to the Caribbean.

The most enjoyable part of my sabbatical was to be able to watch my daughters, Rachel in her senior season at Dickinson College, and Sarah in her freshman season at Guilford, participate in their lacrosse programs at their respective schools. I truly appreciated this new opportunity to just watch them play, a different perspective than when I watched them during their playing days at FCS. I was able to be just their fan without worrying about the duties of being an athletic director. As many of us know, there are not many experiences that are as enjoyable as watching your children participate in something that they enjoy and are successful in pursuing. I also realized from watching multiple high school and college teams play, that at FCS, even when not 100% effective, our program approaches athletics in the right way: we want to win, but we want the students to respect each other and the traditions of the games.

*The Friends Schools League Commissioner Handbook* is still a work in progress, while I wait for additional information from other athletic directors. When done, the handbook will include not only the general guidelines for the FSL, but sport specific rules for the nineteen varsity sports that the league offers for varsity championships.

On a lighter note, I spent some time trying to teach myself to ride a unicycle; unfortunately this task was much more difficult than I expected. However, my inability has worked in your favor. Had I succeeded, I would have made this presentation balancing on my unicycle, with my camera in hand, wearing my SCUBA gear while showing you hundreds of photographs. That, I'm sure, is a sight you do not want to see.

There are two things that stood out in regard to the sabbatical itself, the first being that people who are outside the world of education do not quite understand what a sabbatical is. I cannot tell you how many times, when I explained that I was on sabbatical, I was asked, "Are you sick? Did you get fired?" So if you are granted a sabbatical, be prepared to explain that a sabbatical is a gift, which, to me, seems beyond a doubt the most appropriate way to answer those questions.

I am grateful that after thirty-one years, I was able to have these experiences and now share them with you. My final thought about being on sabbatical is that no matter how much I was able to relax, to teach, to travel or to spend time with my friends and family, I truly missed the sense of community that I find while I am here at Friends' Central and am glad to be back.

*Keith Bradburd (1978-) is actively involved in PAISAA (PA Association of Independent School Athletic Association) where he serves as tournament Director for all sports. Keith also continues to have an avid interest in photography. He lives in Bryn Mawr with his wife Trina of 33 years.*

## Two Masters of Lower School

By Marilyn Lager 2004

They are two master teachers who have influenced almost four thousand students in their years at Friends' Central Lower School. They have built monumental structures in their classrooms, wiped away tears and patiently explained long division for a cumulative fifty-eight years. They have educated themselves along the way,

spread their wings through a renowned curriculum unit on flight, and grown a bit grayer and thicker as they matured. Bill Bower and Jack Briggs, keepers and stayers, have grown up and matured at Friends' Central just as their young students have, and along the way both have flourished.

\* \* \*

When Bill was a third grader in a Swarthmore elementary classroom, he sat quietly at his desk, feeling a bit lost. He had missed time in the earlier grades when reading and writing skills had been developed, and by the end of third grade, his teacher suggested a summer remedial clinic. During the fall of fourth grade, something happened. He met a special teacher, Lillian Steciw, who watched over his work, taking an interest in his learning and holding him accountable for every assignment. He blossomed and kept hold of that special inspiration which she engendered in him, until he finished college and became a teacher himself. He is still in touch with Lillian today.

After completing a BA in history at West Chester, with a minor in philosophy and psychology, Bill taught gym for a year at a Maryland public school and then took a job as an assistant therapist for psychiatric inpatients. On call twenty-four hours a day, he read psychology and psychiatry texts but knew he wanted to get back to teaching. He registered with a teachers' bureau, which brought a call from Tom Wood to interview at Friends' Central. "The call was relayed to me by a patient who had had over a thousand electroshock treatments," Bill smiles ruefully. This became a clarion call, for his desire to get back to teaching was strong. He started immediately as a fourth grade teacher, also instructing fifth and sixth grade gym classes, and for thirty more years, he has never left fourth grade. "I like nine and ten-year-olds. They get the jokes," said Bill. "It's a time when light bulbs go on. Piagetian concepts such as sequencing, logic and categorizing are in their command. They can empathize and are sponges for information: they are balanced in liking art, science, music and the academics." And indeed there is a cheerful buzz in his classroom. Children are being instructed on how to take the ERB's, national standardized tests, and they have questions. "How will the computer (which scores the test) know who I am?" "What if I put down a false name?" "What if my pencil breaks?" Bill stands calmly at the front of the room, answering the questions and allowing for

digressions. "Can we have snack now?" "When is lunch?" I ask a lively class member what she thinks of this, and she tells me, "Mr. Bower is patient, and doesn't lost his temper with us."

Bill's classroom is filled with child-made exhibits and a model of the Spirit of St. Louis, shored up with wood and propellers made of paper towel rolls. Lots of duct tape and silver paper have been fashioned to make an escape pod for the Apollo 11 landing. He has turned his classroom twice into castles, into Columbus' ship, and the children, one special year, lived in The Hobbit's Mirkwood Forest. Hands-on, thematic education has always been a central interest.

And so in 1986, when he and Jack worked on a special unit on flight, they presented a slide program to the education director at the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. and were asked to write a resource book for teachers. They won a government contract, and their curriculum guide was published and used by other teachers around the country. Bill and Jack presented this at the National Association for Independent Teachers. Another curriculum interest of Bill's has been the expeditions of Lewis and Clark, and he has presented this at adult school nights.

Married since 1984 to Bambi Dudley, he is eager to point out that they met on the tennis court, introduced by Ken Yarnall, then business manager at FCS, in a game of mixed doubles. Bill and Bambi have played competitive tennis on national teams and have gone to championships as captains numerous times. Bill coached varsity and junior varsity tennis for twenty years to FCS high schoolers and is proud of the program, Saturday Morning Basketball, which he initiated and ran from 1974-1994. It continues to this day.

\* \* \*

A friend and colleague, Jack Briggs has taught third grade at FCS since 1976. He started his career at a Friends school in Atlantic City and then worked at Greene Street Friends. Being involved in the Friends network brought him to FCS, and he credits Jean Taranta, then teaching third grade, with mentoring him.

His teaching has always been informed by his passion: history. His love for the subject, garnered from earliest family stories (see box) and from his study of history at Swarthmore as an undergraduate led him to a broad understanding and to a parallel career as a storyteller and portrayer of living history. Relates Jack, "I remember stories about an ancestor who was a Revolutionary War

veteran, and this evolved into my most popular story-telling persona, Ebenezer Smith, a colonial peddler.” Dressed as varied historical figures, he has performed at museums, libraries and at living history enactments since the early 80’s, regaling audiences with dramatic stories and dressing up as a mountain man, a pirate, a Union soldier or recently, at Agnes Irwin School, as a Norman knight, with a coat of mail weighing forty pounds, and with a museum-quality shield and helmet.

Jack’s classrooms at FCS have housed learning environments that grew out of his father’s stories and his father’s abilities as a master builder. Jack mastered construction skills, and children at FCS have helped build and then played on the Wright Brothers’ Flyer and on the Hispaniola from Treasure Island; they sailed on the raft Kon Tiki and lived, most recently, in an hacienda from Santa Fe. “Every time I made something with my students, I feel Dad right there reminding me how to saw straight or use a carpenter’s square and telling me about the people who made these beautiful structures,” smiles Jack.

This past year, Lower School teachers decided on the theme of Latin America, which the entire school embraced. In Jack’s classroom, the children and he constructed a replica of an adobe hacienda by stapling cardboard over a wooden frame. In and around this life-like playhouse, El Rancho de Las Golondrinas (the Swallows), he and the students became immersed in the life of the old Southwest. They ground corn to make tortillas, wove colored wool to create *Ojos de Dios* (God’s Eyes) and cut out *papel picado*, a form of paper art.

Later in the spring, Native American culture prevailed as it does every spring in third grade. A nine-foot canvas teepee, with thick wooden struts, was installed, and as the children sat encircled in it, Jack told the class about the sweat lodges used by the Plains Indians in their ceremonies. A few children worried about the heat in a sweat lodge. “What if you have asthma?” asks a young student. “Before doing a sweat, you’d check with a doctor,” he reassures them.

Jack is an enormously busy man. He received a Ph.D. in Reading, Writing and Literacy from the University of Pennsylvania in 1996 and brought his learning back to the FCS faculty. He works as an educational consultant on thematic education and has traveled widely in the summers to teach teachers around the country. He has published work on this subject, recorded a cassette on tales from the American Revolution and served as consultant and collaborator at numerous pedagogical conferences. He is married to Cinda Crane

and is the father of Jenny '95, a massage therapist, and Brian, age eighteen, who recently, Jack proudly reports, achieved Eagle Scout status.

"Jack is a real intellectual," states Joe," and he's interested in so many things." Adds Lou, "The breadth of his knowledge is amazing. He comes up with information on a dizzying array of subjects." And one of his third graders succinctly comments, "He's funny, and he lets you try new things, like sawing and hammering that other kids can't do."

\* \* \*

So both these men, who have given their professional lives to FCS, stay on, and both agree that the main reason they do is that, as Bill puts it, "We are supported in our ideas and can go forward and develop new areas of curriculum." And it is clear that with the commitment these men have made to elementary education, FCS students have been lucky to have such powerful role models.

### ***Jack Reflects***

*My father was a high school physical education teacher and football coach, but building was his hobby. He remodeled our house and built furniture. He also made toys. My favorite was a wooden castle, complete with a working drawbridge, all constructed from an orange crate. He taught me how to use tools from the time I was old enough to pick up a hammer.*

*My father loved history and told me stories, many of which had family connections: The French and Indian War (he grew up in Pittsburgh), the Pilgrims (the first Briggs arrived in America in 1638 in Scituate, MA, next to Plymouth), ships and the sea (a distant cousin, Enos Briggs, built the USS Essex in Salem in the 1790s. His shipyard was near Hawthorne's House of the Seven Gables). Ancestors were involved in the Witchcraft Hysteria on both sides. Anthony Buxton was a Quaker in Salem Village in 1690. There were Minute Men who answered the Alarm of April 19, and Tories who left town. At Springfield College my great-uncle Harrison Briggs played football against the legendary Jim Thorpe. I soaked it all up, awash in a wonderful pageant of history.*

*My mother was the elementary school librarian. Our house was full of books, newspapers and magazines. She read to me every night when I was little. I heard the classics, such as Winnie the Pooh, but she also read to me from A Child's History of the World. My mother*



*had her own family stories. Her great-grandmother Eliza crossed the Atlantic in 1835 from the Isle of Wight and left us her journal, which my mother transcribed. Ebenezer Smith from the 18<sup>th</sup> century became my colonial peddler. Henry Hook, a Union volunteer who defended Little Round Top, lives on in my Civil War persona. My grandmother's buffalo robe, used to keep her warm on winter sleigh rides, comes into my classroom each spring as we learn about Plains Indians.*

*I loved costumes as a kid and wanted to "be" all the people in history. When Disney's Davy Crockett hit the theaters, my parents bought me a coonskin cap and a complete "buckskin" outfit. Davy eventually became the mountain man Dakota Jack, my first storytelling persona.*

*The library was my second home. I devoured historical novels and read every Landmark book I could get my hands on.*

*Then there were the hundreds of toy soldiers my brother and I painted with which we recreated in miniature just about everything we read in books or saw in the Saturday matinees at the local theater. Every year we reenact the Little Bighorn in 3A using my childhood collection, but now, unlike the 1950's, the Lakota and Cheyenne are the good guys.*

*In third grade today we read lots of history, hear stories, build play-houses, watch movies, and make costumes, all inspired by my childhood play.*

**Bill Bower** (1972-2012) lives in Radnor with his wife Bambi and looks forward to playing tennis a bit more, reading and planning some trips in America and abroad.

When not teaching **Jack Briggs** (1976--) is currently researching and writing an historical novel about the American Revolution. He is married to Cinda Crane, Middle School Librarian at Tower Hill School in Wilmington, Delaware. His daughter Jenny '95 continues her massage therapy practice. She and her husband Carl are the parents of Jack's two granddaughters, Sarah and Amy. Jack's son Brian, age 26, is living in Wilmington studying for certification in waste-water treatment and management.

## Keith Buckingham: A Teacher of Science and the Soul

By Marilyn Lager 1999

*I propose that science be taught, at whatever level, from the lowest to the highest, in the humanistic way. It should be taught with a certain historical understanding, with a certain philosophical understanding, with a social understanding and a human understanding, in the sense of biography, the nature of the people who made this construction, the triumphs, the trials, and tribulations. —I. I. Rabi, NOBEL LAUREATE IN PHYSICS*

Although the words above belong to 1944 Nobel Prize winner I. I. Rabi, they are part of the mission statement given, in the fall of each school year, by Upper School teacher Keith Buckingham to his physics students. These students are about to embark on their study of a daunting and detail-driven discipline, but the syllabus goes on to tell them: “Look for ideas, not details; develop an appreciation for uncertainty and be willing to make mistakes as part of the process.” Clearly FCS students are urged to study this discipline in a unique way, one that will help them see “physics as a human activity with a tradition...of evolutionary adaptation and change.” They are exhorted to pursue this study with an independent and problem-solving attitude. And that is exactly what Keith has in mind.

Keith has been at FCS for eighteen years, and during this tenure, he has influenced over a thousand students to consider not only physics, but chemistry, mathematics, psychology and, in the last seven years, foundations of scientific knowledge—all in the context of the large issues of human life. While he has a firm grasp of scientific concepts and teaches quantitative subjects, it is the whole fabric of human life that interests him. Here at FCS, in an atmosphere of respect for humanistic values as well as for scholarship, he has been able to connect academics and concern for the individual in his curricula.

Keith is from a family that provided sophisticated psychological tabletalk—his grandfather was a psychiatrist who headed Connecticut State Hospital for many years, his mother a psychologist, and his father in medical practice—and he grew up respecting the importance of feelings and relationships. Although he was good at science, he never liked school until he was a student at Lycoming College, where he could combine chemistry and psychology in a double major. He

found then, and believes today, that science is a vehicle that teaches people to think rather than a discipline that collects facts.

He was able to go on to greater depths in his chosen field, biochemical genetics, in graduate school at the University of Maryland. But the art of teaching quickly grabbed his interest. Special relationships with certain professors and, in particular, tutorials with a very bright and quick thinker in experimental psychology led him to begin his teaching career, first in the Maryland public school system and then at Wyoming Seminary, near Wilkes-Barre. And in 1981, after experiencing at his initial interview, "the friendliness and brightness of the students here at FCS," he made his move to the Delaware Valley.

When he started work, Charles Frey was head of the FCS science department, but only two years later, Keith became chair, a position he held until two years ago. In the FCS community, he found that excellence in academics is a primary goal, but it is grounded in the context of how students live their lives. Keith was able to weave the idea that "our connections is the basic stuff of life" into his course curricula. He has been able to be a model of a scientist who respects facts and technology but sees them as "part of the larger picture." Thus he has been able to influence students, who come back to see him year after year, in decisions about their courses, their study habits, their emotions and their career choices.

Seven years ago, Keith was able to put into practice and make real what he knew should be the goal of science education. In collaboration with his colleagues in the science department, a new course called Foundations of Scientific Knowledge was crafted to teach the big ideas of science, such as conservation of energy, entropy, molecular genetics and evolution, by showing the interconnectedness of all human knowledge. This course, required of all ninth graders, has made a huge difference in how science is taught at FCS and what a graduate can take into the world.

"Keith was instrumental in originating and supporting this course that integrates the major themes in all the sciences," says John Gruber, present chair of the science department. "He sees the true connections between the disciplines." With this course, students are helped to use scientific thinking as a process, a framework for thinking about big ideas. Perhaps they will take only one more science course in high school (the present requirement) or perhaps they will take a full menu of biology, chemistry, physics, botany,

geology or higher mathematics. With this foundations course, the students get to explore “unifying concepts and principles, not only specific facts or details.” With energy and evolution as the unifying themes in this basic course, they can go on to study other areas such as cellular life, the elements of the earth and Newtonian mechanics later in their academic careers.

For many years, Keith was also able to teach psychology, leading discussions in concepts of existential psychotherapy—death, freedom, isolation and meaninglessness—and Harry Stack Sullivan’s interpersonal theories of the corrective value of human interactions. He felt at home teaching this course, but with the demand for more science courses, he had to relinquish it. Still, he is able to integrate projects in astrophysics with adolescent feelings, in lasers with love. Says one of his twelfth grade students, “I took physics and physics AP with “Buck,” [as students comfortably call him], and he made both courses fun. We made holograms with lasers and mirrors, projecting light through special film, imprinting the image. All along, we laughed a lot and felt comfortable even when things didn’t turn out as planned.” And a junior in his physics I class says, “‘Buck’ tells it like it is...if he has something to say, he says it straight out. He understands that his class is just one of the many demands in our lives, and he structures class so that we have a manageable amount of work. He sees the student as more important than the curriculum.”

Moreover, Keith is now twelfth grade dean, taking on the job after the death of his colleague and long-time friend, John McCollum. Wearing this hat, he sees students of the Millennium as “more intense and less hopeful about doing well in work and life” than in the years before. He sees each senior class as composed of “separate individuals, independent thinkers, self-educating human beings,” rather than as an integrated whole. He wants students to “bumble through, if necessary, and be persistent. Kids are used to success. What’s important is a tolerance for ambiguity and staying with a problem.”

And as Maryellen Schwartz, co-principal of Upper School, says, “Keith accepts all students for who they are—more than accepts—he does not label people but cares about them for their characters. He is completely nonjudgmental. He can work with the most advanced students and those who need a lot of support. He expects inner motivation.”

The sources of his own inner motivation can be traced to his connections to his family’s deeply-held values of helping others

through the understanding of human nature. He brings this attribute to his relationship with his partner of twelve years, Joan Grillo, FCS coordinator of transportation and her three daughters, Johanna, Amy and Claire. Joan's love for literature has affected him: "Her interest in literature and stories has been a wonderful thing for me. Good stories revealing human nature teach us about ourselves." He has no particular interest in science fiction: "Scientific facts are so fascinating; why bother with fiction?"

In that vein, he has read lately such titles as *Being Digital, a History of Media Technology*, by MIT's Nicholas Negroponte and George Soros' 1998 *Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered*. Like Negroponte, Keith sees the educational value of computers but warns against overdependence on them as a teaching tool. Keith is positive that teachers are not going to be replaced by computers. "Technology is not going to solve problems; people will solve problems," he says. "The computer is a tool: If you want to dig a hole, you need to use a shovel."

Parenthetically, he does dig holes in his own backyard: He finds gardening to be good therapy. "It's the patience required to plant and reap that builds character," he smiles. And character is the word that his colleagues use about him over and over. "He's a character, all right," states one wryly, "a surprisingly sensitive character with a brusque exterior." And John Gruber lauds his perceptiveness: "Keith is an exceptional judge of character. He has an incredible ability to get to the meaningful heart of any subject matter in science and in human life."

*Keith Buckingham (1981-) has spent time remodeling and renovating his house in Havertown. He enjoys gardening. Although his wife Joan Grillo, head of transportation died in 2003, he is still connected to their three children, Johanna, Amy and Claire.*

## **Mister C, or Just Call Him Mike**

By Marilyn Lager 2010

It's a clear, brisk March day. In fact, it is the last period before spring vacation begins, and Mike Crauderueff is working hard. He wants to keep his young Quakerism students fully engaged and participatory as they get ready to embrace their time off. In his small classroom, on the third floor of the Wood Building, where a poster of Afghani girls is at home next to one of the Dalai Lama, Mike is energetic, cheerful and full of entertaining information on Quakers. Talk ranges from their assignment: to discover what makes a Quaker school different from other private schools (the hope to develop "eyes for invisibles," to develop a student who has the courage to follow the inward argument where it leads, and the centrality of Meeting for Worship) to talking animatedly about Quaker stereotypes. "Quakers are easy to stereotype," he says ruefully. He flashes on the screen a website advertising all things Quaker: Quaker coffee?? Quaker Chemical Company?? Quaker delicatessen?? The students are amused and critical...and soon, ready to leave. Mike's parting words: "Promise you will do something special for you this vacation!" And they are gone.

And Mike, as he wishes the children to call him, is about to finish his thirtieth year of teaching at Friends' Central this June. He grew up in Elkhart, Indiana, and attended Beloit College, in Wisconsin, where, in his senior year, he embraced Quakerism. He recalls a snowy, winter morning, when a Quaker philosophy professor held a small Meeting for Worship, in his living room, with a warm fire glowing. Mike had been aware of his parents' leaving the Methodist Church because the Church would not admit African-Americans, and he now began to read everything he could about Quakerism. After graduating and teaching French (with which he had become enamored after high school trips to Guadaloupe and Quebec and a college year in France) for two years at Lake Forest Country Day School, Mike met his wife Elaine. Elaine was part of an organization called "New Call to Peacekeeping," where she spoke and preached about peace topics. Theirs was a quick courtship: they married in July 1980, merging their last names, hers (Crauder), his (Rueff), becoming the Crauderueffs.

They soon moved to Philadelphia, which they had identified as a bastion of Quakerism, and with some experience at the Quaker center Pendle Hill in Wallingford, he was hired to teach French to Middle Schoolers at FCS. In the fall of 1980, he joined a Middle School faculty, half of whom were Quaker, and soon was working on a French certification and a master's degree in education at nearby St. Joseph's University.

Mike's professional life, teaching, connected him with his two parents who were long-time teachers. He often had tutored slower classmates, those who were scapegoated and ill-treated. His parents had shown him a way of life that was inclusive, taking active umbrage against racism. In Elkhart, they had seen crosses burned by the KKK, and Mike remembers a race riot in high school. Indeed, he was ostracized for his liberal views. In landing at FCS, he found the perfect union of values: education and the respect for the light within each human life. "It is our job as teachers to help it glow brighter," he smiles.

His language skills bloomed at FCS, and after some years, he was learning and studying the Spanish language, encouraged by summer stipends that took him to Guatemala, Mexico and Spain. (He had lived for a time early in his marriage with his Puerto Rican brother-in-law and his family.) Middle School did not have Spanish in the curriculum, and Mike introduced it, and it grew incrementally, year by year. It was not simply the acquisition of a second language that intrigued him, but the social problems and injustices of migration and the border issues. These took him to Texas for part of a 1991 sabbatical and also brought him a second master's, this time in bilingual and bicultural Spanish studies from La Salle University. And in 1993, he joined the language department of the Upper School. Jackie Gowen-Tolcott, department head, appreciates his qualities, saying, "I greatly value Mike's professional advice on teaching methods and strategies. But more, his message of compassion towards the students guides us to make the right decisions."

Mike's world was expanding. Elaine came to teach Quakerism at FCS for twelve years and was the Quakerism coordinator of all three divisions. She currently works at the Friends General Conference, nurturing meetings all over the United States. Their children, Rob '01 and Mary '03 were educated at FCS. Rob, after graduating from Columbia and working at an organization called "Sustainable South Bronx," is currently in a master's program at MIT in urban planning.

Mary, an Earlham graduate with a master's in library science, is working in the archival department of the Smithsonian, which has included traveling to the Panama Research Institute.

When Elaine left FCS in 2002 to develop a writing career, Mike stepped in to teach Quakerism to Upper Schoolers. His sense that FCS needs to maintain a Quaker identity, while still being an academically excellent institution is keen, and in an article published in the school newspaper *Focus*, editor Arielle Fogel wrote that Mike tries "to foster a learning community that can slow down and notice what is in front of us," despite our necessary emphasis on achievement and academics. Arielle also wrote that she was grateful that there was no intent to convert anyone, that in her Quakerism class, Mike hoped that a student would become "a better Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist or...Quaker," valuing his/her own religious beliefs. Kendall Bedford, a current student in Quakerism, likes that "it's not all about history; it's reality based." And Adam Bolotsky says, "He makes Quakerism interesting and fun." Mike also teaches courses in Comparative Religion and Peace Studies to juniors and seniors, investigating non-violent responses in history and contemporary life to conflicts in the world.

Mike is a questioner, a seeker of the truth. His mind is always turning over such issues as what is the aim of education (to be transformative) or what defines spirituality, above and beyond the aspects of a Quaker education. He is a frequent speaker at Upper School Meeting for Worship, never hesitating to reveal the personal and soul-searching questions that are meant to stimulate adolescent growth and development. Says Gary Nicolai, history teacher and long-time colleague, "I've always admired Mike's ability to walk the walk; he speaks his mind, even about controversial subjects that may have unpopular outcomes. He is not at all afraid to stand apart from the crowd."

Mike continues to be an eager learner, and he is always ready for new life experiences. He left FCS for a year to join a charter school in Camden, New Jersey, as language department head. He wanted to offer his professional expertise to children with many challenges in their lives. He returned to FCS, appreciating its openness and the freedom he has to teach his subjects, while modeling Quaker values. Last year, he suffered from a severe pulmonary disorder, having to take a leave of absence and was able to look deeply into what is important to him. He now "appreciates each day as it comes."



Sports have always played a big part in his life, from pick-up games on summer nights in Indiana to coaching baseball and softball for some years at FCS, telling his teams that “If we win the championship and don’t love one another or connect fully with one another, then we have lost.” At the school lunch table, he often will uncap a treat that he has cooked himself: pulled pork, vegetarian chili or pan-seared chicken with lemon, and as Upper School secretary Diane DeVan says, “You haven’t had Italian homemade bread until you taste Mike’s!” He is a passionate watcher of cooking shows and an eager student of opera and classical music.

And so Mike’s thirty years at Friends’ Central have been rich and varied. He is never content with the status quo, with teaching only one subject, with thinking about a problem in only one way. As Beth Johnson, co-principal and dean of students says, “He is an artful teacher, and he genuinely connects with people...the connections are extraordinarily warm and genuine and cross all boundaries of race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and socio-economic status. He is thoughtful and deeply moved by global, national, state, local and personal tragedies...moved to do something and always moved to help.” He is Friends’ Central’s gadfly, a peacemaker and a peacekeeper.

*Mike Crauderueff (1980–) teaches Spanish, Quakerism and Peace Studies in the Upper School. He still feels blessed, after all these years, to be at a school where he has been supported and cared for by his students, colleagues and administrators. His children, Rob '01 and Mary '03 have graduate degrees and are off doing their own things, while he resides in Havertown with Elaine, his wife of thirty-one years.*

## **"Standard Davis Fare:" FCS' Music Program and Its Champion**

By Marilyn Lager 1991

When Jim Davis returned from winter vacation this past January, a letter was waiting for him. A generous check, made out to the music department, fell from the envelope, and Jim read about two parents' "pride and delight with the job (you) are doing in the music department at FCS. The Christmas concert held...December 7 was extraordinary in all respects and a tribute to your skills and devotion to our children." This was Jim's nineteenth Christmas concert at FCS and probably one of his most ambitious. But it was also only a "business-as-usual" effort in his ability to challenge young students musically while exerting an unerring judgment about what young voices are capable of. Thus, once again another FCS audience was treated to a moving musical evening.

December's concert seemed like a harmonious coming together of many strains of Jim's FCS life. He assembled, as he has done twice a year for nineteen years, choruses from fifth to twelfth grades to sing elegant and restrained choral music. But in addition, this time he had invited back Fred Haas '79, a music student from Jim's early FCS years and now a Philadelphia composer. He was invited to be present as the combined choirs sang a setting of Psalm 23, Fred's choral piece from his 1979 Senior Project. Jim, who had kept the piece in mind, dusted it off and reworked it for the traditional all-chorus finale. He described it as "lyrical and euphonious, with a natural directness." It concluded with a hundred and twenty young voices "singing the word 'amen' with a peaceful reassurance," Jim recalls. Appreciative applause was generated, along with a sense of triumph for students, past and present, and their teacher.

For nineteen years, Jim has sent music students like Fred out into the world, fortified with a special taste for serious music and a knowledge of music theory and history, which Jim teaches to advanced students. He gives a rueful smile when asked how he responds to students who would rather hear—and sing—only pop and rock music. "As a teacher, I feel it's my job to expose them to music

they wouldn't listen to on their own. Education is an opening up, an exposure to what's good," he states.

Jim seemed to take naturally to what was "good." When he was a five-year-old child in Seattle, Washington, he started piano lessons and remembers "Bach from the beginning," listening to his mother, an opera-trained soprano, sing in church as a soloist. By the time he was nine, he asked to play the trombone, but, instead his fingers were measured, and his sense of pitch was tested, and he was started on the cello as a reward for obvious musical ability. Piano is still his first instrument, and he accompanies local voice teachers and choral groups in his spare time. And as for the cello, he played in last spring's production of *A Little Night Music*, refreshing himself with lessons beforehand.

But it is choral music that seems to delight Jim the most. When his family moved east right after his high school graduation in 1964, Jim enrolled at West Chester College and "became very excited about vocal literature," starting voice lessons even though he was to be a piano major. This interest continues today; he sings in a choir called Ancient Voices, a University of Pennsylvania-sponsored group of sixteen voices that performs early music. "It's a great outlet," he smiles. "It's adults making music, so the skill level is high. This opportunity to practice keeps it that way, important for a teacher."

After graduation from West Chester in 1969, Jim worked for four years as the music teacher at Wayne Elementary School. "With my beard and bell bottoms, I was 'suspiciously sixties,' and I'm sure I scandalized the old guard there with my first concert, complete with strobe lights, rock music and dancing." Now he feels that there is so much technology involved in the production of a rock song that students would not think that it sounded authentic, even after months of practice.

Jim left Wayne to come to FCS in 1972, and since then audiences at concerts have heard what he calls "standard Davis fare:" a psalm from the Mozart Vespers, an alleluia from a Bach cantata, an original English or Appalachian folk song, Renaissance madrigals or a traditional Hebrew song. "Sometimes in the early days, I chose inappropriately difficult pieces, such as a Heinrich Schutz Christmas Oratorio, where there was just too much music." He feels he "is certainly more adept at picking music that makes kids sound good. I'm not a purist anymore; I'll adopt a tenor line for the altos or rescore a four-part piece for three if that's what we have."

Jim's respect for serious music includes his delight in the repertoire of show music. Most years, he serves as music director of student musical theater productions, as well as for faculty shows whenever they occur. He has taught Upper Schoolers songs for *Fiddler on the Roof*, played synthesizer in *Godspell*, adapted music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, played piano for *My Fair Lady*, been happily converted to Gilbert and Sullivan during a production of *Iolanthe* and directed the music for *Carousel*, the first production in Shallcross Hall. He recalls directing a performance of *Guys and Dolls*, when some leads couldn't match a pitch, including a math teacher who was so inspired that he went on to take voice lessons.

Even though Jim's musical acumen and talents are widely applauded at FCS, he considers himself first and foremost a teacher. He states unequivocally that he wanted to be a teacher since junior high when he was influenced by a history teacher "who tolerated silliness yet fostered respect for learning." Even when he received his master's degree in music, with a concentration in theory and composition, his penchant was for teaching. Because he is able to teach what he reveres, he seems to have indefatigable energy for his students and for his work.

Although he was refreshed by a half-year sabbatical to London in 1982, (during which he drove ten FCS flutists across England in a van so that they could concertize on their spring vacation), he works intensely with the same sense of purpose and sense of fun that he admired in his junior high school history teacher. In a small music theory class of juniors and seniors, he is observed to have rapport with his students, to be respectful when they hesitate with an answer; he is scholarly yet ebullient. He moves about the room briskly, checking students' notations, playing intervals in order to heighten students' aural skills and illustrating chromatic inflection at the blackboard and then on the piano. "*What's the starting note folks?...so..la..ti..do...accidentals need to be added here...yes?...your instinct is right, but that's not necessary...you're sooo close...Yes!...almost...let's go!*" Jim is having fun, and so are his students.

A deeply religious man, Jim has always associated music with religion, as far back as when he listened to his grandmother play organ in church. "Religion and music always went together," he says. His eyes light up as he expounds on what he describes as the inexpressible magic of sound. "Why is there sound that works that

way? That's why I teach...I want people to know that whole world of expression. Music to me is a gift, a religious experience; I treat it with profound respect."

***Jim Davis** (1972–2011) retired from teaching music, capping a career at FCS of thirty-nine years. He remains at the school as Archivist and Alumni liaison. He is a volunteer with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He feels incredibly lucky that FCS became a place where he could be himself: Gay, Anglo-Catholic, Miss America buff, Flyers fan and cook. He lives in Gulph Mills with his partner of twenty-eight years.*

## **Living Life to the Lees: Lou DelSoldo and Lower School**

By Marilyn Lager 2009

It's a sunny March morning, right after spring vacation, and Lou DelSoldo is welcoming his senior psychology students back to class. First, there is the friendly chatter about what they were up to, and in particular, where he has been, to his beloved Italy, the country, he tells them, in which all four of his grandparents were born. Next, he reminds them that they have only eighteen days left of school (they are off in late April for Senior Project). "I will find ways to amuse you," he promises, with his characteristic laugh.

And so he begins, in his fifteenth year of teaching psych, to talk engagingly of abnormal disorders about which they will give presentations, following the DSM-4 (the psychiatric Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). He talks comfortably about major depressive disorder, substance abuse and dissociative identity disorder, referring to some of the films which illustrate these conditions: *Girl Interrupted*, *Days of Wine and Roses* and *The Three Faces of Eve*. Any disorder can be discussed, and as senior Pat DeSabato says, "Mr. DelSoldo knows exactly how a teenager should learn. We discuss genuinely interesting topics; it's not about the grades; it's about acquisition of knowledge."

This class began in the fall with a three-week introduction to research methods, including natural observation, culminating in child development observations of the pre-k and kindergarten classes at the Lower School. Students were given check lists of behavioral and emotional traits appropriate to children of this age, and they discussed what they saw, such as a five-year-old with "mixed up past and present tenses, who identified the plural of mouse as *mouses*," and a four-year old "who wanted to be a piranha, because of its sharp teeth." The students were taught to collect data, and with Lou's expert eye, of over forty years of working with children, including a job at Head Start in North Philadelphia which he held in the 70's, to evaluate and understand.

Lou's shuttling back and forth between the two campuses encapsulates his thirty-one year career at FCS. For it is the young children with whom he spends most of his time, and he was initially hired to teach a pre-k/kindergarten of thirty students in 1978. As the school grew larger, he was named Director of Early Childhood Development, and then assistant principal of Lower School, setting up programs, supervising teachers and taking part in the gentle discipline of even the youngest students. Seating them in the small brown rocking chair in his office, over the years he has soothed and corrected, cajoled and set limits, solving problems that range from a sobbing second grader who was sure he had no friends to a child who promised he would never bite another child again, even though he had promised twice before!

Lou also assists the Admission Department at the Lower School and will soon see a dream begin to come true: the initiation of a nursery school class for three-year-olds which will begin next fall. "My true dream is to see this program grow to thirty children and also to have a full-fledged day care for faculty children," he muses. "But this is a wonderful beginning." His close working relationship with Joe Ludwig, head of Lower School and assistant headmaster, has made so much of his work successful. "Joe and I support one another. He is one of my best friends," states Lou. And Joe admires Lou's optimism, his likeability and his reliability. "I value his opinion; he has such a good heart and always tries to make things better. He is very bright with a wonderful sense of humor."

Lou was in charge of the historic move of the Lower School from the City Avenue campus to the eighteen-acre site four miles away. The grounds had been the home of the Montgomery Day School, and

at the time of the purchase in 1987, Lou and Joe realized that they had to make major changes to accommodate Lower School. "We had to renovate and build a new sixteen-classroom building, gut and build a new library, pack up, color-code and ship our existing school, and," he smiles, "we even used Quaker Moving Company." Pre-k to fourth graders came to a warm and inviting, smoothly functioning school in the September of 1990.

His participation in Lower School's fall thematic project has involved him in developing a treasure map for Sports and Games, taking children on an imaginary trip to India, armed with passports and baggage for the theme of Flight, and he has dressed up as a Moor for the Middle Ages curriculum, garbed in kaffiyeh and djellaba, traditional Muslim dress. And he meticulously organizes "Open Period," a Friday afternoon feature, where the children take such courses as Cartooning, Cricket, Scrapbooking and Lou's own Pasta Making. His caring attention to detail revealed itself when he went to the classroom of two third-grade girls to ask them individually if they would be comfortable in a workshop that would include them along with ten boys.

The richness of the curriculum has been made richer by Lou's participation, and its variety mirrors his own varied and full life. From the time he was an undergraduate at Villanova, when he realized that he wanted religion in his life, but not the Catholicism he was born into, through his Ph.D. program at Temple in comparative religion, he knew he wanted to lead a spiritual life, but one in particular that would let him "Drink life to the lees."\* He was able to overcome the intense religiosity of his five-year-old self, one who terrified a young neighborhood child and was punished for it, by telling him he would burn in hell if he didn't believe in God. His recently deceased sister became a Franciscan Sister of Peace, but Lou was to find his spirituality in Buddhism, a religion that promises, in balance, the happiness of a full and active, earth-centered life.

"I didn't want to confine myself to a narrow world, but rather master many fields," tells Lou. Like the young Karl Marx, he wanted to "do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon...criticize after dinner...without ever becoming a hunter, a fisherman or a critic." His life is filled with art, theater, opera, reading, food, travel, cooking and a lively and interesting blended family, all which he shares with his partner, Ray

Bentman, a retired Temple University English professor. Daughters Ramona, a nurse, and Eve '92, a lawyer, as well as granddaughter Lauren, consult him frequently for his confident problem-solving and deep sensitivity.

Lou's colleagues and students are unanimous in the praise of him as supportive, caring and generous, a person who can talk to parents and children, teachers and students with genuine interest and compassion. "I challenge you to find a kinder and more interesting man," says senior Will Castelli, and he is echoed by classmate Catherine Weingarten, who finds him "incredibly caring, about learning and also about having fun." Chris Ramsey, fourth grade teacher praises "his authenticity, his genuine love of both school and colleagues, his sharing of information and knowledge. I also value sharing the big topics in our lives, and his perspectives on child development and his spiritual grounding provide a steadiness and warmth." And finally, as fourth grade teacher Ginger Fifer sums up, "When one knocks on Lou's door, the person who is waiting is a model of consistency in patience, understanding and temperament, with both humor and compassion; he is a respected and treasured colleague, teacher and friend."

*Lou DelSoldo (1978–2011) lives in Center City, where he is taking writing classes to help him improve the memoir he is writing. He is also studying Italian and volunteers in a public school Kindergarten one afternoon a week. His time is rounded out with reading, traveling and lots and lots of baby sitting for his two year old granddaughter.*

## **He's Made Them Phenomenal: Ray DeSabato's Twenty Years at FCS**

By Marilyn Lager 1997

They've been "extraordinary." They've also been "awesome," "fantastic," and "magnificent." For Raymond DeSabato, Middle School principal and language arts teacher, who is celebrating twenty years of service at FCS, they have been even "exceptional" and "excellent."



Certainly, they have been years of firm and empowering leadership in which he models positivity for students and faculty and whoever is lucky enough to cross his upbeat path.

Every September, for those twenty years, Ray has intentionally chosen such adjectives by which to live and to inspire others. Beginning in 1977, when, as a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a Master's degree in reading, he came to teach grades six through eight, he has seen his career as an opportunity to make a positive impact. When Headmaster Tom Wood asked him at the time of his hiring where he saw himself in ten years, Ray replied, "Running Middle School." And Ray fulfills his promises.

Ray started fulfilling promises many years ago. "Don't put on airs to be more or do less than your potential," his father Anthony exhorted him. And indeed when Ray led his Bishop Neumann High School graduating class of 639 boys down the aisle and delivered the valedictorian speech, his father told him it was the happiest moment of his life.

A self-described "street-corner-boy" from the Italian market neighborhood of South Philadelphia, Ray was to give his working class parents much pleasure. He grew up with a secure sense of a home, a lively one in which his mother, who had simply moved to the house next door after her marriage, found ultimate satisfaction. He went to the University of Pennsylvania on a scholarship and, after declaring a dual major in math and psychology, found his next home in reading education under Morton Botel.

Botel, whose philosophy of reading involved motivating students to become lifelong readers, inspired him to stay on at Penn for a Master's degree. Within a month after graduation, he had his first job teaching reading at FCS and coaching football and tennis. Seven years and many Middle School language arts classes later, Ray became assistant principal. And in 1987, after ten years of employment, he kept his promise and was appointed principal of the Middle School.

He taught the literature he loved, literature that appeals to the growing young adolescent: *Lord of the Flies*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Separate Peace*, with their themes of individuation and identity. In his Principals' Course for eighth graders, he and the students explored morals and ethics relating to current events. Recently his course employing the lyrics of popular musicians such as the Beatles, James Taylor and his beloved Bob Dylan, explored

issues of creativity, rebellion and alienation. Words are important to Ray. Dylan's plaintive rebellion, his ordinary "whitebread" background juxtaposed against pain and protest, and the poetry of his lyrics have appealed to Ray since his own young adulthood. In his home, he has every album Dylan has ever recorded.

It seems there are no loose ends in Ray's life. His experiences—friendships, work, play interests—all revolve around family and FCS. His home is a mile away from the City Avenue campus, where his son READ (Raymond, after Ray himself, Edward for his wife Pat's father and brother, Anthony for his father and brother and D for DeSabato) is a seventh grader. On the Lower School campus, his daughter Andrea (whose name also has READ in it, he points out) is in the fourth grade, and Pat is the receptionist. He and Pat (born Patricia Ann O'Malley) met when they were in middle school (called "junior high" at that time), and although they didn't connect until college, he describes them as "birds of a feather."

Security is important to Ray: he likes to have it and to provide it. He provides it for his larger FCS family too, his faculty and students. Ray's philosophy of a middle school education is strong and sure: it is a time to teach skills like reading, writing, speaking, computing, athletics and art. Content is the means; curriculum is what you use to teach skills. "I like the energy, the enthusiasm, the changes that take place at this age," he states, and he likes the concept of "a strong, separate faculty devoted to this age group."

And the Middle School faculty appreciates him. "You always know where you stand with Ray; he's very supportive," states Deb Fedder, a member of his faculty. "He is the most moral person I know. His standards are on such a high level that he keeps everyone up there with him." Doug Ross, a Middle School science teacher, points out he has "worked *with* Ray for years and not *for* him, a nice distinction. Ray allows creativity because he is so grounded. We give him the ideas...he makes sure they become reality."

And what a reality! A dizzying panorama of programs fills the year: Adventure Day, Ski-skate Day, Echo Hill, Renaissance fairs, Egyptian markets, intricate scheduling, study skills, service projects, team-teaching, thematic weeks, fully developed curricula in math, language arts, language, computer, social studies, the arts and athletics. The almost 300 students are exposed to a vigorous, experiential, hands-on education of variety and excitement. They are watched over by a nurturing advisory system which Ray has brought

to bear. Each child feels Mr. De knows him or her. "It's like he's a distant friend, taking the time to say hello in a personal way. He even gave me a card on my birthday," says Eighth grader Allison. And David, a fifth grader, already has discovered that his principal is "kind, caring and funny. He gave me a sourball after I told him that I got an A on a test. He likes good news."

Ray's reputation as the diviner of the whole-School master calendar each year is legendary. Perhaps it is his early training at Penn in theoretical calculus that allows him to plot the year for the FCS community so that the Lower School Pumpkin Sale does not conflict with the Upper School play performance. And to make sure he didn't miss a heartbeat of FCS life, he ran the summer swim club for fourteen years until retiring last year, opening the pool in June and closing it in September in time for the opening of school. When he discovered he had an allergy to bee stings, he came inside during the summer months and is now director of summer programs. Not a moment is wasted in the year-round meshing of Ray's life and the life at FCS.

What informs Ray most, however, is his sense of self. He describes himself as a realist, one who has a hope for every child who is under his care. He is also the realist who knows that not every child will excel. He is honest and direct with everyone in his life. His honesty manifests itself also in self-revelation, and he worries about important decisions, sometimes losing nights of sleep. His positive nature and ability to make decisions are balanced with thoughtful introspection. He states unequivocally that "everybody in my life always believed in me...people always took care of me. I never spent a day in the hospital, never had a broken bone. But when the inevitable comes—suffering or loss—I will know I have respected and cherished my family all along."

It's Monday morning, and almost 300 Middle Schoolers are trooping into Shallcross Hall for weekly assembly. Ray is facing the crowd, hands folded in front of him, waiting quietly for their attention. And impossibly, within two or three minutes, the children and pre-adolescents quiet down to absolute silence, their eyes riveted on their principal. He has not said a word aloud to get their attention. There are many things to tell them this morning—announcements about lost and found items, about safety at dismissal time, about returning overdue library books. Announcements from students about the yearbook, literary magazine, service projects and math

contests follow, delivered in some cases by shy and nervous youngsters confident enough today to tell about their interests. A skit or two, some teachers' announcements, and it's time for recess. The crowd is still respectful and patient. "Make it a phenomenal one!" their principal exhorts them, and so begins another week in the Middle School.

***Ray DeSabato** (1977-) taught for ten years in Middle School and served as its Principal for twenty-five. His son READ '02 works at FCS as part of the Physical Plant and also teaches, while his daughter Andrea '06, a college graduate, is pursuing her interest in TV news.*

### **Thirty Years of Enduring Work: Bob Emory's Tenure at FCS**

By Marilyn Lager 2002

The noise is deafening: lathe, jigsaw, planer and router spin and whirl in alarming cacophony, all operated by teenagers who look too young to drive, let alone operate such daunting machines. Raw, sweet-smelling cuts of wood lie about on tables, while, in another room, thick brushes of pungent polyurethane are being applied by Middle School girls to intricately carved benches. Keeping a mature eye on all this activity while moving smoothly from student to student, giving a quick lesson on draftsmanship or complimenting an almost finished piece is Bob Emory, master carpenter and master teacher, celebrating, this year, his thirtieth anniversary of teaching at FCS.

The older students, juniors and seniors and mostly boys, are working on independent projects: an entertainment center, a chess table with drawers or a carved mirror. As Bob walks by, he sees that Jarrod's table is wobbly. Together they determine that, while three legs are of equal measure, the fourth is 1/16 of an inch shorter. The solution: carefully cut the three longer legs to match the shorter. Bob moves on.

At present, Bob teaches woodworking to two classes of Upper Schoolers and to every sixth and eighth grader who goes through

Middle School. They go home with clocks, jewelry boxes, small benches and a wide variety of beautifully finished and functional products. Moreover, he has done this since former principal of Middle School, Bob Hallett, and he initiated a woodcarving course in 1975. Joined by Cappy Knight, another Middle School teacher, the course was team-taught by all three for a couple of years.

During his thirty-year tenure, he has also had a hand in the construction of hundreds of stage sets for drama productions, in teaching photography to students and in taking all the public relations and school brochure photos. His dark hair is certainly grayer, but his step is no less steady than when he came to FCS as a young teacher in 1971. Then, fresh from a year of teaching painting, drawing and ceramics in the Worcester, Massachusetts, public schools, followed by another year at Shipley, he met FCS art teacher Jack Cederstrom. Cederstrom convinced him to come to FCS to start a photography program.

Bob's degree in fine arts, pertaining to industrial design from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, made him uniquely able to move from discipline to discipline in the FCS arts program. He added Middle School art soon after he came to teach photography. Always a "three-dimensionalist," he enjoys most of all "the hard material, the tangible product building stuff as I conceive it." As a young boy in the elementary grades, he began constructing useful carpentry projects; at his house today in Rosemont, his family still uses a mahogany table, a two-compartment lidded box and a pump-style lamp that young Bob had made by the time he reached eighth grade. FCS took to his versatility like raw wood absorbs shellac.

In the eighties, he added stage set production, and since then every FCS dramatic production has borne his signature. As a teacher first and foremost, he has involved students over the years in lighting and set design. Particularly exciting has been his elaboration of special props. Jim Davis, head of the arts department, and his colleague since 1972, laughs when he recalls that Bob even came up with a *prie-dieu* to establish the idea of a convent for a production of *The Sound of Music*. A former student, David Talemal '00, remembers his ingenious use of materials, like the scaffolding and tarpaulin which created rocky ledges and cliff perches for a 1998 production of *The Birds*. Says David, "Nothing is too hard for Mr. Emory, and he encouraged us to try new materials, new techniques." David Glasser '02 goes further: "Whenever we think something is impossible, like

re-painting the entire stage floor for a production of *'The Hot l Baltimore'* so it would look like a hotel lobby, he has it done by the next day."

But for all the bravos Bob has received for the stage sets, he feels a let-down when the sets are struck the day after the closing of the play. "There's no permanence, no record," he smiles ruefully. "I appreciate the enduring, the lasting." And he is going to give over much of this work to another teacher next year, an involvement he has had since he worked with drama faculty Dave Schaeffer, Lenny Haas, and since 1988, Terry Guerin. Terry praises his "elves-and-shoemaker-can-do magic," but she says, "More important than what is made for the stage, Bob exemplifies humility and team spirit. His patience and diligence are inspirational. He aims to please but never asks for kudos."

Bob's involvement in photography, the discipline he was first hired to teach, will leave a lasting mark on FCS history. "I suspect that every photograph taken of events, sports and for public relations at FCS in the 70's, 80's and into the 1990's were taken by or printed by me," he states When Todd Swimmer '81, a former student of Bob's, was hired to take over photography so that Bob could do other things, a special bond was re-ignited. Todd elaborates: "Bob was a wonderful teacher. Somehow, I had an almost obsessive interest in photography to the detriment of other subjects, which Bob nourished by readily providing the technical and creative tools to explore image-making. He gave me space and trust to make mistakes, never limited my desire to experiment, yet actively and critically supported my creative expression.... He seemed to know everything and could solve any problem. My experience at FCS was far wider and deeper than most kids that age had." And they have worked together as art department colleagues since 1994.

Although Bob can be found on campus working late into the evening hours and on many weekends, he enjoys a satisfying personal life pursuing the aesthetic side of his crafts: handpainting constructed pieces, photographing natural scenes woodworking, painting landscapes, and most happily, building boats for sailing, particularly on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. He attended the Wooden Boat School half a mile from the Emory family property in Brooklin, Maine; and in 2001, also in Brooklin, he participated in a kayak-building course. Stipends, sabbaticals, membership in crafts guilds, and a couple of courses at Villanova in

stage design have all enhanced his skills over the years and allowed him to expand his teaching assignments. He is a busy man.

What has been as enduring as the mahogany table of his youth is his thirty-three-year marriage to wife Susan. And becoming a grandfather this past year, when daughter Heidi gave birth to young Jamin, has certainly given him that piece of immortality he longs for. With his two sons, Hunter, who manages the Villanova Skating Rink, and Trevor, in ophthalmic research, now out on their own, he is beginning to think of the next step: having time to pursue his beloved hands-on art projects. Bob has been painting landscapes for the past years, and he says, "I can visualize Susan and me living in rural New England, perhaps on the coast of Maine, spending my days with paints and watercolors. I wasn't able to choose that option while raising a family. I can see us rambling through back roads, or perhaps owning a bed and breakfast, with me capturing the New England scenery on canvas. I want my work to be lasting."

Bob Emory is a stayer, an endurer, as rock solid as some of his projects and as deep as his resonant baritone voice. FCS has benefited from his steadiness of purpose and solid expertise that have come from constantly honing his skills and developing new ones. Jim Davis cannot imagine Bob not being behind the scenes at FCS. "He's unflappable; he's quiet but masters any request thrown at him; he was kind and supportive to me from my first days on the job, and he's been quietly and thoughtfully supporting us here for these last thirty years."

**Bob Emory** (1971–2005) is involved in painting in acrylics, showing in juried shows and acting as photographers for the Delaware Valley Art League. He and Susan, grandparents to six, may move to New Hampshire in a bit (two sons are there now).

## **Clayton Farraday: Sixty Years of Constant Purpose**

By Marilyn Lager 1992

This June, Clayton L. Farraday celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of his graduation from Friends' Central. For most, that would have meant a visit back to their alma mater once or twice in a lifetime. For

Clayton, the six decades since graduation have involved almost continuous and always loving service, from the time he arrived in 1928 as a quiet ninth grader who had heard about FCS from a math teacher, to the present time, in his capacity as school archivist. Dubbed "Mr. Friends' Central" by some, Clayton has enjoyed a career bearing at least a dozen job descriptions from biology teacher to Upper School principal, and twice Acting Headmaster. His has been a family life deeply entwined with the life of the school and a friendship network emanating from school activities that stretches over many American cities and three continents. He attributes his membership in the Society of Friends and his religious commitment to Quakerism to his observations and learnings at FCS. But most of all, he has been a unique source of wisdom to countless folk who have come in contact with him.

It is easy and pleasurable to come in contact with Clayton today in his Archives office on the second floor of Blackburn Library, the converted barn at the back of the campus. His carriage is upright, his silver hair neatly barbered and his gait brisk and purposeful. He strides around the school's track every day, weather permitting, for a two-mile walk, doctor's orders since a triple by-pass operation almost three years ago. He is at his desk, on a part-time basis, contacting and connecting people from the FCS past and present, setting up historical exhibits, identifying pictures, collecting publications, and serving as a gentle gadfly to the present faculty and staff who struggle with similar issues and conflicts in education, as if sixty years hadn't passed in the twinkling of his eye.

It may be said that a man who is everybody's friend is no one's real friend...except for Clayton Farraday. He has had an uncanny ability to make friends with so many whom he has taught, worked with, counseled, disciplined and led. Perhaps the most richly textured relationship is his present one with Bob Hallett, who succeeded him as Upper School principal from 1979 until 1985 when Bob left to become headmaster of St. Paul's School in Maryland. "Our relationship has been very unusual and personal," Bob muses today. "While he is without question a friend, a mentor and senior educator, he also has been like a grandfather to my children. He has helped guide me in so many ways, in my teaching, my administering, my reading, even my gardening." It seems that Clayton is able to turn valued relationships into deep and lasting bonds that transcend everyday professional contacts. And while his present-day social



contacts number in the thousands, they represent sixty years of FCS folks like Edmund Preston, Vernon Gotwals and Mary Sax Hoenigmann, all class of '41, former faculty, like Ann Preston, Tim Golding, Hans Fickenschner and Ruth Fiesel, and even the British teacher Brian Cave, who came to FCS when Clayton taught in England in 1960. By his estimate, he has taught over 2,000 graduates of FCS and worked with perhaps 4,000 school folk. And there is no one who does not remember him.

So many, like Joe Ludwig '69, present Lower School principal, fall into several categories. Joe was taught biology by Clayton, who also was his Upper School principal. Joe says that "Clayton has long been my ideal as an educator; he's a tremendous resource for me, my mentor and my friend. I still go to him for valued opinions and advice. He has great patience and is open and caring." Bill Ravdin '46, also a former student of his and presently head of development at The William Penn Charter School, says, "Clayton had a formative influence on my life, but no one can count the number of lives he's changed. He influenced how people thought about themselves and the direction their lives took. "But how, we must ask, does one man influence so many?

"He has a rare ability to tell someone his deficiencies in a most gentle and tender way without reducing a person's dignity," states Stanley Cherim, a colleague in the science department in the fifties and sixties and, later, a Board member. "He put people first, but he was a master organizer, incredibly on top of everything," he adds. Eric Johnson, Headmaster from 1948 to 1952, recalls that "He had no need for glory; he always let others take the credit for things accomplished. He was—and is—a modest and cheerful person." And Ann Whitcraft, who taught English, served as coach, Dean of Girls and head of college admissions for the same tenure as Clayton's, attributes his remarkable influence on whomever he touches to "his great insight about people. He always has a special knack for remembering something positive about a person and recalling that information at the right moment."

Clayton has been a model of character and integrity for so many over the years, but he is also "a wonderful source of amiable knowledge," says Eric Johnson. Indeed one will always come away learning something from him: how long it takes red trillium to produce a blossom, how many three-hundred-year-old oak trees there are in Pennsylvania or how deep to plant daffodil bulbs. One can learn what the Progressive Education movement was, how many

Quaker schools there are in Kenya and where there is a Quaker center in the Costa Rican rain forest. And Clayton, who Johnson says "never forgot anything," has certainly been a source of knowledge about the history of FCS over the last sixty years.

Who else on campus remembers Miss Anna Eisenhower and the way she organized her Latin class into five separate groups, each working on its own? His mentor, "a lady beyond description," says Clayton, "was the teacher who taught me all I came to know about being a good teacher, one who has clear expectations, a sense of humor and who knows the subject and his students well." When she died suddenly in 1941, he took over her Latin I class the next morning. Who else remembers which room served as the girls' coatroom or that boys' and girls' classes were separate until the school became officially coed, "more because of space issues than philosophy"? Who else remembers Mr. Percival T. Rex, American history teacher and stern disciplinarian who "took students to the woodpile to chop wood" when they misbehaved or the day in 1942 when Headmaster Dr. Barclay Jones returned from a conference in Chicago excited about progressive education, thus engaging the school in the John Dewey-inspired movement which has influenced it up to the present time?

And who else has perfect recall for the days of the Depression and the fact that Board records show that the faculty took a 15 percent cut in salary to keep the school operating then? Or who else remembers the days when the "color distinction" was dismissed in the late forties, making way for admission of the first black students in the early fifties? Or when the boys' sports program left the inter-Academic League, a membership he calls "a millstone around our neck," because FCS, the only coed school in the league, was matched with larger all-boys' schools? And how about the student exchange with Germany which was initiated after the war in response to a desire to improve international relations and which lasted over twenty-five years?

When Dr. Jones died in 1945, Clayton became Acting Headmaster, "a difficult situation," he remembers, "because I was young and awfully green." He was there when Dick McFeely "a compassionate, understanding leader" was named Headmaster months later and says of McFeely's three-year-stint, "He didn't stay long enough." Clayton was there at the naming of Eric Johnson, who had a "brilliant mind and a very direct sense of humor." He saw the Linton Gym and the swimming pool built on campus during those years. And during Dr.

Merrill Bush's eighteen-year tenure as Headmaster, a tenure marked by a strong interest in community and international relations, Clayton worked as Upper School Principal. It fell to him to inform the school community of Dr. Bush's death over a weekend. Again he was named Acting Headmaster, a position he held until Dr. Thomas Wood was chosen as Headmaster a year later, in 1971. For that stint, he knew he had "gained the necessary experience and was well-prepared"

How did this young man touch the hearts and minds of folk at FCS so deeply...and so quickly? After his high school graduation in 1932, he followed Dr. Jones' college guidance advice: "Three will go to Swarthmore." And indeed it was superb counseling, because he avers that "Swarthmore was everything to me...an opening up for a boy from a family whose education ended with normal school." By 1936, he was back at FCS as a substitute in seventh and eighth grade, while working on an M.Ed. at Temple, which he earned in 1939. His lifelong commitment to FCS had begun, and no doubt the light of his commitment and competence shone through almost immediately. By 1940, he was asked to teach biology full-time, and he was to hold the position of biology teacher, along with varied administrative positions such as Dean of Boys and Principal of Upper School, for almost forty years.

Clayton has been called the consummate and proper schoolman by some, so it must have produced glee and surprise when, right before Thanksgiving vacation in 1952, he, the Upper School principal, quietly married the Lower School principal, Winifred Robinson. And if Liza Blackburn, Director of Girls' Athletics, and her students, who were on a class trip to Williamsburg, Virginia, had looked out of the window on the route back to Philadelphia, they would have seen Mr. Farraday and his bride bound for Williamsburg on their covert honeymoon! It was not at all a scandal, he is quick to reassure, but it must have been good news for a closely-knit school community. When son Ted was born in 1954, Winifred left FCS. "I've never favored husband and wife on the same faculty," he says with some irony.

One of the happiest family and professional experiences took place when, in 1960-1961, Clayton went to England under the Fulbright Exchange Program to teach biology at the conservative King Edward VI school in the Cathedral close in Norwich. His young family went too, and they all found friends among the English families with whom they lived and at the school where he taught. "It

was a marvelously enriching year; at first they didn't trust this young teacher. But by the end of the year, all the students passed their tests. "The American teacher did fine," he recalls. A significant outcome of the year for him was that he learned to "slow down and to stay that way. Every teacher ought to have a full year away."

His contacts with parents, teachers and youngsters widened when Ted and then David came to FCS and later became his students in biology classes. "There was no preferential treatment, but I did have to be careful not to be partial since I knew all their friends. I held back a bit." His sons, however, were "very perceptive about their teachers," he smiles. He is in close contact with his sons today: Ted '72, lives in New Orleans where he teaches French and is Dean of Academic Programs at the Isidore Newman School; David '74 manages the Coliseum, a sports facility in Jacksonville, Florida. Winifred died in 1976.

When Clayton retired in 1979, there was an outpouring of praise and tribute at a gala black tie party on campus. At that time, hundreds wrote notes, poems and letters to commemorate his career and the influence he had on the school community. Kathryn (Kay) Orr, his secretary for nineteen years, wrote to him, "Every fifty years or so, there comes one who reaches out and touches the inner depths of the hearts and minds of mankind. Clayton Farraday is such a person." At this time, The Clayton Farraday Master Teachership Fund was initiated to award teachers stipends to explore individual interests. Contributions still come in to honor him.

What plans does Clayton have for the future? One will have to roam the world to keep up with him: In the last few years he's been to Kenya, Costa Rica, to England's George Fox country on pilgrimages with teachers from Quaker schools, and he spent spring vacation in Japan visiting his goddaughter Connie Burgess Lanzl '68, the daughter of Richard Burgess, a former English teacher. He remains deeply associated with the Friends Council on Education of which he was clerk of the Executive Committee for fifteen years. He is involved with membership in the Merion Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, and he is on the Board of Directors of Delaware Valley and Lansdowne Friends Schools. This summer he plans a big move to Crosslands, in Kennett Square, where he will still have his own small garden to tend. Clayton, who has given advice for so many years to others, apparently will not listen to his own words: "One can slow down...tomorrow will do."

Clayton remains a steady resource on the FCS campus. He talks with present students about FCS history and speaks up in Meeting for Worship from time to time. As archivist, he is busy preserving realia gleaned from all school activities. "His presence has been one of wisdom," says Bob Hallett. "He has had immense intergenerational influence on our community. In the midst of a changing world, he is our constant, our solid rock."

*This article was facilitated by a series of interviews with Clayton Farraday in 1989–1992, conducted by Erika Harnett, Upper School language department head. The interviews are on cassettes in FCS' archives.*

**Clayton Farraday** (1936–2004) died in 2004 after nearly seventy years of contributing to FCS life. His son Ted lives in Michigan and followed in his father's footsteps, working in education. His other son David works for sporting venues in Florida.

## **David Macdonald Felsen: A Headmaster in the Classical Mode**

By Marilyn Lager 1993

The February sun was streaming through the windows of Headmaster David Felsen's oak-paneled office. It streaked his blonde head bent over the telephone and dappled his worn work boots planted on the Oriental rug at our feet. I had come to interview David on this sunny afternoon to mark his fifth-year anniversary as headmaster at Friends' Central. I realized that I was talking to him on a day that had to be particularly bright for him because FCS' girls' and boys' varsity basketball teams were to be involved in playoff games on the coming weekend for Friends League titles. This, of course, would represent a potential triumph for any private school headmaster. For David Felsen, whose passion for sports is widely known, the anticipation of this weekend was surely sunshine itself. He hung up the phone. "My daughter Kate," he smiled. "She's at work and needed to talk something over with me."

I was in his office for a series of interviews that I hoped would help me to understand what fuels our headmaster, a man who has

led FCS through five historic yet unusually peaceful years. I wanted to know how he handles a position that involves him in fundraising millions of dollars, while maintaining a teaching commitment of at least one section of classics a trimester; how he develops and maintains relationships with thirty Board members and over 150 staff and faculty spread out over two sizeable campuses. I wanted to know how he balances his participation in the myriad daily activities of a busy school while planning for its future. I wanted to know how he is finding his unique voice amid the din of a 150-year-old institution. I felt that in my interviews I was able to separate out the strands of his remarkably interwoven experiences and to marvel at how he remains in touch with the sources of his strength.

That the five years have been historic is a matter of record. The purchase of the Wynnewood campus on Old Gulph Road during former Headmaster Tom Wood's tenure was a "done deal" when David came aboard. "Getting the Lower School up and running," says David "is now a marvelous joint accomplishment to look back at. But the construction on the new campus, the smooth transition to two campuses, the renovations for our Middle School, and the financing involved were major concerns of my first years." They became concerns which immediately immersed him in financial arrangements, on consultations about construction projects and in projections for enrollments that were ambitious, to say the least. "The changes of the last few years seem to have galvanized enrollment," reports David, who points with pride to a burgeoned and unprecedented student body of 769 students from pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The school's commitment to diversity also burgeoned in the last five years, and David likes to point out that "we meant what we said when we increased the financial aid budget enormously to make this happen." David is proud that he was asked to establish the program of a Basketball, Reading and Math Clinic similar to one that he initiated at Germantown Friends where he had been associated for twenty-seven years. This summer program, he feels, furthers diversity and supports it with a structured program for talented young sports participants. David has also aided the Japanese Language School of Philadelphia in sharing FCS facilities, and he has been gratified as its members make important contributions to the FCS community.

David has headed Friends' Central for the last five years with a style of leadership that he sees as "delegation of authority and power in order to enable people to do their jobs. I expect a lot of principals,

department heads and deans. I want to develop and encourage decentralization in an atmosphere of trust and openness where people take responsibility and initiative." One faculty member said that she felt that she was working in a place where her specialness would be respected and that if she had an idea and backed it up with practicalities, it has a good chance of being put in place eventually. "David is reflective. He doesn't take hasty action. But he encourages one to proceed when one feels strongly," she said.

David is proud of the retention and growth of faculty. He is constantly praising the abilities and commitment of those who serve as Board members. He travels frequently to meet with alumni all over the country to talk about fundraising and also to link up personally with those who know the school well. "Great schools come from great people," he points out.

David has always thought of himself first and foremost as a teacher, a person with a deep intellectual interest in history and human events. He has managed to teach at least one section of either Latin or Greek despite his schedule of administrative duties. "There is nothing like actual teaching," he says, "to keep one directly in touch with students and education." This direct contact began twenty-seven years ago when he started teaching classics and ancient history (in which he holds a master's degree) to GFS students. It has been an essential grounding for him as he is required to spend more and more time out of the classroom. One of his students, eleventh-grader Jocelyn Trachtenberg, says, "He's a great storyteller and relates personal stories to history. He's a calm person with a good sense of humor."

More than anything, David Felsen's passion for sports is integral to his life and work. At FCS, he is an avid fan, one who has been seen walking briskly across campus towards the gym to watch a key game. He is a headmaster with a long-range plan for putting in place a financial package to build new sports facilities. But step back over the years, and one can trace this passion—and considerable personal ability—to his earliest years, playing three sports in high school and college and serving as captain of varsity soccer at Haverford College where he returned, after graduation, as soccer coach, remaining in that capacity for many years. That he could teach classics and coach basketball at GFS simultaneously seems to have clinched his career choice years ago. In 1989, after David had been on the FCS side of the river for a year, the athletic directors at both schools established the

David M. Felsen Cup, awarded annually to the school that achieves the most points in thirteen sports.

But what really defines David, what gives his life meaning and substance and his position at FCS a firm grounding, is his sense of the importance of family relationships, past and present. He has always told, with humility and pride, of how he raised his two children, Kate and David, now in their twenties, by himself after a divorce. He is glowing about their accomplishments—Kate, a Harvard graduate, is now in her second year of a program at Johns Hopkins in international relations; David, who graduated from Haverford too, is working in TV and radio in Wyoming. He is able to talk about parental love, evoking vignettes of conflict and connection for present parents at the school. “I’m amazed,” says Ray DeSabato, Middle School principal, “at how family-focused David is. Even after a day spent managing millions of dollars, followed by a late Board meeting, he takes the time to ask me about my family. He shares personal anecdotes about his family that are very human and show how much he values family.”

One is struck by the fact that David is in touch with his family stories and what was imbued by family from his earliest years. When one talks to him, one gets to know both his parents because their values and the way they lived their lives were profoundly central in shaping his life. As the son of a general practitioner from Brooklyn, New York, who settled in a small town in western Massachusetts, David used to make rounds with his father, stopping in homes of patients and becoming involved in their lives. This ended when his father died when David was nine, leaving him, as he recalls his father’s last words that fateful day, as “the man of the house.”

He remembers an intensification of his love for sports at that time—after all, his father may have left Brooklyn behind during the forties but not his loyalty to the Brooklyn Dodgers, in the era of Jackie Robinson’s entrance into the major leagues. Wouldn’t anyone emerge as a passionate fan as well as a champion of civil rights? David asks logically. And no doubt the nightly father-son catch between the busy Dr. Felsen and his young son left its mark: David recalls his father looking impatiently at his watch when his son was late in getting home one evening for this ritual. His father also instilled in him an intellectual prowess. He used to look up words for the Sunday crossword puzzle which his father and his friend solved each Sunday. This man, head of the history department at Williston Academy where



David would attend, was influential in overseeing David's education and intellectual choices long after his father's death.

But by far, the greatest influence on David was his Scottish-born mother, a veritable pillar of strength to him throughout her life. Through her wisdom and outspokenness, her courage and fortitude, she shaped his life. "Parents are the air children breathe," he remembers her saying, and he feels she encouraged a sensitivity in him while also making him tough. Although she found herself on the opposite shore from her own family when her husband died, her decision to remain in this country was predicated on the fact that her three children—David and his two sisters—would receive the best possible education by remaining in Massachusetts. She had earlier stood strongly against the prejudice that had almost kept her family out of small-town New England. Her Jewish husband had been discouraged from beginning a medical practice there by a town selectman named Sandy Campbell. "It won't work out for you here, Dr. Felsen. There aren't many of your kind here." Agnes Macdonald Felsen retorted, "This town needs a doctor, a fine doctor like you. And besides, what can you expect from a Campbell?"

David credits his respect for diversity to the early understanding of his parents' unlikely union. "I was tremendously shaped by my father's death but more shaped by my mother's personality. She was a literate woman with immense mental energy" who read widely and broadly, sharing her love of books and learning with him. She read aloud regularly to her children, even when David dribbled the basketball restlessly around the living room on warm spring days, eager to be out playing. But he listened. Years after her death, he enjoys reading aloud to audiences at FCS. At assemblies and school functions, he has read Ring Lardner stories about baseball and wisdom, translations of the classics, excerpts from family letters and even his mother's diary from the 1930's. These writings have clearly provided inspiration and guidance for him throughout the years. And he sees himself, in a way, as being like a general practitioner, one who makes house calls as he did with his father, always interested in hearing about people's lives and in sharing a community.

Stores are the very air that David breathes, and one is able to trace the values he wishes to impart to the tales he tells so feelingly. He has been associated with Quaker institutions for over thirty years and finds the values of simplicity, self-discipline, community

responsibility, peaceful resolution of conflict and unreserved respect for the individual exactly in keeping with the early teachings gleaned from his family. He speaks of honesty and compassion for and understanding of others as traits to inculcate in our young students. His definition of a first-rate education includes affirming values such as these, as well as instilling confidence in the young and the ability to think for themselves. He feels that “people who persist and who have staying power” will be the successful ones. In addressing the faculty last March, he said that, in the words of E.M. Forster, he would like our youth to become “an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky.”

*David Felsen (1988–2011) retired from Friends' Central in June 2011. He continues to live in Germantown, cheers mightily for the FCS basketball teams and visits his children and grandchildren in New York City. He remains interested in the life of the Friends' Central community.*

### **What Wonderful Gifts : FCS Graduation Address, 1996**

By Mark B. Fifer 1996

As you would expect, I have prepared remarks for today, but before I begin, and perhaps more in keeping with the manner of Friends, I would like to spend some time in speaking to the spirit of this moment and the spirit-filled moments I have experienced this morning.

As I drove my children here today, I heard a familiar phrase repeated for my benefit. When Megan and Mark first participated in athletic contests as young children, I would always say to them as they departed, “Good luck. Have fun. Play hard.” This was a phrase often repeated during their years of competition. As we arrived here this morning, before I got out of the car, my son, Mark said, “Dad, good luck. Have fun. Play hard.” You can imagine my feelings.

In talking to my older daughter, Megan, I told her there was a familiar “feel” to the morning. It had a similar feeling to days long gone by when I used to play football for Gettysburg College. Today had a “going-out-for-the-captains’-coin-toss” feel to it: incredible excitement with a strong desire to “get on” with it.

My younger daughter, Elisabeth, just gave me these babies' breath. She said that they would bring me luck but to give them back to her when I was done with them.

And today I am wearing my Dad's shoes. He is an Episcopalian minister and has been for almost sixty years. When he retired from the ministry, he gave me one pair of his many black "preaching shoes." I am wearing those shoes. I guess you could say that I am literally and figuratively filling my father's shoes today. I am so proud that both my father and mother can be here on this day to enjoy these moments.

And finally I am quite struck by those who are not present here today. How very proud they would be of all their children. I would like to have a moment of silence to honor those who could not be present. Thank you.

\* \* \*

When I began to consider what I would say today I was drawn to one of my favorite spots on these grounds, to the place where the bur oak, that natural historic monument which is over 300 years old, grows. You shouldn't leave here today without seeing it. There are times (when no one is looking or listening) that I touch that tree, and I talk to it. It is like touching and talking to the past. As I sat quietly under its expansive canopy, I wondered what it would say to me if it could speak. It had already been around for roughly a century when the Declaration of Independence was signed, for approximately 175 years when this school was founded and for over 225 years when it first greeted the students of Friends' Central at this site. If this tree could speak, it could tell us many truths based on its vast experience.

It seems that the tree did speak to me, helping me to think that, on this day, June 8, 1996, on this occasion, there are many truths for all of us to consider. As we celebrate this graduation, we celebrate 150 years of truth-seeking and telling, symbolized by this tree, and this educational institution, founded upon Quaker philosophy.

Truth-seeking and telling are a personal matter, a process that is usually difficult, involving matters of the heart and spirit, a process that gives meaning to life. We must be bold enough to trust what we know in ourselves and to share that knowledge boldly. For it is in the telling and seeking that we become vulnerable, and for me, in the end, it is that vulnerability that we can best offer each other. I offer my vulnerable self to you today. Know that these thoughts and

words are from the heart, partly because there are two special pieces of my heart that are part of this graduating class, but also because you, the FCS community, have been a meaningful part of my life. Our life paths cross this day; we touch one another, never to be quite the same again.

As a member of this community, I have attended fifteen graduations. None has held as much significance to me as this one does today. Your graduation allows us parents to feel in all too real ways the rapidity of the passage of time. It was only yesterday that you were babes in arms, holding our hands to take your first unsteady steps. It is hard for us to understand where these eighteen years have gone or, for that matter, the years since our own graduations. It is clear to me that the gift of children, each child given to our care, is a precious resource that we will forever love, an ever-present part of our consciousness. Yet it seems that the daily rigor and sharing of life has slipped by in the blink of an eye. The path these precious resources (you children) now take diverges from ours in significant ways; that is the way it should be...it is the way of life. We are meant to live our own lives and share in yours. As caretakers of you, our children, our hope is that we have given you both roots and wings...roots that will allow you to hold firm values which will see you through the peaks and valleys of your lives, permitting you to act justly, honestly and with integrity. And wings that will allow you to soar with dreams of limitless possibilities for your tomorrows.

This graduation has a special significance for parents, but for teachers, graduations provide a moment to pause for reflection. As a social studies teacher whose focus is history, my approach has been one of trying to give history life by looking at the stories of people. My interest has been in viewing events to see how they have had impact on individual life stories. As a student of history, I look at how people choose to respond to their situations, the decisions they make which influence their personal lives, as well as the collective life of a family, community, nation and planet. I have always viewed those decisions with great interest, considering what distinguishes each of us from the others—time, place, race, gender, sexual orientation and socio-economic position. I wonder how you, our graduates, will respond to the impending history of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What decisions will you make that will affect our lives and our future? My charge to you today is to consider two expressions of truth and search for your own truth

in them. The first is that you *can* make a difference. You have the power to make changes that will alter the way life is lived.

[The first truth is]...you *can* make a different. You have the power to make changes that will alter the way life is lived.

When Juan Williams, author, television commentator and columnist for the *Washington Post*, spoke at the Sesquicentennial anniversary symposium in January 1996, I listened to his comments about Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela. He indicated that these two individuals, at first, were simply indistinguishable parts of the landscape of their time; they had little intention of becoming people who would reconfigure their worlds. They were not destined for greatness and were willing to follow the status quo. They aspired only to what their worlds were willing to offer them at the beginning of their lives and careers, worlds that significantly limited their talents. Mr. Williams went on to say that the forces of change literally grabbed at them, forcing them into the breach, compelling them to respond, leading them on and sweeping them up in the whirlwind of change that would alter humankind forever. As a teacher I pause each year and consider the graduates of a class and wonder which, if any, will break from the status quo and reap the whirlwind of change, leading us to a world that will be transformed forever. When I think of King, Mandela or Rosa Parks—people of such earth-changing stature—I find Mr. William's comments comforting, even inspiring, as they suggest that people like them started from unremarkable positions; their initial responses were halting, unsteady ones. What does that mean to you and me and all who are listening today? It means that you *can* make a difference, that we all can, and that we can be empowered to make changes that will alter the way life is lived.

The second expression of truth for me is: No course of action is too small if it leads us to live life in a fair and just manner. As a teacher, my hope is that all will play a part according to their talents, however small or great that contribution may be. In April, one of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classes heard Morris Dees, noted civil rights advocate and litigator. His impressive message taught us that even the smallest of deeds can be large forces in fighting racism and prejudice. Here was this man, a champion of civil rights saying that he would not allow the cynic's view of this monumental task to override his idealistic beliefs. He would not allow the view of the mountain to deter him from the step-by-step climb to overcome the obstacle. To create a society that is more just and strives toward the

ideal of equality upon which it was originally founded, Morris Dees looks only to what he can do each day, to do his part in working toward that ideal society. What does that mean for you and me? As a teacher reflecting upon you as graduates, I think of the many decisions that you will face and hope that you, and all of us, recognize that no action is too small if it leads us to live justly and fairly.

Today I find myself reflecting on the choices that I have made that have filled the space of time that is mine. Those choices have brought me to this place and moment in time. What does that mean today as you graduate? It means that a piece of myself, part of what I am, is leaving with you. And so it is with every class. Your teachers have given pieces of themselves; you reflect our lives, and you have given meaning to us. What a wonderful gift. And as your teachers have given of themselves, so have you given of yourselves...again, what a wonderful gift. What an amazing partnership it has been. When you were Lower School students, your teachers gave you tools and introduced you to opportunities to think about this world; in return, you offered an open, fresh, invigorating receptivity to learning...what wonderful gifts. When you were Middle School students your teachers helped provide direction and balance in your physical and intellectual development while negotiating the whirlpool of social and emotional adolescent issues that arose in defining yourselves; in return, you offered your high energy, idealism and intensity of relating to each other and the world around you...what wonderful gifts. When you were Upper School students your teachers prepared you to face the competitive world, providing you with challenges that were intended to build confidence and to help you see the possibilities within yourself; in return you have offered the excitement of intellectual stimulation, the satisfaction of contributing to adult patterns of thought and habits and the wisdom that arises from challenging accepted views...what wonderful gifts.

So, as this teacher reflects on your graduation, there is a sense of loss, yet one of intense satisfaction that pieces of myself and my colleagues live in you and pieces of you in me. Perhaps words from a favorite song of mine says it best: *Somos el barco. Somos el mar. Yo navego en ti. Tu negas en mi.* "We are the boat. We are the sea. I sail in you. You sail in me." It is my hope, and the hope of your teachers and all gathered here today, that each of you will search for and find the place that will allow you to fill your space in time in

meaningful ways: that in so doing you will wear a mantle of greatness, possibly becoming the next generation of Kings, Mandelas or Parks. In seeking your place, avail yourself of the opportunity to serve others in great or small ways; that is how the world can ultimately be changed.

The class of '96 has distinguished itself in many ways. What wonderful gifts you have been to your parents, teachers, families and friends. We are proud of you and thank you for the time you have spent with us. The road of preparation continues, but it does diverge and separate here. Our life paths have crossed; we have touched one another, never to be the same again. You are strong, well-prepared travelers, so now begin on your new paths.

*Mark Fifer (1981-) in his thirty-second year of teaching at FCS, will serve as Interim Principal of Middle School for the 2012-13 school year. Mark's wife Ginger, Lower School Assistant Principal and children Mark '96 and Megan '96 are also teachers/administrators. Libby '09 is studying French and art history in college but did intern in Paris in two schools. Time will tell if she goes into the family business!*

## **Two Erudite Ladies of the Language Department: Jacqueline Gowen-Tolcott and Erika Harnett**

By Marilyn Lager 2001

### *Jacqueline Gowen-Tolcott*

Her animation and quickened body language, as well as the expressive words she rapidly and clearly enunciates, has awakened even the sleepest student on this gray March afternoon. Señora Gowen-Tolcott, who for thirty years, has been entertaining—no, really teaching—students the Spanish language in classes of many levels has not uttered a word of English. The students in Spanish III Advanced answer hesitantly, but they pay unwavering attention to their cheerful teacher. Ben Fogel '12 notes that “You can tell she’s enjoying the class. It makes it very pleasurable for the students.”

Although Jackie, as she is known to the FCS community, is teaching only Spanish now, because the interest is so high, she is as proficient in French as she is in Spanish. She was born and grew up in Cuba, moving to the US in time for high school, and after college at Drew University, she received an MA in French literature from the University of Rochester. She met her future husband Michael there, and then went on to study for a Ph.D. in French literature, at University of Virginia. Soon after, she was teaching both languages at Springside School. She was “stolen away” by Sonia Tonelli and Penny Weinstein, FCS language teachers and began her teaching career at FCS in 1981. She immediately “loved the coed atmosphere (Springside was all girls) and the warmth of the community.”

Jackie creates a comfortable atmosphere in her classes. “No one is threatened,” she says. She uses the target language 98% of the time and is always trying different methods. “English is the last resort,” she smiles. “There is immersion; there is respect. No mocking. We are all learning together.”

Jackie’s life has always been informed by travel and culture. She currently lives in Center City and takes advantage of cultural events. She studied dance, was inspired by noted Cuban dancer Alicia Alonso and still finds it “another way of expressing myself, deeper than words.” She has been awarded a sabbatical for next year and one of her plans is to take dance classes at the University of the Arts. She and husband Michael appreciate different forms of art; in fact, Michael is the nephew of the late Roy Lichtenstein, and they have been appreciative of and involved in art through him. They have travelled throughout Spanish- and French-speaking countries, gone on summer workshops, and Jackie has taken FCS students on exchanges to Paris, Madrid and many other Spanish cities.

Although Jackie and Michael live a most grounded life in Philadelphia, it is intriguing to think of her growing up in Cuba. Her memories include the “impeccable beach at Varadero, east of Havana, with the whitest sand and clearest water; Castro’s interminable speeches, broadcast on TV, radio and loudspeakers, some of them lasting more than five hours;” and how hard it was for music lovers when “rock and roll was *verboden*, and all music had to be listened to quietly or you might be labeled a *gusano* (a maggot: a derogatory term for a counter-revolutionary).” Her parents, both



dentists, were able to come to this country also, after Castro and his communism took reign.

Her colleague, history teacher Gary Nicolai, sees Jackie as “a lady, a consummate professional with dignity and class.” She has been department head of the Language department for several years. Mike Crauderueff who has worked with her for many years, sees her as “a true linguist who lifts her students to increasingly higher levels of competence. She expects a lot of them academically, but she also understands that it is not easy to learn a foreign language. She strikes the right balance between strictness and flexibility, firmness and compassion. She is, indeed a model for me to emulate.”

*Jackie Gowen-Tolcott (1981–) was granted a sabbatical in January 2012 and travelled to Argentina and Spain, the latter in order to take courses. She also worked in a Spanish Immersion school in Center City where she lives with her husband Michael.*

\* \* \*

### **Erika Harnett**

It's the day before spring vacation, the last block of the day, and Erika Harnett's Latin II Advanced students are playing a game. It is a board game called Ludi, where Latin prepositions have evolved into English prefixes, like *circum*, *intro* and *semi*. While the board represents the Circus Maximus, the answers are called out by teams who provide the matching words. It holds their interest, and it doesn't have a screen or apps. By the end of the block, goodbyes and good wishes are called out, and Doc Harnett begins her thirtieth spring vacation from Friends' Central School.

Now an elder stateswoman, with an elegant white pageboy, a brown-haired Erika started teaching Latin in 1981, and aside from also teaching Ancient History for four years, she has been doing that ever since. In fact, when our son Rob started Latin twenty-five years ago, and we went to Curriculum Night, my husband remembers her charming intro to the parents about the variety of words one can make from Latin words, such as *mater*: matriarch, maternal, and even matricide.

After graduating from Temple with a BA in 1974, she went to work as an archaeologist for the National Park Service, on call to dig

and catalog any treasures that were unearthed at the final excavation of Ben Franklin's home (Franklin Court). Erika went on to teach Latin to fourth through sixth graders in four Philadelphia elementary schools. After taking graduate courses at Bryn Mawr College, she was a sabbatical replacement for David Felsen at Germantown Friends, and there she heard about an opening at FCS from their school psychologist. She was hired by Tom Wood.

She received her Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr in 1986, while working at FCS, and made archeology a big part of her life: during the summer of 1997, she excavated at a site in the Mt. Carmel Range in Israel, and in 2000, she was in eastern Romania, digging at a Roman fort. She has taken legions of students to Italy and Greece, served as head of the Language department for over five years, been a tenth grade dean and worked in college counseling.

She is an upbeat, enthusiastic teacher who has flourished at FCS. "Latin creates mental alacrity," says Doc. "It challenges you to think about language in a different way." Amelia Weinberg says that "Doc loves to talk about the history of Rome. She is passionate about the subject, making us laugh. She has a good time." "And so do we," adds Peter Dissinger '14. She is about to offer a new course for the 2011-2012 school year, *Ancient Cities: Jerusalem, Athens and Rome*.

Erika has had a rich life away from the FCS campus. Daughter of immigrants, who spoke no English at home, she was at first thought hard of hearing when she could not respond to the neighborhood children. But she went on to master English, Latin and Greek at Temple, where she also became a varsity fencer who competed in national championships, continuing fencing after graduation. And she is a fine equestrian, introducing her daughter Emily '09, now a student at Penn, to the sport early on. They both were excited to find a reference to Friends' Central in a 1947 book, *Spurs for Suzanna*, by Betty Cavanna whose niece had attended FCS. Son Brendan '05 was born in October of 1986, and he is now a computer analyst. Emily's birth was more dramatic, when English teacher John McCollum was called into action to rush his colleague, who was in labor during lunch, to Rolling Hill Hospital to give birth.

Erika has worked closely with Mike Crauderueff for years. He finds that "her energy and intellectual prowess have earned her the respect of both colleagues and students. I am impressed with the loyal following she has had among her students over the years. Their fond memories of Doc's classes always lead them back to her

classroom during college breaks.” And Jackie Gowen-Tolcott, her colleague and “trustworthy friend for thirty years,” finds her “witty, smart and sharp about any topic!”

*Erika Harnett (1981–) lives in Glenside, with Brendan '05, a pharmaceutical consultant and Emily '09, when she is home from University of Pennsylvania where she spends much time at the Writers' House. Erika plans to go to Germany to research Charlemagne to support her medieval Latin class.*

## **The Gift of Quaker Women in Ministry in Friends Education**

By Galen McNemar Hamann 2012

*Galen worked in the Middle School as a language teacher in 1992-1996. She is currently Director of Friends Education and Upper School teacher of Religion at the Moses Brown School in Providence.*

Recently *Friends Journal* published a magazine focused on Quaker women in ministry. As a Quaker woman in ministry myself, I devoured the edition, reading each article with anticipation and curiosity. When I finished, I realized that I was feeling unsatisfied. One particular form of Quaker women in ministry had not been expressed: Quaker women in Friends education. Now if you know me at all, you might assume that absence was disturbing to me because I myself serve in Friends Education, and I did not see witness of my own ministry. But this was not the case.... Rather I found myself disappointed because I realized that my own life as a young adult Friend has been nurtured by Quaker women serving in Friends Schools.

As I thought of those women who have impacted my life I thought of one Quaker woman in particular who had a tremendous impact in my life probably unknowingly. She has recently died and it seems important to share her impact on me with others in hopes that her example of ministry will continue with others. This woman is Linda (Arras) Hensel; she was the assistant to the head of Middle School at Friends' Central and teacher of Quakerism.

Linda's gray hair, her straight back posture and her disciplined nature led me to be a bit skeptical about her when I arrived as an overly eager twenty-two-year-old, first year Middle School Spanish teacher. I was a bit cautious in my interactions with Linda that first year, worried I might get reprimanded or gently reminded of any behavior that might have been inappropriate or "unquakerly." These were my assumptions and misperceptions, of course, that I built up as the months passed, and it wasn't until my second year that they came crashing to the ground

I had recently begun working with our Middle School students to program some of our meetings for worship. One of the things they loved to do was change it up; give the community something to think about. This particular meeting we had given every one a tiny slip of paper. After meeting had begun I sat there listening as the probably 195 of the 200 students played with the paper in their hands. My mind was racing. I was worried we had made a poor decision, I had made a poor decision; I was a teacher working with Middle Schoolers; I should have seen this coming. Of course they couldn't handle being quiet when given a tiny piece of paper. And then as if I wasn't feeling bad enough, I saw Linda rise. "Oh no," I thought, "now we are going to get reprimanded."

She began slowly and spoke intentionally choosing each word with care. "As I tried to settle into worship, I was very distracted by all the paper rustling (at this point she even rustled her own *paper in her hand angrily, a sure sign we were in trouble*), and I started to get annoyed. And then I listened again and I heard the noise in a new way: it was like a humming, like the sound I might imagine in a forest or a jungle. And when I listened to the crinkling in this new way it sounded peaceful not distracting. I wonder how often this happens to us, when if we can stop and listen or see something in a new way; this new perspective might bring us peace or joy instead of annoyance."

As she sat down I could almost hear the collective sound of a smile spreading across the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade faces as they now calmly and quietly crunched their paper making music not seeking to annoy their teachers or peers. Through this Spirit-led message she had gently guided the meeting to a new depth of fellowship as we worshipped together; like a boat on a rough seato gentler waters. This model of the way in which an adult in the community can gently nurture the meeting through a grounded message is one that has served me well.

Her message itself opened me up to seeing Linda herself in a new light. As the weeks and months passed by, I noticed more of her sense of humor, the twinkle in her eye, the love of the students, her commitment to service and her meeting and her dedication to and love of her family. These complimented her demand for respect and her ability to hold individuals accountable for their actions. She soon became more than my supervisor or colleague: she became a mentor to me.

*Friends Journal* also had an article in the recent years about how young Friends are nurtured, with the concern that young Friends are drifting away from meetings. I remember one young Friend expressing the importance of older Friends showing interest in young Friends and engaging them in conversations about their own lives and supporting them in their current life stage. This article did not include how young Friends are nurtured in a Friends School, a place where the number of Friends teaching in Friends schools is also dwindling. If it had, they surely could have profiled Linda.

When I was in my third year at FCS, I had decided that I would like to move to Central America while I was still young to travel and have adventures. In order to do this I knew I would need to save up money, so I began working a second job at Chili's on City Line Ave. It was quite an adventure and hard work. Linda knew this first hand because she made a point to figure out when I was working and she and her husband Phil would come by every once and while for dinner, asking to be seated in my section. This made me feel connected to her because she was intentional about supporting me and my dreams.

In my fourth year at FCS, I realized that I wouldn't be moving to Central America after all but instead wanted to find a job similar to Linda's in which I might be able to teach religion, coordinate service, and care for Friends Education. I found such a position closer to home in Providence, Rhode Island. It was a sad decision to leave Friends' Central because of the close-knit community of both faculty and families, but I knew that I was being led in new directions vocationally. Linda knew this too and kept in touch. She and Phil visited me in my first home. When I got married, she sent me pottery from one of her favorite artists. These were simple acts whose intention was received with great appreciation.

This gift of women's ministry in Friends education that Linda had was one of quietly nurturing others. She is not alone in this

ministry in Friends Schools; there are many other Quaker women cultivating the next generation of Friends students and educators. Linda's life, like her message in meeting, is one that I continue to draw inspiration from and seek to emulate as I let my own life speak to others as hers did to me.

***Linda (Arras) Hensel** (1980–2010) During her long career at FCS, she taught math, computers and Quakerism. She served as Assistant Principal in Middle School and is specially credited with starting the immensely successful weekly Middle School service projects in the 1980's. Mother of two sons, (Philip Arras graduated from FCS in 2003), she also left behind her husband Phil and one grandchild.*

## **Making a Record of Ourselves**

By Michelle Johns 2004

*I am traveling backwards and forwards all at the same time, back to a place that forever changed my life twenty-eight years ago. Now, as I make the same journey to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, I am remembering and anticipating. What has changed? What has remained the same? What are the parallels? – Journal Entry, August 2003*

Before we were married, my husband Joe and I were extremely committed to the work we were doing in Camden, New Jersey. It was the late sixties and I was teaching at Martin Luther King Day Care Center, and Joe was doing social work and helping to rehabilitate a Hispanic area near Rutgers University. We made a commitment to someday add an adopted child to our family. Two years after our daughter Kristen was born, Joe and I began searching for a hard-to-place, biracial baby. In the process, we encountered complications, disappointments and frustrations.

At that time, Dr. C. Everett Koop, then the head surgeon at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, had successfully separated conjoined Dominican twins who had been brought to Philadelphia for the operation. In a remarkable series of events, our lives were about to intersect.

While in Santo Domingo he had visited Dona Chucha Orphanage, where he examined sick children. Dr. Koop then made a post-operative visit to the twins in the Dominican Republic to monitor their progress. He made a phone call to my home in Malvern, Pennsylvania, telling us that there was a premature, malnourished infant that needed immediate placement. I quickly made plans to leave the country and was so excited that I felt as if I could fly there without the plane! To this day I do not know all of the specific details of how we came to be contacted and were able, eventually, to bring our daughter, Angela Maria, home to be part of our family.

During my time in the Dominican Republic, when I picked Angela up, we bonded as mother and baby. I was fortunate to be able to relactate, which definitely helped Angela get stronger and brought us closer together. It is difficult to put into words the strength of maternal love I felt when Angela began to recognize my voice and turn her head toward me when I spoke. Those days were hectic. My time was spent running between government offices, getting paperwork done, while I only spoke rudimentary Spanish. I carried Angela everywhere with me as I went about my tasks. Three and a half weeks later I brought her home.

Kristen was in awe of her four-pound baby sister, and my family immediately fell in love with her. There was never a question of her acceptance into the family. We did, however, encounter prejudice outside the family. Complete strangers would approach us to say the most incredulous things! Early on my girls learned the meaning of the word "ignorant."

Angela went to FCS through second grade and then to the Woodlynde School. She graduated from the Knox School in St. James, New York, and earned an associate's degree from Dean Junior College in Massachusetts. Her summers were spent at Camp Netimus, where she was an excellent counselor. Angela has always had a gift for relating to children with differences. She is presently pursuing a career in film. Her latest project is to make a documentary about finding her family and herself.

Angela was always told that she was adopted and loved by two families, but one lived far away and the details were sketchy. Still, she has always considered herself "Dominican." The deeply personal questions, "Who do I look like?" or "Who am I?" seemed impossible to answer. Last year, at the age of twenty-eight, Angela felt an urgency to

try to locate and meet her family. In April, with the click of a mouse that produced the Santo Domingo phone book, we found the phone number for one of the people whom I had spoken with in 1974.

Phone calls led to exciting news and information and, eventually, to Angela's family. They told us that she had been born in September, not December, as we had thought, and that her birth name was Virginia Ramirez. They were shocked to hear that Angela was alive and living in the United States. They had lived with the belief that the sick baby had died at the orphanage. Email photos of Angela's family were sent to us. She saw, for the first time, her mami, papi, three sisters and four brothers. Angela is the baby of the family.

By August we found ourselves flying to the Dominican Republic. Angela needed a few days to take in the culture, look around, and begin to prepare for the emotional journey that lay ahead. She immediately took to the warm climate of the Dominican Republic—she had always preferred summer to winter. The slower pace also suits her temperament. I've often joked with her that her laid-back style came from the Dominican side of the family. We walked down palm-tree-lined streets and could hear the ocean lapping against the barriers. Vendors sold fresh squeezed orange juice, avocados and bananas. At night, the sound of merengue music filled the air. Out on the busy streets, we tried to pick out Spanish words and phrases that we could understand.

Then the big day arrived! In the hotel parking lot, the doors to a van flew open, and the email photos sprang to life. Brothers and sisters smothered us with hugs, kisses and tears. I was able to step back, if only for a moment, and watch my daughter surrounded by family that we had thought, wondered and dreamed about.

We drove a short distance to the barrio where the most emotional reunion took place! Seated on the front porch of the bright blue, four-room home in which Angela was born, were her sixty-five-year-old mami and her eighty-three-year-old papi. It was the first time they had seen her since her birth. Dozens of people, most of them relatives, surrounded the squat wooden structure. Angela was welcomed as the long-grieved-for, miraculously saved baby they had longed to see.

Angela is a wonderful combination of her parents and siblings: mami's cheekbones, sister Milagros' smile, Leo's eyes and Miguel's height. She fits perfectly into the picture. The fourth girl, the baby, Angela is the missing piece in the family puzzle. It is now complete.



Life is a journey. In her book, *The Price of a Child*, Lorene Carey suggests that "We must make a record of ourselves...no one else will do it for us."

And Angela and I are doing that!

**Michelle Johns** (1980–2010) has "landed barefoot on the beach in Beaufort, South Carolina." She continues to teach, coordinates curriculum, writes for a local newspaper, practices piano, is learning Spanish, and plans trips to exotic places with her husband Michael. She is happy to be closer to some of her family in Charleston.

## **The "Loyal Hound:" Friends' Central's Joe Ludwig**

By Marilyn Lager 2005

It's a bitter, raw day in early March, and Joe Ludwig is handling 3:00 parent pickup duty. He's directing the cars around the oval, and he has just helped a small child into her mother's SUV. He tips his Eagles cap, and he's ready for the next car in line. "I've been bitten by a dog guarding the back seat," he grins, "and helped push a car stuck in the mud, but it's no big deal."

The bigger deal waits for Joe in the office of the principal of Lower School, a large bright room, filled with memorabilia, pictures drawn for him by children and a bell collection from his second grade teacher, Bettina Moore. What awaits him is the resolution of a discipline problem, where a student has reportedly used threatening language towards a classmate, and Joe is considering a day's suspension. "Children make mistakes in Lower School; they grow and learn from them. When they are older, mistakes are more serious." He calls the parent, who is awaiting his decision. Interrupted by the news that there is a broken pipe in the basement, and water is pouring in, he asks to call back and is on his feet to investigate.

On the run, I question him about *Time Magazine's* February 21, 2005 cover story, "What Teachers Hate About Parents," about how American parents have become pushy and hovering, "helicopter parents," in a newly coined phrase. Have parents changed, pressing

the school for privilege and exceptions for their misbehaving children? Do they present a challenge to the school's smooth functioning? Joe responds, "We have good families. Parents feel they have to be their children's advocates. But we are their advocates too. When home and school work together, the child does well."

Physical plant folk have the leak under control, and Joe is still ruminating about the suspension. "I enjoy working with Lou DelSoldo [Assistant Principal of Lower School and Head of Early Childhood Development]. He is wise about making these decisions, and Nelly Colapinto, our psychologist, has incredible insight. Parents may seek short-term solutions, but we're in it for the longer view. We have strong families who most often accept guidance."

Joe has been connected to FCS for enough years to see the longer view. His is a third generation relationship, and he relates a touching story of his mother Rutah Kogan, a Russian émigré raised in Iran, who came to Philadelphia to join her older sister, Isolda Solo, a war bride. Young Rutah, a lively actress and dancer, started FCS in 1946 as an international student, graduating four years later. She married Richard Ludwig, a Philadelphian, and they bought a house in Overbrook. Joe was born one year after her graduation.

Joe started kindergarten at Overbrook Elementary School in 1956, but by mid-year he was placed in FCS. When he grew restless for a bigger world in eighth grade, his whole family, particularly his grandmother, wanted him to stay the course at FCS. So he became a "lifer," one who attends throughout his school career. He was taught biology by Clayton Farraday, "a great influence and mentor," Russian by Clint Ely, who called him Pyaws, Russian for loyal hound, and he made strong friendships, as with current Board member Bob Gassell. He graduated in the class of 1969. Although he attended Dartmouth College for four years, he worked in the FCS day camp and at the pool during summers, as he had in high school, solidifying his pleasure in working with children. Clayton gave him advice that set him on his lifetime path: "Go and finish your graduate work before full time work and a family engages you."

Walking around FCS during school hours, Joe is greeted comfortably by teachers and young students alike. He gives out over 300 birthday cards a year, one to every child, expressing how positive he feels about his students. He points out the carefully displayed works of children's art that adorn the hallways, a kind of children's gallery for art. He greets Marcia Slade, art teacher, who has been at

FCS for thirty-three years. Marcia tells, in an aside, that “Joe has always been supportive. I feel he is for me one hundred percent. That’s a wonderful way to feel about one’s principal.” He glances out the window at an orange and purple play construction, with fantasy peaked roofs and blue ground matting. “It’s Joey’s Playground,” he says, built to honor the memory of a beloved student, Joey Pozzulo, who died a month before his graduation in 1999.

Joe followed Clayton’s advice and went to Duke for graduate work in education, all the while teaching in Durham County, North Carolina. And at age twenty-five, with his master’s degree under his belt, he was ready when Headmaster Tom Wood called him to be Director of Admission, along with teaching language arts courses and coaching football.

Exciting opportunities kept coming to this prepared man, for, just three years later, in an exchange of personnel, where Clayton retired as Upper School principal and Bob Hallett, the Middle School principal stepped into the job, Joe was named Middle School head. “I felt mature enough to take on the job at a young age. I have always gone forward professionally as an optimist. The world seems to smile back at those who smile on it.”

After seven years at FCS, Joe traveled down to Texas at the invitation of a friend, Don North, to help with an evaluation of the Kinkaid School, where Don was principal. He liked the school and soon was asked to become its Middle School head. There was family in Texas, and he, Mary and three-year-old Jeffrey, moved to Houston in 1983.

On a trip back to Philadelphia with a group of Kinkaid students five years later, he bumped into Tom Wood on the train between Philadelphia and Washington. Tom talked about the exciting phase of FCS history that was just beginning: the purchase of the Montgomery School campus was complete and ready for Lower School; Michi Tashjian was stepping down as principal, and Tom was looking for a replacement. “You need somebody who understands children, loves the school—and doesn’t want your job,” Joe remembers advising. Tom asked if he would consider returning. “It was a great time to say yes.”

Joe accepted the appointment as Lower School Principal and Assistant Headmaster in 1987. And merely a few months later, he found himself appointed Acting Headmaster, when Tom Wood stepped down. He went back and forth, hobbling on crutches from

an ankle injury sustained at an alumni basketball game, between the paneled Headmaster's office and the Lower School office and had a busy time as he became more and more involved in planning for construction on the Old Gulph Road campus. He was juggling many roles.

That's also, coincidentally, what first grader Katerina Gardella praises him for. "He's a *real* juggler," she giggles. "He can juggle oranges!" More important, she exclaims, "He takes care of us, and he's funny too." Taking care of his students and his faculty are his strengths. "The most enjoyable thing for me is my interaction with the children and the teachers. I take a long time in hiring. I like to develop teams of teachers and students who work well together." Headmaster David Felsen praises his abilities as a general manager. "He is remarkably engaged. He clarifies issues and models a fair approach to problems. He'll sit a young person at his round table and work through conflict in a caring, respectful manner. He has great loyalty along with breadth of intelligence and curiosity."

Joe's great loyalty belongs to FCS, but he is extremely proud of his own family. In March, he and Amy '04 traveled to Italy together on her spring break from Cornell University, where she is studying Italian and linguistics. In Bologna, they were able to meet with friends from Rimini's *Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero*, our sister school, and where Joe spent time in 1993. Ken '08 will enter tenth grade in the fall, and Jeff '99 is a second lieutenant and pilot in the Marine Corps. In this competitive program, he is gaining expertise to fly jets, which has long been a dream of his, Joe explains. "I worry, but I'm glad there will be someone like Jeff in those situations. You want intelligent and caring people making hard decisions." Joe and Mary, a registered nurse in telemetry and day surgery at Delaware County Memorial Hospital, have been married for twenty-seven years.

With an almost unbroken twenty-five years at FCS, he's served on many Board committees such as School Life, Admissions and Financial Aid and currently serves on the Board of Friends Council on Education. He's hired long time FCS loyalists, like Middle School Principal Ray DeSabato and Business Manager Emily Miller, and he's stepped into many classroom situations, handling them confidently and energetically.

School is out, and he has consulted with Lou and Nelly about the suspension. The sun is setting over the beautiful eighteen acres, and

long shadows stretch purple on the late winter snow. He is again on the phone to the parent, explaining in caring detail the decision that involves keeping her child home for a day's suspension. She accepts the arrangement.

A furry little dog softly pads into his office. "This is Shadow, [science teacher] Peter Grove's dog," Joe says, as he bends to pet him. His love for animals is legendary; he is on the board of the American Anti-Vivisection Society. "Although dogs at school can be a problem," he acknowledges, "animals and children are a good mix." He grins sheepishly. "They are loving...and loyal."

*Joe Ludwig (1987-) is completing his twenty-fifth years as the Associate Headmaster and Principal of the Lower School. Before that, he was Admissions Director for two years, and Middle School Principal for five years. He and his wife, Mary, have three children who have graduated from Friends' Central, Jeffrey '99, Amy '04 and Ken '08. They are also the proud grandparents of Noah (four years) and Lucy (one year).*

## **A Teacher Attuned to Living History: About Gary Nicolai**

By Marilyn Lager 1989

On a daily basis, Gary Nicolai conveys history to his students. More significantly, he conveys students to history through unique hands-on learning experiences that have provided the bones for the body of a solid teaching career. This tall, rangy Chairman of the FCS history department, and a teacher for two decades, is an activist historian. He has traveled with students to cities in America and Europe as participants in a Model UN Program. He has led his students up the stairs of an elegant Georgetown townhouse to meet senior statesman Averell Harriman; to a comfortable New York City apartment to talk with Alger Hiss, the State Department official jailed for treason in the 50's; and, recently, to a Yeadon, Pennsylvania church for a poignant interview with Anna Hauptmann, widow of the convicted kidnapper of the Lindbergh baby.

Nicolai's early experiences as the child of a peripatetic Navy Department official were to provide the model of a life of historical inquiry. From Hawaii to Denmark, from the Panama Canal to the Mojave Desert, he remembers "twelve unique places in my first twelve years." In 1958, as a fourth grader, he found himself in Memphis, Tennessee, confronting "a class of rebels, for, of course, I was a Yankee, born in Passaic, New Jersey. I was soon the center of war games, as classmates claimed Southern victories over the beleaguered North. Out of the experience, I became a Civil War buff," he recalls with a smile.

When his father was based at the Pentagon, Nicolai enjoyed four solid years in one place, Arlington, Virginia. To grow up anywhere in America in the 60's was a stimulating experience, but to be in the Washington, D.C. area, the pivotal, on-the-scene locale for anti-Vietnam War protests and the intrigue of Capitol Hill politics, was a heady experience. "My radical transformation," as Nicolai himself tells it, occurred when a high school summer workshop called "American Politics," took him on learning jaunts to the State Department and to Congress and led him to work for the Democratic National Committee. "We went back and forth between the House and Senate," he recalls now with glittering eyes. As a teenager today might hanker to glimpse Madonna or touch the shirt of Michael Jackson, Nicolai recalls meeting Hubert Humphrey and the young Senator Ted Kennedy. "We carried messages to Bill Moyers and Jack Valenti, watching the 1964 Democratic campaign heat up," he smiles. Nicolai's interest, too, heated up.

At age sixteen, he attended the 1964 Atlantic City Democratic Convention. He was on the floor as Lyndon Johnson, with his long stride and back-slapping style, entered the hall. "I realized that this was history, and I was part of it. From my experience in Washington and at the convention, I realized that these people were accessible human beings." He became a kind of history "groupie." Later that fall, Johnson invited Nicolai's group of youthful volunteers up to the White House for a "pinning ceremony." As Lady Bird looked on, Nicolai came away with a donkey on his lapel.

At the University of Michigan, Nicolai's involvement in politics took clearer focus: he became a member of SDS—Students for a Democratic Society, a national group based on college campuses "eager to bring an end to the Vietnam War, to change the system and to affect history." Again, he attended the Democratic Convention, this time in Chicago in

1968. Now, he was out in the streets, “demonstrating in Grant Park for immediate government action and change.”

This passion, along with his double major in political science and history, culminated in his acceptance into law school for the fall of 1969. He was brought up short, however, by a dilemma, one faced by hundreds of thousands of students in 1969—how to serve their country without going to fight what they saw as an immoral war. For Nicolai, there was pressure from family to go to law school. He realized that this could result in losing his deferment and being drafted. He explored alternative service and discovered the Teacher Corps, a brief flicker in Johnson’s “fire” called the Great Society Program. Eschewing law school, Nicolai would teach in an inner city school, in Appalachia, on an Indian reservation or at a one-room schoolhouse in Montana as an alternative to military service.

In the fall of 1969, he went to Hartford, Connecticut to teach a small group of disadvantaged truants, “who could not sit still in an ordinary classroom, and my job was to nurse them toward a high school degree.” Admitting that this was a difficult task, Nicolai recalls a breakthrough, a knowledge that “here I was, doing what I wanted to do, teaching kids.... I knew that I was born to do this work.” At night, as part of the program, he worked on his masters in teaching at the University of Hartford; he received his degree in 1971.

With M.Ed. in hand, he took off to explore the parts of North America he had not already seen. He roamed from Montreal, Canada to Norman, Oklahoma, where he worked in a mental institution caring for Woody Guthrie’s mother, among others, until he became inadvertently tangled in law-breaking. “The police raided the house where my landlord was growing a pretty green crop—of marijuana, it turned out! I was out of there the next day,” Nicolai rubs his beard in rueful remembrance.

Sobered by the close call with the law, he returned home to Virginia. During some course work in political science at American University, he was referred to Dorothy Jackson, head of the history department at Georgetown Day School, for a job teaching history. “I was a raw novice, even with all my worldly experience...I limped through a dreadful first year.”

He was now back in Washington where he had first had his political eyes opened. Having complete freedom to develop his own program at Georgetown Day, to give his students the first-hand participation in history and politics that had been so exciting for him

at the same age, he introduced the Model United Nations Program into the curriculum at Georgetown Day. A well-known, established international program in which high school and college students meet in conference to re-create bodies of the UN, the program provides opportunities for much sound research as students represent countries of the world, debating, understanding and perhaps resolving conflict. Later, in 1982, Nicolai and ten students, representing Pakistan, traveled to the Hague to the International Model UN for sessions opened by Queen Beatrix. "Living history, history alive—it all came together for me in this dynamic hooking up of students with the larger world," says Nicolai.

But to Nicolai, living history had also to involve contact with individuals who shaped it, and while teaching his popular course, "The World since 1945," at Georgetown, he created simulations of history in the classroom. "I thought of how to find primary sources by finding people," he says, and an early encounter came when he called the offices of Averell Harriman who had been Ambassador to the Soviet Union during World War II and now lived in Georgetown. "It was amazingly easy to get an appointment to see him," Nicolai laughs. "To this day, I suspect he thought we were political scientists from Georgetown University, but, whatever, it got us into his townhouse, with Matisses and Monets on the walls, for a two hour interview." Harriman was expansive, recalling his first trip to Russia at age five with his father, a railroad baron, when he met the Czar. Nicolai and his students questioned him on the personality of Joseph Stalin, heard first-hand about the charismatic "Uncle Joe," a man in total control who also could be totally charming. Surrounded by photographs of Harriman with Churchill, FDR, Stalin, and John Kennedy, Nicolai avers that Harriman was eager to talk about his experiences in World War II, Yalta and his 1956 presidential bid. Harriman then took out his Rolodex and gave them the phone number of John McCloy, head of the United States Occupation in Germany after World War II, whom they later contacted.

When Nicolai's students were studying the 1950's, they recreated the Alger Hiss trial. Hiss, the foreign affairs expert at the State Department, had been convicted of giving secrets to Russia. Through the class grapevine, Nicolai learned that a grandmother of a student knew a lawyer who represented Hiss, who was involved in a life-long struggle to exonerate himself. After several phone calls, Nicolai was able to go to New York City with the student to interview Hiss at



the small, book-lined apartment of Hiss' woman friend. "He was very relaxed, for we were on his turf," Nicolai recalls. Hiss talked about his experiences as a law clerk for Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., his involvement in Cold War politics, the Yalta Conference, and his outrage at the McCarthy era. He mused about Washington in the early thirties and his own idealism about FDR. "Hiss was a person waiting to tell his story. We just pressed the button and got out of the way. We were on a ride, a fantastic ride back into history."

Recently, at Friends' Central, a student became immersed in a project on Charles Lindbergh for an American history class. The student was gently led by Nicolai into the details of the 1932 kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby son. "Here was history to which a student could relate. Instead of mere hero worship of Charles Lindbergh, here was a tragic and human story waiting to unravel," Nicolai says. And unravel it did, because Nicolai encouraged the student, with the help of a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, to contact Anna Hauptmann, the 89-year-old widow of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, who had died in the electric chair for the murder of the child. Knowing that Mrs. Hauptmann lived near Philadelphia, Nicolai urged the student to call her, and she easily granted an interview. "In explaining her accessibility, she later told us she had developed a sense of who was honest and trustworthy," he explains.

So, one windy March day, Nicolai, and the tenth grader and his mother made their way to a small, stone church in Yeadon and heard first-hand the dreadful personal story of what it was like to be a German immigrant in the thirties, the wife of a carpenter who became the nation's most heinous criminal, whose right to a fair trial was destroyed, Mrs. Hauptmann tells, by the popularity of Charles Lindbergh and his aristocratic family. Mrs. Hauptmann was living history and history living, and they sat gripped by the emotional power of her desire to prove her husband's innocence.

This year, Nicolai himself has been surprised at the intensity of the hands-on experience he is encountering. He was asked to serve on the board of the Quaker delegation to the United Nations, which is a lobbying constituency advising on policy and agenda. With meetings at the United Nations itself, he is now in a position to influence, modestly, he insists, international events—and, of course, he includes his FCS students. On one "run" to New York City, they met Brian Urquhart, former Under Secretary General of the UN, who was instrumental in forming the UN peacekeeping force that won the

1988 Nobel Peace Prize. And at the Model UN Program at Georgetown University in February, Nicolai's students listened raptly to Secretary General Perez de Cuellar talk about the difficulty of negotiating peace between Iraq and Iran. Said an 11<sup>th</sup> grader who was there, "History was happening as we heard him talk...it was much better than reading about it in the newspapers." In an article about the Model UN Program in the *Inquirer*, Nicolai is described by one of his students as being "our window to the world... (history) is his life...it has become our life." Nicolai acknowledges, "I try to get kids to recognize their potential, to see how they can be engaged directly and dynamically in history. I am their cheerleader and their expeditor to living history."

*(Since the writing of this article, Gary Nicolai has been appointed chief faculty advisor to the National Association of Model United Nations.)*

*Gary Nicolai (1984–) continues to teach a variety of courses in the history department and has just supervised his 205<sup>th</sup> Model UN delegation (he started counting in his own high school years!). He has two sons who graduated from FCS, Adam '02 and Justin '10. In 2010 he was granted a sabbatical and he was able to fulfill a life-long dream of following the route of the civil rights bus ride of the Freedom Riders in 1961.*

## **Integrating Integral Education into Teaching at FCS**

By Douglas Ross 2009

Last February I noticed an e-mail from John Gruber, Upper School science teacher and department chair, recommending the Integral Education Conference to be held in August 2008 on Whidbey Island near Seattle where he would be one of the conference faculty. I didn't know much about integral education, but the term "integral" resonated with my life-long goal of creating learning environments that engage all aspects of a student's experience and personality.

More importantly, when former students come back to reminisce, those taught by John describe life-changing experiences they had

with him. Who wouldn't want to hang out with John and enjoy his magic? John said the conference, which he attended a couple of years ago, was transforming, providing a model for teaching that is "inclusive...of all of the elements of human experience," (see *Forum*, Fall/Winter 2007-2008), and that was good enough for me. I was able to arrange for support for my attendance from the Fannie Cox Hendrie stipend program.

So this past August, I made my first trip to the beautiful city of Seattle. I arrived early to visit some college classmates, get acclimated to Pacific Coast Time and tour the city on my friend's bike. The day of the conference, one of my buddies decided to take a morning off to drive me to the northern end of Whidbey Island where there is a bridge connection and a nice place to hike overlooking the bay. After lunch he dropped me off at a remote location on the southern end of the island, the locale of the conference, where I received a warm reception from John and the other staff.

The next morning I scrambled to keep up with my younger roommate as we hiked up the steep half-mile hill between our Japanese style guest house and the conference buildings. I felt like I was at summer camp for teachers since I had my choice of three pre-breakfast activities. I chose the Feldencrais movement workshop led by the amazing juggler and dancer, Thomas Arthur, who had entertained us after dinner the night before. I chose him, because I could see in the fluid and graceful way Thomas moved that he had something to teach this old wrestling coach about movement and ways of being. My usual approach could be described as "Let's bull through this situation," an attitude that has generally worked for me but has scarred my body with injuries. I made a good choice, and it turned out to be a nice warm-up for the meditative forest walk the next morning with John, which he led for participants, asking us to open our senses, then talk about our experiences.

After breakfast and some delightful singing, we jumped right into the cognitive content. I soon realized that integral education encompassed more than integrating skills and subjects, although that is a likely outcome of an integral classroom. The first speaker immersed us in advanced concepts of integral philosophy based on the groundbreaking work of Ken Wilber whose work not only considers the full spectrum of human development (emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical), but challenges educators to

respect the learners by including them in the process of producing meaningful and useful knowledge.

First, it became clear to me that an integral approach to education, concerned with all aspects of human development, could be characterized as having a Constructivist approach because of the emphasis on the individual's participation in his or her own development. I was impressed to find that Ken Wilber has proposed a most comprehensive model describing aspects of human development. We at FCS are blessed that teaching the whole child has always been valued, so this model is quite relevant to our work. Unlike many schools, we are unabashed in speaking of the spiritual and emotional development of our students and have structures such as our weekly Meeting for Worship, our advisor system and our explicit focus on Life Skills to support these elements.

Secondly, development is an on-going process that continues through adulthood. Furthermore, children who are taught and parented by adults who are actively engaged in their own development tend to progress with more depth and breadth. I believe the children "stand on our shoulders," so it is up to us to be as tall as possible.

Thirdly, development can be accelerated by viewing events and problems from varied perspectives. Wilber does this explicitly with a number of models, the simplest one being to look at the same situation from the point of view of the individual (the ego-centered "I"), from a group perspective (the "We") or from a third person or purely objective point of view (the "It"). Growth and understanding are likely to occur as we move from one perspective to another. In fact, we can even develop the capacity to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously.

My participation in the Integral Education Conference is a good example of these points in action. Regarding the first, the FCS philosophy promotes a broad approach to growth for our students, and our practices support these values. As for the second point, the encouragement I received to attend this conference is characteristic of the remarkable commitment the School makes for faculty development, as expressed through the Clayton Farraday Mastership Program, the Cox/Hendrie funds for science, math and technology, as well as generous support for masters degrees and faculty conferences. Our curricula encourage multiple perspectives, and our school schedule builds in the weekly Meeting for Worship for

individual and corporate reflection where we can emerge with deeper and broader perspectives (point three).

How was I to incorporate my conference experience into my teaching when I returned in the fall? First of all, I had been refreshed by the nourishment received from master educators in an exquisite natural setting. I was to try out new means of expression and enjoy being in the roles of student, listener and observer. Considering the full range of my students' development and the importance of explicitly guiding them through multiple perspectives was to strengthen my teaching.

In the fall when I first take my students to our outside lab at Indian Creek East in Morris Park, I usually allow them to explore the area before we begin our water monitoring. This fall, I added a wonderful activity that brings all three perspectives of I, We and It together. The students silently examined and passed natural objects across a circle as a means of eliciting a sense of connection within our class while inspiring awareness, awe and appreciation for our natural world.

The summer week went by quickly, and before long I found myself taking the beautiful ferry ride across the bay back to Seattle. I was refreshed and stimulated, ready for a new group of eighth graders. I have memories, teaching ideas in a powerful framework, and the inspiration of fellow educators. The last evening one of these educators recited lines from a poem that reminded me of my sacred role as a teacher in helping humanity over the next evolutionary hurdle. We are all assisting the next generations in getting over this hurdle together, working in partnership with each other and our students, exploring the spiritual reality of the natural world of which we are part. It is the only way we can succeed.

### **For the Children**

*The rising hills, the slopes,  
of statistics  
lie before us.  
the steep climb  
of everything going up,  
up, as we all  
go down.*

*In the next century  
or the one beyond that,  
they say, are valleys, pastures,  
we can meet there in peace  
if we make it.*

*To climb these coming crests  
one word to you, to  
you and your children:*

*stay together  
learn the flowers  
go light*

Gary Snyder from *Turtle Island*\*

\* *Turtle Island*, the title of Snyder's book of poems, was a Native American reference to North America

**Doug Ross** (1979–) continues to teach eighth grade science in the Middle School. His children, Anne '94 is assistant head at the East Harlem School in New York, and Jeremy '00 works as a program administrator in a Philadelphia school. Doug has completed the course work at the University of Pennsylvania for his doctorate on "Teaching Science in the Knowledge Age." He and his wife Jerilynn continue to be active members of the Radnor Friends Monthly Meeting.

## **Steve Ruzansky: Master of the Classroom, Master of the Stage**

By Marilyn Lager 2008

"Puppets up. Watch the angle of the head. Keep the energy going!" The instructions, spoken in a surprising mellow voice, come from the middle of Shallcross Hall. "Okay, now, puppet heads down. Speak like wide-mouthed frogs!" The mellow voice belongs to the

teacher and director of this fifth grade puppet show, Steve Ruzansky, and on this gray, March afternoon, these Middle School fifth graders are rehearsing their production to perform at Lower School later in the spring. Their unique, life-like sock puppets display colored wool for hair, buttons for eyes, teeth made of beads, some with bright felt hats fixed to wobbly heads. They bob and talk to the audience atop a simple sheet-covered wood frame.

"Listen for directions...and articulate ....articulate!" The students have rewritten jingles based on familiar nursery rhymes and TV commercials. The whimsically altered slogans of Geico, Flako, MasterCard and anti-smoking songs come from puppets' mouths. And while Steve is directing his last puppet show at Friends' Central, and while the children are having fun, he hopes he is teaching them skills of writing, speaking, collaboration and creativity that will last a lifetime.

Steve is leaving FCS after thirty-one years here as a teacher (forty years of a teaching career), primarily of ten-year-olds. He was first labeled as an elementary school teacher, before fifth grade became part of Middle School; then in 1988, he began teaching social studies and language arts in the Middle School. His puppetry, emblematic of the project-based learning and teaching he supports, began with a summer stipend where his goal was to come up with a means to supplement his salary. He performed for years at birthday parties, fairs and libraries, eventually bringing the creative skills of play writing and puppetry into the classroom.

His fifth grade teams over the years have included such FCS professionals as Harvey Zendt, Michi Tashjian, Dave Thomas and Lylee Van Pelt, with whom he taught for twenty-six of his thirty-one years. He, Lylee and Dave created a fifth grade that gave the youngsters support, organization and a deep love of learning, in Steve's case, particularly for books of different genres and cultures. Under his guidance, they studied Early Peoples, Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece. He wrote historical skits for them and guided their research in the library, long before the Internet and Power Point existed.

"Steve has always displayed great depth and caring about how children learn," says Lylee. "He is a different kind of thinker, full of imagination and innovation. Most of all, he is a gracious man—and he has always tried to teach his students to be gracious in their own interactions." Lylee pauses. "Working with Steve has been a joyous journey, full of whimsy and wonder. He leaves with us a great legacy

of memories, of fifth grade humor, of campfire cheers, of hilarious puppet shows that we will continue to share and value."

Puppetry has been only one of his performance-based interests. Steve is an accomplished guitar and banjo player who has started school jug bands, with students on metal spoons and teachers strumming washboards. He has directed five faculty musicals such as *Anything Goes* and *Carousel* over the years, helped organize faculty talent shows and Home-and-School coffee houses. During a sabbatical, he wrote the lyrics and book for an original musical about Socrates (entitled *Gadfly*), teaming with Andrea Green, a local musician and songwriter. It was performed as a faculty show at FCS and as a student production at Germantown Friends School. His docudrama, *The Trial of Susan B. Anthony* was performed at the Annenberg Theater by the professional touring group, Theater Caravan.

Steve grew up as the son of two Philadelphia public school teachers, and he always felt that "teaching gives one the opportunity to be as creative as one wants to be. Certainly at FCS, the atmosphere was most conducive for me." He had his students making "passion boxes," exploring and researching their passions, decorating boxes with iconic trinkets and pictures of what they most loved and identified with. These boxes each year would hang from the ceiling of their fifth grade classrooms. (Steve's own passion boxes depicted the banjo and golf.) "He doesn't yell. Our classroom has a calm environment," says fifth grader Krishna Kahn. "It's easy to learn when you feel calm." Under his direction for service related activities, his students repaired ripped books, ran used-book drives—"anything to do with one of my prime passions: books!" smiles Steve.

Chiara Neilson, now a rising seventh grader, points out that "Mr. Ruz was always happy when you told the truth. He respected you for it. He taught us stuff in an interesting and fun way." And indeed he encouraged the children to have a good time while at school. "I'm here to have fun while I get my job done," he has told them many times. And what good times were had: thousands of classroom activities, yearly camping trips to French Creek State Park, serving on the Board of the Multicultural Resource Center of Philadelphia (as they hosted such nationally known speakers as Morris Dees and Julian Bond), and mini-courses, in particular, one that art teacher Caroline Maw-Deis remembers fondly. "It was called "From Sheep to Shawl," and we took the children to a sheep farm in Chadds Ford owned by Georgeann Schellenger Blaha '75,



spun the raw wool, carded it and wove scarves. All the time I knew I was working with a mentor, a master teacher. I wanted to be and do my best for him."

During many years of his tenure at FCS, he watched his own children grow up and learn right under his nose. Beth '96 is currently coordinator of community and neighborhood services for the city of Burlington, Vermont, while Josh '00 is an information technician in New York for Tran Siberian Orchestra, a symphonic rock band. Stepdaughter Nancy Lipkin '88 manages her own advertising agency, First Impressions, in Cherry Hill. "I always have tried to be the kind of teacher that I would want my own children to have," says Steve.

Steve thinks of his retirement as a "rebooting," an opportunity for him to explore the unconventional life of a "banjo busker" (aka street musician and troubadour), as well as pursue numerous professional puppetry possibilities. His wife Cindy, accustomed to Steve's many ongoing creative passions and projects, will continue to work as a psychotherapist and assistant director of Lower Merion Counseling Services in Bryn Mawr. She acknowledges the positive quality of Steve's "need for new and very different learning situations."

Ray DeSabato, principal of Middle School, remembers that Steve was part of the "Rookie Class of 1977": Joe (Ludwig), Ray and Ruz. "He has long taken pleasure in the FCS community and is known in the area as the master fifth grade teacher," says Ray. "Steve has been a pillar of FCS Middle School."

Dave Thomas remembers that one of Steve's most enduring philosophies has been, "Catch the students in the acts of doing good. They always hear from us when they do the wrong thing. Make sure they know we see them when they are doing the right thing." Over the years, it has not been hard to catch Steve Ruzansky himself in the act of doing just the right thing.

*Since retiring, **Steve Ruzansky** (1977–2008) is an on-the-job "Pops" to his four grandchildren, plays golf, strives to improve his banjo picking for his weekly bluegrass jams, reads historical fiction, performs as a professional puppeteer, visits the gym and is exploring the world of the busker (street musician).*

## Teaching about Africa

By Toni Sharp 2001

In 1979, if someone had asked me why I teach about Africa to second graders, I would have answered, "Because, that's what the curriculum says to do. That's what the teacher did last year, and who am I, a new teacher to Friends' Central, to change what had always been done?" For the next eleven years, I immersed myself in learning about Africa and developing a curriculum that I felt comfortable with and that was appropriate to second grade. The curriculum was fun to develop because of the richness of the material, and the topic of Africa was easy to use as a vehicle for making the transition for these youngsters from reading for pleasure to reading for information.

In talking with people who had been to various countries in Africa and in talking to the African visitors who came to the classroom to share their experiences, it became clear to me that the concepts of Africa that I held in my mind and that the children were getting from the books that were printed may not have reflected the true picture of African countries. Yes, the Sahara desert conjures up a scene of vast sand dunes and desolate scenery in our Western minds, but what about the thousands of people who live within the desert and have a lifestyle that allows them to survive? The jungle that is so often referred to only takes up 5% of the total land on the continent. It is hardly a "mighty jungle." I became interested in learning more about the continent from first-hand experience and found a program where I could visit Kenya for three weeks and gain an understanding of the people and culture by living with Kenyans rather than just be an observing tourist. I was granted a Clayton Farraday summer stipend and went off to Kenya for three weeks during the summer of 1990. (See *Forum* article, *Hats Off*, fall 1990 edition.) A dream came true.

In 1990 if you had asked me why I teach second graders about the continent of Africa, I would have answered, "Because it is a fascinating place, rich in its diversity and important to understanding the richness and diversity that we have in our own country." I had seen first-hand and felt more comfortable talking about the Serengeti Plain, the Maasai people, the coffee plantations and the Ngong Hills of Isak Dinesen, and most importantly, because I was excited about my experience in Kenya.

Africa is a continent in constant turmoil. This last year, as a result of needing to know more, I applied for and was granted another Farraday stipend to attend a two-week seminar on "The Teaching of Africa" at Yale University. The seminar is designed as "An intensive introductory course in African Studies for educators and other professionals who face a new and often daunting task of teaching about Africa" and is sponsored by PIER-African Studies, Council on African Studies at the Yale Center for International and Area Studies. "Intensive" puts it mildly. Through four to six lectures a day and two to three movies each evening, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, economists, political scientists, cultural anthropologists, musicologists, linguists and global educators overwhelmed us with information. Being exposed to lectures, such as "South Africa Since the End of Apartheid" and "Using Stories and Folktales to Teach about Africa," to readings and to lively discussions, our very diverse group of twenty educators struggled to digest all that was being fed to us.

Now in 2001, if you were to ask me why teach about Africa to second graders, I have a more complete answer. My first objectives still hold true, but there is a deeper purpose in that I feel that it is *important* for students to learn about the continent. It is the cradle of civilization, a continent of contrasts, the second largest continent on the Earth, and it is full of history that can enlighten and inform the peoples of the twenty-first century. It is a continent full of strife, populated by people bound in tradition and pride. It is a continent that is the ancestral homeland of millions of Americans. In the words of a Kikuyu proverb: "This land is the mother of us all." Africans are often portrayed in books as "remote village dwellers, wearing skins, carrying spears and shields, untouched by the technological revolution of the twentieth century. Nothing could be further from the truth, "but these stereotypes are reinforced daily through movies, television shows and news media produced by people mired in the same stereotypical ruts." (Marylee Crofts, *Teaching About Africa In Elementary Schools*.)

In teaching about Africa, I hope to teach tolerance and appreciation for cultures, traditions and peoples who are as full of contrasts as is the geography of the continent. My hope is that, through education and awareness, this world will, in the future, be free of racism. It has been said that race is in the eye of the beholder. If so, then let us begin changing what the beholder sees, from only

skin color to human shapes that breathe, cry, sleep and live with the same hopes and opportunities for rich lives.

*Toni Sharp (1979–2012) ascended to the Lower School library in 2009 to be the part-time librarian, after honing her skills as a second grade teacher for twenty-nine years. In this position, Toni continued to enjoy teaching and reading to children and became more involved with strengthening the Quaker presence in the Lower School. Toni has three grown children and four grandchildren.*

## **The Grande Dames of Lower School**

By Marilyn Lager 2003

They are respected role models and the keepers of history, these two dignified older women of FCS Lower School. They have been teaching in tandem for cumulatively sixty-three years, and for both Marcia Slade and Jean Taranta, friends, colleagues and parents of alumni, it has been a long labor of love.

From 1971 to the present, Marcia and Jean have given FCS children their brand of gentle yet firm, warm and competent guidance in, respectively, art instruction and reading and research skills. They have added beauty and a love for learning to the school throughout their tenures. And the good news is that they aren't going anywhere: their love for teaching children is vibrantly alive and, as they both say, "It's still a creative process!"

\* \* \*

It's art period for fourth graders, and they noisily file into the low red building on the Gulph Road campus, and into Marcia Slade's art room. One can barely hear the Mozart piano music coming from the radio; the children's cheerful eagerness drowns it out. Today Marcia has a new project to present: students will browse through and pick out a reproduction of a well-known artist like Degas, Renoir or Rembrandt, and then extend the image to make it their own.

They discuss and pass the pictures around and begin drawing, coloring with pastels and colored pencils or painting with tempera and watercolors. When the project is completed, these works will

decorate the halls and walls of Lower School. "Children's art should be displayed so that the school becomes a child's world," states Marcia, and indeed she has made it so since 1972, when she began to teach art at FCS.

Her BFA from Penn, five years at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and experience teaching art to adults and teenagers did not prepare her for teaching young children, and she began tentatively. She took to it quickly, though, when she was hired first to help out when Nancy White went on maternity leave and then stayed on to split the week when Nancy returned. She continued that arrangement with Ginny Kendall, who taught the youngest children, on the City Avenue campus in the stone and wood barn that is now Blackburn Library. Deb Fedder '79, presently a Middle School teacher, remembers being a ten-year-old in Marcia's class. "She was everybody's mom. Her soft-spoken, gentle yet commanding manner gave so much weight to our work. I remember a project with milk cartons and plaster of Paris. We were serious yet kicked back a lot. I learned but had fun." Currently, Marcia's partner is Kim Parris, who teaches the smallest children, while Marcia works with third and fourth graders.

Marcia leans down to inspect young Claire's work. "One can *suggest* that children try various media and styles when they create. I love to help them see a world a bit differently, to carry their abilities just a bit further." She reminisces that it was sitting for a portrait of her twelve-year-old self, sculpted by family friend and well-known artist, Harry Rosen, that changed her life. When her parents urged her to show him her watercolors, he warmly encouraged her. Two years later, a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art furthered her strong interest in art.

She is concerned that the children learn about balance, color and design as well as develop techniques that help them express their ideas. Her musical voice rises and falls with enthusiasm; in fact music is essential to Marcia as is nature. She imbues her instruction with an emotional sensitivity as well as a critical view, which influences the best outcome. As Lou Del Soldo, assistant principal muses, "Marcia has an elegant eye and an elegant mind. She sets the tone for a high aesthetic level at Lower School." And a stroll through the hallways, where strong colored pastels, watercolor gouaches and abstract drawings are hung, shows, as Lou puts it, that "Marcia is our seasoned curator who has transformed the school into an exquisite art gallery."

Marcia, who lost David, her husband of over thirty-nine years in 1996, has time (she works three days a week) to devote to her own art, mostly pastels and line drawings. She is involved in the lives of her twelve-year-old triplet grandchildren, children of Steve '76, who live in Princeton and please her with their art talents. "Early education is so important," Marcia says. "Values are set down early, and children sort out experiences quickly."

*Marcia Slade (1972–2007) has moved to Princeton to live with her son Steve '76 and his family. She will be travelling, and she continues to work in watercolor and pen and ink.*

\* \* \*

A warm fire glows in the Story Room of the Lower School library, as slender, white-haired Jean Taranta, hoop earrings dancing, picks up books and puts away magazines one winter morning after a kindergarten class has been in. She's been at it for over thirty years, since 1971, when she brought her daughter Ann in to interview for admission, and Tom Wood, then headmaster, asked her if she'd like to work at the school. "I was knocked off my feet," remembers Jean, but she was qualified, with her Temple University B.S. in education. Thus she began a nine-year stint of teaching third grade, with one year in fifth. The opportunity to take over the library came in 1981, and, says Jean, "It had great appeal: to do something different, to work with all the children, with all those great books."

And so for over twenty years, FCS children have been exposed to the best in literature as Jean has read to thousands of classes her favorites, *Ping*, *Ferdinand the Bull*, *Domenic* or *The Stone Fox*. She has not tired of the musicality of the prose and the deep themes of the best children's literature, and although she shares the job now with Regina Ziffer, she more often is the reader, while Regina more often teaches research skills. Regina comments, "The children gain so much from her insights, particularly when they come up in relation to the stories she reads to them. I'm blessed to have Jean in my life...her energy, wisdom and compassion influence me greatly."

Jean had responsibility for designing the current library. When she first saw the space, it consisted of five small dark rooms. After reading and consulting, she built her "dream" to scale with balsa wood, and with the help and support of Dom DiPrinzio '71, then

head of Physical Plant, it developed into a warm, spacious center with natural light, cozy places to read and soft colors. Later, under her direction, the library became fully computerized: the catalog is now electronic, and the children also access the computers for encyclopedia use and word processing. She is quick to point out that Regina was responsible for bringing computers to the library. "I was slow to warm up to technology," she says. "I felt the children had much to learn about research from the old card catalog. But I learned along with them."

Jean's life is full and rich outside of school. She has a fierce commitment to yoga, to the particular challenges of *iyengar* yoga, stretching and breathing in weekly classes. She is a master quilter; each member of her family has received a personalized quilt. She has applied "The Cricket in Times Square" on grandson Jonah's quilt and used themes and earth colors of the southwest for her daughter Ann who lives in Santa Fe. Jean is devoted to Italo, her husband of forty-six years, who is a musician and composer, and to her six grandchildren, and, as her children wrote in a recent eightieth birthday rap for her:

"Jean has three children, Mark, Chris and Ann.

It's clear to all that she sure loves her clan.

Checking in daily to see how we are,

She comes to help us no matter how far."

Jean served on the Family Committee of the Board of Habitat for Humanity in Philadelphia, helping make decisions about who would get housing. A trip in 1992, while on sabbatical, to Guatemala, where she slogged through mud with her own pick and shovel to build houses with Habitat International taught her that "the poor in North Philly or the poor in Guatemala don't need pity or a do-gooder attitude from me." The commitment to egalitarian diversity, to nature and to peace is supported by her involvement in the Unitarian Church. It was affirmed by her children in the birthday rap: "Mom, of a true Unitarian crew: a Christian, an agnostic and a Jew!"

\* \* \*

Together, Marcia and Jean have deep roots within the FCS community. As parents of alumni (Mark Taranta '80 and Steve Slade '76), as long-time participants in the FCS Book Discussion Group and members of the Mad Hatters, a social group made up of former Friends' Central faculty, they have had a long and comfortable

association with one another. Joe Ludwig, principal of Lower School lauds “two terrific teachers who have helped shape FCS Lower School. These are well-rounded people with rich lives and many interests. They are role models for faculty. Marcia and Jean have only gotten better with experience.”

*Jean Taranta (1971–2008) proudly tells that she will be 90 in 2012, continues to do yoga daily, be with her seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren and remains active in her church, starting and helping with a food bank.*

## Missing Michi

By Marilyn Lager 2001

Her red high-top sneakers barely touch the ground. She’s moving across campus, towards her office in Blackburn Library, and when I catch up with her, I hear her ebullience. She’s been planning April’s Multicultural Day with Upper School students, in particular with the Black Student Forum, FCS’ group of students-of-color. “They’re terrific,” she exclaims. I ask her for more specifics. “These students have grown towards a real understanding of issues. They understand about the double-consciousness, the negotiation between two worlds that W.E.B. DuBois wrote about in the *Souls of Black Folk*. Yet these kids want to talk about *now*...and move on. It’s wonderful.”

Michi Tashjian, after almost thirty years of continuous service to FCS, is moving on too. She’s leaving FCS, where she taught in all three divisions, served as Principal of Lower School and held the first-ever position of Administrative Advisor for Diversity. It was this last position that seemed as natural and comfortable to her as her red sneakers and worn back-pack. As administrative advisor for diversity, she was, for five years, the *gasa-gasa*, Japanese for “quick-as-a-bug” gadfly, as her mother called her, the push-me, pull-you for consciousness raising and change for all students, parents and faculty. As intentional objectives on the part of Headmaster David Felsen and the Board of Trustees succeeded in increasing the school’s



diversity enrollment, Michi labored to make this group successful and comfortable in a mostly white, suburban environment.

This position was a perfect fit for Michi, who has personally known the challenges of being different in white America and has experienced the consequences that accompany ethnic and religious prejudice. When she was four years old, after war was declared on Japan by the U.S., she and her family were relocated from their placid California farm, where her parents grew flowers, to an Arizona internment camp for Japanese and Japanese Americans. "Living in this concentration camp, in such a restricted atmosphere, adults experienced demoralizing powerlessness, and I yearned for a more expansive life," she reminisces. A particular yearning, she recalls, was for piano lessons, on a piano where the black keys were real and not painted on, as on the toy that her mother's friend sent her, along with a book called *Teaching Little Fingers to Play*.

Finally in 1945, when the family was able to leave the dreary regimentation of camp life and return to California, the promised piano lessons began. One teacher, she remembers, refused to teach her because she was Japanese. But then she connected with Lucille Vogel Cole, a taskmaster of a teacher, who saw the talent and intelligence latent in the young Michi. "I would have taught you if you were green," Mrs. Cole reassured her, and her love for the piano and music took off, bringing her at age eighteen to Philadelphia and the highly selective Curtis Institute of Music.

At Curtis, she was instantly immersed in a heady musical world as her studies unfolded. After living and working with musicians who later were to be hired by major symphonies and chamber groups around the world, her chamber music teacher, Jascha Brodsky introduced her to an engineer, Albert Tashjian, who happened to be a fine violinist. She collaborated, and they were married before graduation. Carol, her first child, was four months old when Michi received her degree from Curtis.

Although she had fine musical training, her dream from childhood had been to be an elementary school teacher. She was able to continue playing chamber music and then begin studying towards a Master's degree in elementary education at the University of Pennsylvania. Two years after she enrolled her young daughter Carol at Friends' Central in 1972, she received her degree and was hired by principal Charlotte DeCosta as a fourth grade teacher in the Lower School. It took merely six years, until 1980, when she was appointed

principal of the Lower School under Tom Wood. "She brought her sense of order and vision," as Jack Briggs, Lower School teacher later wrote in his University of Pennsylvania dissertation, to her position as principal and in particular to the thematic projects that were being created at that time. She helped develop Terra, an imaginary world where each classroom became a country, with unequal resources. Interdependence and sharing was essential: collaboration brought survival and harmony. Happiness, the young students in Lower School were to discover, came from sharing wealth resources and talent. Lou Del Soldo remembers that "Michi's rare ability to see both the big picture and all the small details enabled her to complete projects with a high level of vision, intensity and success."

In 1987, stepping down from the principalship, she was granted a sabbatical that took diversity as its focus. She had long felt that learning differences, as well as cultural and class differences, interfered with the success of some students at FCS. And Michi was never one to sit on a problem. During that year, she participated in the Luce Project for the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), working on a Multicultural Assessment Plan, or the MAP. She was trained as an evaluator for schools which agreed to use this measure to examine all components of a school community from a multi-cultural standpoint.

In a *Forum* article she wrote at that time, she related a nostalgic and sensitive visit to her aged parents, listening to their reminiscences about experiences with racism, and she stated, "It hit a responsive chord." She realized she wanted "an opportunity to develop an education that allows people to be who they are and to be proud of that identity. A multicultural education would allow this." She brought this consciousness back to Friends' Central, and this desire to improve FCS' multicultural environment became a passion that would not be stilled. Finally, in 1995, all constituents of the FCS community evaluated, discussed and wrote about the curriculum, the activities, the life of the school and even the books found in the library, using the MAP in an effort to make the school a more inclusive community. When it was done, the common experience of discussing diversity and raising awareness of difficult issues gave FCS a blueprint for moving forward.

After returning from her sabbatical in 1988, she joined the Middle School faculty to teach language arts and social studies. "I loved the collaboration of developing curriculum with the team approach to

teaching. I loved the mix of serious historical research, such as of Sumer, of the European Middle Ages, of library projects, with the creative approach that engages this age group. They kept me on my toes."

After her six years in Middle School, and the MAP, David Felsen appointed her administrative advisor for diversity. Recently he said of her retirement, "You don't replace a Michi Tashjian. She's served the school in so many capacities. She has given us clear direction on how to keep the concerns of diversity before the community. She has been tremendously effective in keeping this 'conversation' going. She knows how things work."

And in these last six years, the *gasa-gasa* has not been still. She has helped plan events, such as Black History assemblies, encouraged Middle School students to articulate diversity-related concerns, helped form the Parents of Students of color, or PSOC, a parent group which meets to discuss common experiences of being of color in a primarily white school, served on the School Life Committee of the Board, and been part of a study of moral growth in Friends high schools, contributing to a publication, in collaboration, with Friends Council on Education. Throughout, she has worked closely with Beth Johnson '78, now FCS Director of Admission, who was one of the very few African American students at FCS in the 60's and 70's. Beth says "Michi has been more than a colleague, not only a friend and confidante, but a mother who gives me great practical advice and encouragement. She brings order to chaos, fruition to unrealized plans. We share a long history."

To complete her participation in all aspects of an FCS education, for the last two years, Michi taught psychology in the Upper School. Her students, like Geoff Wertime '02, appreciated her intelligence and preparation, her humor and concentration. "She makes the material real, using examples from her own life, like how her young son rolled potatoes down the stairs trying to see why they continued to fall to the floor. She's personable and funny."

What really has grounded her, throughout the years, has been her family. For sixteen years, Michi's involvement at FCS was paralleled by her children's, and the Tashjians were a collaborative quartet throughout her tenure. Al's illness and death in 1983 took a painful toll on the family, but their flexibility and resiliency allowed them to move forward. Daughter Carol '78 is currently membership manager of the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation; Mark '80 is headmaster of The Children's Storefront, a K-8 school in Harlem, and Peter '88, who

also lives in New York City, works in advertising. Most amazingly, now two granddaughters, Carol's children, Morgan McKenzie '02 and Kirby '04 remain on the City Avenue campus to carry on this special family's tradition. Michi has watched them on the playing fields and in the classrooms for the last three years with pleasure.

Some folks are worried that a person with Michi's vibrancy, intelligence and energy will be lost without the structure of a job. She is in the midst of a project with a respected teacher of music and violinist, studying the violin/piano sonata repertoire, which includes the music of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. In a letter to David Felsen earlier in the year she wrote "Through the years, the priorities of family and Friends' Central took my time and attention, none of which I regret. Music and opportunities in the city have been a neglected part of my life. During the past two years, I have approached my work on the piano with greater seriousness and attention.... Now I would like to create a life with music and the city at the core, with a network of people, places and interests radiating out from this center.

There is no doubt that the *gasa-gasa*, clad in sneakers and denim pants, will soon be flying over new horizons, her competency and sense of justice bringing order and completion to projects so far not even conceived of.

*Michi Tashjian (1971–2001) enjoyed wearing many hats in her thirty years in the Friends' Central community. Her three children and two grandchildren are graduates of Friends' Central. She is currently involved in chamber music groups as a pianist, cooks at MANNA for AIDS clients and enjoys the cultural offerings of the city.*

## **How to Use 525,600 Minutes, Twenty-Nine Times Over**

By David Thomas 2011

Alida Van Pelt, Lylee to most of her colleagues and to her parents, will retire from Friends' Central School at the conclusion of the 2010- 2011 school year. Since Lylee is a math teacher, one might ask how did she spend her approximately 11,431,800 minutes (525,500 minutes per year x 0.75 years/1 school year x 29 school

years), at Friends' Central School? I will try to answer the question in part, by sharing the experiences and perspectives of some of the members of the Friends' Central community who have had direct contact with Lylee over the years.

Lylee has been the Grade 5 math teacher for most of her time at FCS, but she has assumed many more roles during her tenure. She has also taught social studies and science. Her colleagues, as well as students, have benefited from her willingness to take on these different roles.

When I arrived at Friends' Central, Lylee was already an established teacher of ten and eleven year old students, but she was adjusting to her new assignment as a teacher in the Middle School. One year earlier, the fifth grade had been separated from the Lower School, where Lylee had started at Friends' Central, and added to the Middle School. She and her colleague Steve Ruzansky and their students went from being the oldest grade in the Lower School to being the youngest grade in the Middle School. Their classroom locations, principal and immediate teaching colleagues all changed! Their mission as Grade 5 teachers also changed, for now they were no longer cultivating leadership of the eldest of the Lower School student body. Their new focus became helping the youngest members of the Middle School manage the transition to being in the Middle School. Lylee brought perspective, creativity, enthusiasm, sensitivity, compassion, open-heartedness, versatility, energy and a sense of adventure to the task. One year after her move to the Middle School, I would join the Friends' Central community and begin to experience the perspective, creativity and energy that Lylee brings to her teaching.

I was not new to teaching, but I was new to teaching pre-adolescents. Lylee's experience with and perspective about ten and eleven year old students was indispensable in helping me transition from teaching high school students to teaching middle school students. Her grasp of the developmental needs of this age group was particularly helpful to me. It was, however, the professional but caring way, in which she helped me to learn these needs quickly that earned Lylee high respect, high appreciation and much gratitude from me. What follows is a sampling of the impact that Lylee has had on the lives of members from a variety of different sectors of the Friends' Central community.

“One of the things I have always admired and appreciated about Lylee—as my former teacher and now my colleague—is her strength and outspokenness as a woman. When I was in Middle School, she helped me and other girls to feel empowered—not only in math and science, but also in our broader lives—to speak our minds. From her work with IGLES to her refusal to ignore common statements like, “You throw like a girl,” Lylee emphasized that there were no limits to what girls and women could do. She is the first teacher who showed me it was important to actively confront the societal forces that had the potential to make me and my friends feel like second class citizens. I have been fortunate to have many strong women in my life, and Lylee is certainly one of them.”

—Alexa Dunnington '98  
*Administrative Assistant,  
Grade 7 Language Arts Teacher*

“Ms. Van Pelt was so amazing at helping me to adjust to a new place. She would help me no matter what, even when I wasn't in her class. She was always thinking of different things our homeroom could do to help the community.”

—Annie Kennedy '16

“I will always remember the first time I met Ms. Van Pelt. I was in fourth grade, and it was Moving Up Day. The fourth graders moved from classroom to classroom, briefly meeting all of the teachers we would have the next year. As soon as I stepped into Ms. Van Pelt's room, I knew where I wanted to have homeroom every morning in fifth grade—the room with the giant sofa. When the new school year started, I found out that I got my wish. I soon realized how right I was in wanting to be in Ms. Van Pelt's homeroom and advisory, but for the wrong reasons. Sure, the couch was fun to have, but what was even better was the fact that I got to spend a large portion of my first year in Middle School with MVP. Pretty quickly, I discovered that she was a fun, reliable and dedicated teacher as well as a caring, compassionate and supportive person. I would always enjoy being in her math classes, homeroom, advisory, and her “Share the Warmth” service. Now that I am in seventh grade, I still smile whenever I talk to her, because that's just the type of person she is.”

—Jesse Rubin '16

"Lylee was one of my first friends when I started at FCS! Over the years Lylee and I have collaborated on many ways of combining our disciplines for the benefit of our students, where Math + Art + Life experiences allowed for creative learning opportunities, including: Designing mosaics, constructing recycled bird feeders, fabricating 'Fantastic Patterned Fish,' stitching tangram quilts, weaving Navajo rug samplers... all in order to instill educational and creative results using math concepts and art techniques. Lylee's love of sharing the natural world and stewardship with students has always been our 'connecting fiber,' and I was thrilled to be a part of her Girls Celebrate Science workshop when she asked me to share natural remedies, which we still use every year at the fifth grade Dark Waters camping trip! She is an avid knitter. Another of our 'connecting fibers' lies in our passions for fiber as we designed a mini course combining recycling (plastic bags) and fibers (weaving, knitting, crocheting) into 'Plastic Fantastic,' an avenue for students to craft from discards! As an invested colleague on the fifth grade team, Lylee always offered deep insights and vast knowledge throughout the years and remains a committed and inspiring role model to me."

— Caroline Maw-Deis,  
*Middle School Art Teacher*

"Lylee is a fearless advocate for the environment. I have worked alongside her on Streamwatch for several years, and her devotion to this Service project has been an inspiration to me. She is ever mindful of her carbon footprint and is tireless in her efforts—leading by example—to motivate her students and colleagues to be mindful of theirs. She makes me want to be a better environmentalist."

— Padraig Barry,  
*Grade 6 Science Teacher*

"When I started, Lylee became a mentor to me. She had the patience to sit and talk to me when she felt she had suggestions on how to improve my curriculum, along with helping me enhance my teaching abilities. She is one of the most courageous and outspoken people that I know. Lylee is not afraid to speak her mind or stand up for something when she believes she is right. She is a loyal friend and has taken the time not only to help with work, but personal issues as well. She always had very good advice and a positive outlook on life

itself. She is a role model and an outstanding teacher who teaches, not just about math, but about life itself."

—Melissa Rabena  
*Grade 5 Social Studies Teacher*

"Many years Lylee would visit the Copy Room, and we would talk. I looked forward to seeing her. Our main discussion would be movies. Lylee is a movie buff—old and new movies. I so enjoyed her input about the actors and actresses on screen and the best movies to see. She would say, "Go see this or rent that, and you won't be disappointed." There were also times when my children were growing up that I would ask her questions about them relating to their progress in school. I always valued her opinion. She is a wonderful teacher and a wonderful person."

—Laura McTaggart,  
*Copy Room Manager*

"When I started to work here, there were 'linkage' events, in an effort to keep the faculty connected even though they were on two campuses. Lylee was, as I remember it, very involved in the planning of those occasions. My overriding memory of her my first year was as an extremely bright, encouraging, welcoming presence, expressly reaching out to me as a new faculty member. I was particularly touched by this because she was in fifth and I was in first, and on separate campuses, and her way of greeting and welcoming me gave me the sense that I was joining a school that truly was 'linked' even with the separate campuses. Of course, we know that's true, but not as true as maybe we would like. Lylee stands out as someone who really did her part to make us one school community. And of course, I think of her singing and playing music with Steve Ruzansky.

—Chris Ramsey,  
*Lower School Teacher*

"There's a boldness and verve in Lylee that I've always respected. It's a willingness to engage intensely—whether it's with the needs and struggles of a particular advisee; interesting ideas and questions raised by colleagues; or the vibrant colors and textures of the yarns she joyfully knits and wears. I value her intellectual energy and collaborative spirit and will miss her presence among the fifth grade teachers."

—Juliet Sternberg,  
*Middle and Upper School Psychologist*



“One day at my register, a little girl was standing with her friends, and she didn’t have any lunch. Lylee said, “Why aren’t you eating?” The girl replied that she didn’t have any money, and Lylee bought her lunch. I have always remembered this experience with Lylee, because I thought it was so kind of her.”

— Kathleen Canaris,  
*Dining Service*

**Lylee VanPelt** (1982–2011) *After retiring in the spring of 2011, Lylee has been pursuing hobbies she now has time for: knitting, playing guitar, reading, studying and teaching the Bahai faith, practicing svroopa yoga and growing bonsais. When the weather cooperates, she and her husband Jim also play golf.*