

Issue 18, December 2017



ACS ALUMNI Magazine

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Featuring
Dimiter Lambrinov '39
Ivailo Dimitrov
Maria Grozdanova '18





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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Alumni and Friends,

A knowledgeable pundit once observed “America is great because America is good. If America ceases to be good, it will cease to be great.” Would that current leaders in the U.S. were more familiar with the insights of Alexis de Tocqueville, views that continue to resonate over time. When I reflect now on the greatness and goodness existing right here, in the 25-year renaissance of the American College of Sofia, I think of the enduring legacy of two individuals who passed away earlier this fall, Jim Clayton and Ivo Dimitrov. I do not know that they ever met, and they certainly lived and operated in separate worlds – one as an award-winning American journalist and Washington Post editor and the other as a distinguished and much beloved teacher of Bulgarian history and civilization. Separate worlds, that is, with the exception of a love they shared for ACS. In many respects, the ethos of our school today reflects the character and personalities of these two exceptional leaders.

As noted in our tribute to him in this edition, before his untimely passing Ivo Dimitrov taught almost every Bulgarian graduate of ACS since the re-opening, sharing his passion for and scholarly knowledge of his country’s history and culture. And as I have heard from so many, he had a profound impact on their lives as well as their learning. Over the same period of time, Jim Clayton, as an ACS trustee and long-time Board Chair, shared his deep knowledge of our school’s history and

culture (learned from his favorite uncle, legendary American College President, Dr. Floyd Black) with every incoming trustee and ACS President. His deep understanding and appreciation for ACS’s distinctive and distinguished past and his commitment to its current mission and work was an inspirational and motivational force for all who knew him.

Both of these men brought a great sense of style and intellectual charm to their work, and each had an irreverent sense of humor that never ceased to entertain. Make no mistake, they were both iron-willed, intellectual powerhouses who liked nothing better than the battleground of ideas. They were enormously respected in their fields and not people to be trifled with as many a wayward politician or dilatory student could attest. Their steely professionalism, though, was tempered by their shared passion for the work of ACS, and also by an innate kindness and humanity that endeared them to friends and colleagues.

Each in his own way shaped the ACS we know into a great and good school: great in its insistence on excellence, intellectual rigor, and integrity and good in its devotion to finding and nurturing the heart of the student. I imagine they must have been pleased in seeing their best qualities mirrored in the students of ACS; I do know how much they admired and believed in our students. A generation ago, the MacArthur Prize Fellow and Harvard Professor, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot wrote “students in good high schools [...] embrace the tensions between the utilitarian promises of schooling and the playful adventures of learning.” Both Ivo Dimitrov and Jim Clayton were hard-nosed, practical men who understood that if you wanted to master a subject you had to work hard at it; and yet they never lost their sense of intellectual playfulness; quite the contrary, they delighted in it.

As Ivo, Jim, and so many others that worked side by side with them over these past 25 years well understood, the reach of our mission at ACS goes beyond providing students with an outstanding education, as worthy a goal as that is. We seek as well to help them on the path to creating lives of meaning and purpose as strong people and good leaders, all the while experiencing playful adventures in learning in their own pursuit of happiness.

Sincerely,

Richard T. Ewing, Jr., Ed.D.
President

ACS Alumni Magazine

Issue 18, December 2017

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Petia Ivanova '97

Dear Fellow Alumni,

History is not really my cup of tea – I am very much into the now, and the future holds a fascination for me, too. History though, when told through personal life stories, like those of our fascinating pre-war alums, I cherish. Do you recall a story we ran a year and a half ago about Dobrin Georgiev, Class of 1943, the son of an American College math teacher, who began his studies at the College only to voluntarily quit not long after in order to attend the Military Academy? If you do, you've probably been deeply moved by it, as I was, even without being able to understand his underlying reasoning and motivations for leaving the College. A contemporary of his, though 4 years his senior, Dimiter Lambrinov, Class of 1939, had to exchange the sheltered College campus for the military barracks as well, yet his was not a matter of personal choice and therefore Dimiter's story resonated much more with me. Walk with us into another life story – rich and full and thought-provoking. And once you've read it, how about that idea of pure happiness of Dimiter's!

So I learned I was one of a few ACSers who never had Ivo Dimitrov as their history teacher (probable explanation of my not being a big History fan?). To our class he only taught History profile which I did not have. I got to know Ivo only after I joined the ACS staff in 2009, as a colleague and then friend. I occasionally had the pleasure of sharing a table at the ACS cafeteria with Ivo, and during one of those informative lunches, we began our book exchange. I would give Ivo Bulgarian translations from some of my favorite Swedish books and authors and he, in turn, would give me detailed, spot-on tips on Bulgarian authors whom I didn't have on my radar, or books by favorite authors I had somehow missed out on. Example: "Oh, you're on page 100? You love it and find the language unique? Now brace yourself as the next 250 pages will be a bore-athon. Fortunately, the end is a consolation, so don't give up." (He was right about every step, except he probably used a more exact and nuanced phrasing.) I'm deeply grateful we shared a path. And clearly, so were the over two dozen of you who shared your memories of Mr. Dimitrov. Thank you for "writ[ing] what should not be forgotten" as Isabel Allende prescribes.

Some of you have asked me why we feature current ACSers in this magazine for alumni. Aside from the fact that they're all awesome and deserve all of our attention, that is. When my colleague Roumy Mihaylova started this feature 3 years ago, it was with the hope of it allowing you to feel a connection to current day ACS, in the same way you feel connected to its legacy. The ACSers of today truly look up to you – as you will see, talented and warmhearted senior Maria Grozdanova, featured in this issue, joined the Bulgarian Drama Club pretty much because of being impressed by Matthew Loukanoff's performance. You see, there's an invisible thread connecting us all. And it's worth plenty.

Stay warm and cozy, and stay in touch!

Much love,

Petia Ivanova '97

Dimiter Lambrinov '39: The College, My Home Away from Home

Interview by Petia Ivanova '97

I got in contact with Dimiter Lambrinov through Liliana Ikonopisova '42, who tipped me off about him being a very interesting, “encyclopedic” person. I knew I could trust her judgement, so a couple of weeks later, on a cold sunny February morning, when the snow on the sidewalks of Sofia had melted enough to allow Mr. Lambrinov’s 4-wheel walker to roll, we met at a pastry shop on Vasil Levski Blvd. He was right on time, of course, his walker heavy with a multi pocket bag. Once we had made it to the table furthest from the noise of the shop radio and the bustling boulevard, he emptied the contents of the bag – photos, letters, documents, and notes he had been putting together since I last spoke with him. I was especially impressed by those notes, in impeccable English, beautifully hand-written, even if he kept modestly referring to his occasional meandering hand-writing as “largely illegible” and “enough trouble.” Dimiter Lambrinov is the first pre-war alumnus I interview entirely in English, at his initiative. The story of his life has stayed with me ever since.



Early Childhood and Paris

Between 1923 and 1927, during my formative years (3-7), my family lived in Paris. My father was studying Law and at the same time working – through a connection he had made with Bulgarian Jews while he was in Argentina for a year, he had found a job as a taxi-driver in Paris. It paid well, he even got a plot of land in a good part of the city environments, L’Haÿ-les-Roses, a very famous district today, because Alain Delon lived there, on the way from the south of Paris to the Orly airport. My father bought the plot because he thought we would remain in France for good, you know, that

was at the time of the St. Nedelya Church Assault in 1925 in Sofia.

I had a brother who died in Paris, in the hospital, he caught an infection, the croup. At present, they make a small incision here (*pointing to his throat*) to let the air come in and out, but unfortunately, they couldn’t save him then.

Once my father got his diploma at the end, they told him, *Alright, you are a lawyer, bon pour l’Orient*, good for the Orient; the French had too many lawyers. They said, *If you want, you can continue as a taxi driver.* (*laughing*) He didn’t want that, so we returned to Bulgaria and he started practicing, though there wasn’t much work for

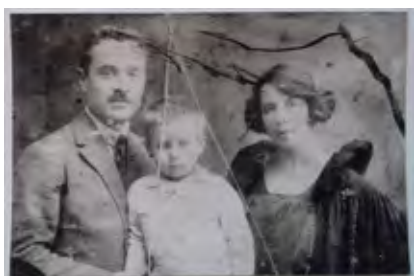
lawyers here either. He worked part time as a journalist for a French language Sofia paper, as well.

The French College in Plovdiv vs. The American College in Sofia

I came to the American College after 4 years at the French College in Plovdiv. When I had a nightmare in Simeonovo, I dreamt of being back in Plovdiv. I couldn’t avoid comparing the two institutions all the time. Of course, it was always in favor of the American College. Two years into my studies here, a delegation from the French College came for a week to see how we were doing things.

As per my family: my mother died while I was at the French College and my father married another woman. Her name was Elena Todorova. She was a famous milliner, she made ladies’ hats. A business woman, no mother at all, not for her own two sons either, she didn’t have any time.

I had a half-brother coming after me at the College, Georgi Lambrinov (Class of 1940), while the youngest boy in the family, Angel, was at the American Grade School, which was a school for younger kids, up to the age of 14. Whenever kids from the American Grade School came to the College, they skipped first form because they spoke English perfectly,



Dimiter with his parents in Paris

they had very good teachers there. Later, in 1942, Angel also graduated from ACS.

The College was just gaining popularity here in Sofia when I enrolled, because it had moved only 4 years before that from Samokov, where it had been founded by the Puritans as the first American College on the Balkan Peninsula and Turkey. A year later, Robert College opened in Istanbul. In Samokov, they began in a very shabby building, an old house. There was quite a large community of Turks in Samokov, who left after Bulgaria's liberation and that is why College boys called the girls' part *Tursko*, girls were out of reach like in a Turkish harem, also an inkling about the girls covering themselves.

Our Simeonovo College had inherited a lot of traditions from Samokov. *Napredak*, the girls' literary and musical club, and its boys' counterpart *Razvitie*, the oldest College club, were both organizations tracing their roots to Samokov.

Did you know that modern printing in Bulgaria began in Samokov, as well? They say that Georgi Dimitrov, when he was very young, worked there and so did some of his relatives. No wonder Samokov was declared a communist republic for a time. Once I asked a relative who works at the French Cultural Institute, *Listen, when you speak of Russia, you say "Russia – this is Pushkin." When you speak of England – it's of course the Bard, when you speak of Italy – you speak of Dante, Germany – Goethe, what about France? Who is France's most iconic author in your opinion?* That was a tough question to answer. I personally fell for Voltaire. He is my favorite writer. At the French College in Plovdiv, Voltaire

was banned; he mocked faith and religion. But when I came to the American College and changed rooms between classes, in one classroom in the basement someone had left some French books. There, I saw a book by Voltaire and I read it and I enjoyed it so much that I misplaced it perhaps. When they came asking *Did you steal that book?*



Dimiter Lambrinov in 1936

I was in trouble until they found it a few days later. I find Voltaire highly entertaining even today. Candide's conclusion to all philosophy that "we must, after all, till our garden" still makes tremendous sense.

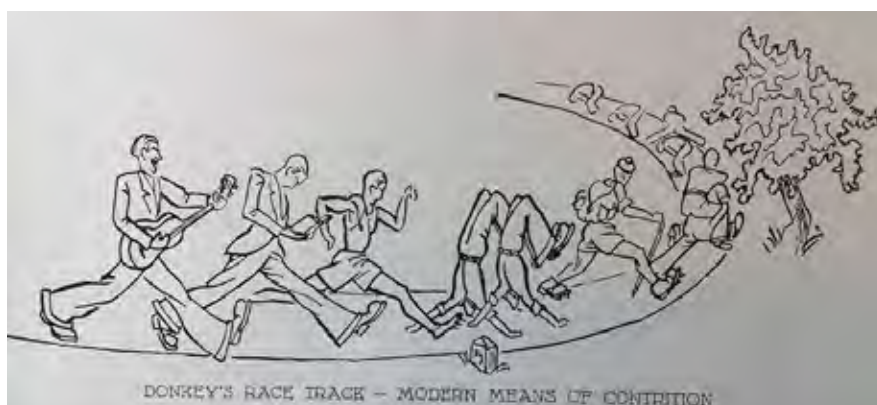
The Donkey Track

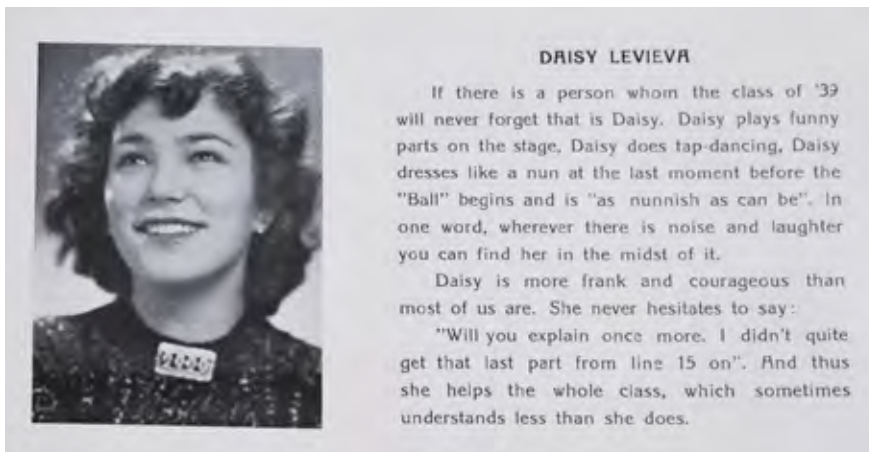
When late in September 1933 my father took me in an open coach, known as a *phaeton*, for the first time to the American College of Sofia, I was more or less resigned: a home away from home again awaited me. Just like the preceding four years of board-and-lodging-and-classes at the French College of Plovdiv. I had *survived*, and prayed for some

change, hoping it would be one for the better.

We were several days late for the school year and arrived at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon when everybody was in class, so we did not see a single person around as the coach, drawn by two horses, came abreast a central building with beautiful white columns. Not far from it we saw the first living thing, a donkey grazing peacefully across the road from the building. I said meekly, *Our first College boy*, trying probably to cheer up my father, who had kept sadly silent throughout the trip. I knew he had paid for my keep and tuition a very substantial sum he had to borrow.

Ironically, two years later, the spot where the donkey was grazing on that day, became known as *the donkeys' race track*. It was a College administration response to parents' protests that their progeny had, before that, been exploited, having to do manual chores for many hours as their punishment asked. I myself had spent many hours planting trees and shoveling cinder from the central heating furnace building which rose, with a high chimney, near the soccer playground. So, President Black decreed that boys breaking the College rules had to expiate their misconduct by circling in a trodden track from then on. You have a punishment of 15 hours for smoking? So, instead of digging 15 hours you will circle the donkey's path for 15 hours. Caught out of bounds faced 30 hours, mind you, in their free time. It was hoped that the punished students would be shamed





in that manner, because the girl students would see them from their windows.

But it turned out that the penitents enjoyed the *asinine* track. In fact, it became a welcome change. Soon the punished boys brought guitars and became a popular sight. The President eventually closed the track. Those punished got the right to pay by, for instance, drawing poster-size graphics, to illustrate some lessons in Physics and Chemistry, or copy music notes.

On that first day, my father left soon, after helping me with the baggage to reach the attic of Building 1, what you now call Sanders Hall. My new bedroom had spring beds for some 30 boys, lockers lining the walls, and ceramic floors. We boys were expected to sweep and wash the premises, except for the WC and lavatories. Most windows, high above the lockers, showed the sky only.

In the evening, the boys from this and a second similar room assembled for a briefing by our instructor for the first year Mr. Zahariev. He lived with his wife and young son next door in a small apartment. His regular evening talks, which we came to call *sermons*, would instruct us how, after washing the ceramic floor, to squeeze *without disgust* the dirty mop used, because it would teach us that life was *earnest and often dirty as a mop*. Or he would scold us for referring in our daily speech to the girls as *the females* (*женските*). This, in his view, was offensive, use *maiden* instead, he would say.

Memorable Classmates

My closest friend, Boris (Boreto) Spasov, an excellent boy, caught tuberculosis, which was very frequent at the time. He used to take part in the relays around the Royal Palace in Sofia. I kept company with him all the time while he was sick, somehow I wasn't afraid, I don't know. His father asked me to say a few words at his funeral in 1944. That was one of the saddest memories in my early life.

At the American College, they served food that was specifically meant to prevent tuberculosis. There was a Czech lady, Miss Rumlena, a dietitian, who knew exactly what food to give us. We had very few cases of students who allegedly contracted TB. My friend contracted it in Sofia. His father was a rich man, a building engineer; he made the St. Paraskeva Church. He had two boys and two girls. He could afford to cure Boreto, but neither of the



Awarding the annual relay-race winners, 1938 (Boreto in the middle)

medicines against TB, first *Rimifon*, then *Paské*, were available then. The tuberculosis bacterium is very difficult to fight because it has a wax

coat. Those new medicines, which came from the US, could penetrate the wax. It was a really very, very heavy burden. If you had children, you were afraid all the time until they reached 16 or even 19.

(*flipping through the pages of the 1938 Yearbook, looking at the photos of the Class of 1939*) This was an interesting girl, Daisy Levy, very original, generous. She was a first cousin of Davico Madjar, another classmate who deserves special mention hereunder.

And this was my College flame, my first flame, Lily Vidinska, seamstress and a gifted dramatics star.



Lilyana Vidinska

Lili Ivanova is the only one from my class I still communicate with. I also talk on the phone with the younger Lili Zaharieva, Dr. Ikonopisov's wife.

Professor Dobri Kiprova, M.D., died last year. He expired in the same moment I entered the room in an old people's hostel where he was staying. He had been expecting my visit but died as I entered. His wife, also a doctor, only gasped. Dobri and I were very close. His mother, an Austrian Jewish woman, had been widowed with two young boys, Dobri and Vlado '41. She put both through the College, where they worked hard for their scholarships. She liked to talk to me of her youth in an Austrian girls' college. She knew my Tante Betty, wife of

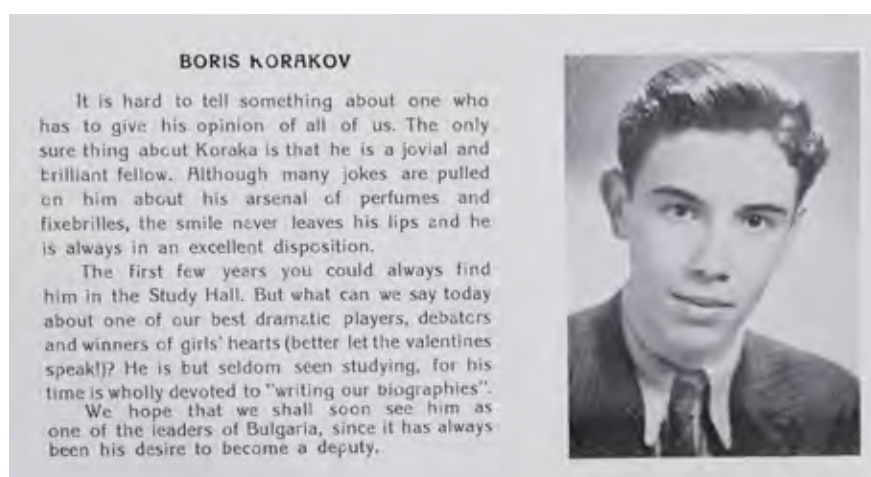
my real mother's brother, Austria-trained architect.

Vlado became an anesthetic surgeon in Austria; he married and worked in his mother's country to the end. In Sofia, we had lived in the same neighborhood. When Vlado retired in Vienna, having a record on "no lethal exitus" of his patients, he wanted to publish a book on his methods. He sent the manuscript, I was to edit it linguistically and his brother, Professor Dobri, medically. But only a few months later came a terse report of his death.

Lydia Yosifova, a good singer, played the part of Geisha Queen. I played Fairfax, the American officer who was her lover. Little did I know I was soon to quit my College paradise for the military barracks in earnest, not just on stage.

Boris Korakov is the boy who edited the *Bor* 1938. He wrote all English text for the boys in our class. He was the adopted son of a barrister in Stara Zagora. After becoming a lawyer near the town of Shumen, he died apparently in a suicide on a local train, or was it murder? I don't know. The communists had come to power; his wife had left him. Our Chemistry teacher Peneva organized his burial in the Sofia cemetery, and called me to assist.

Classmate Mois Kordova – Mosacho is, I hope, still alive in Israel.¹ I used to speak with him for a long time every Saturday, over Skype. He was



the last Jewish person from our class to emigrate. He was from Yambol, he felt very much Bulgarian and continued to work here even after all the Jews had already emigrated. His son opened a factory in Yambol and employed a great number of people in Kordova's home town but he eventually died from a heart attack, to Mosacho's immense despair.

Konstantin Konstantinov '39, called Kotse, was a born genius in communicating with people. With the same ease, he got in touch with people high and low. Polio in infancy had crippled his right arm and left leg but his stunning smile, elegant mop of gold blond hair, and quick wit compensated everything. We were close friends. Dr. Kappe, the German-language professor had formed an extra group of '39 students, advanced in German. Kotse came from Deutsche Schule,

the German school, and so did his cousin Lyubomir Bozhkov, *Bor* photographer and M. D. later. Dr. Kappe abhorred the existing Bulgarian German textbook of the regular curriculum. So we, me included, and a few German-speaking boys, enjoyed Dr. Kappe's tuition apart. No classrooms, we sat in the grass of the southern slope of the College campus, and read an interesting German book, fittingly entitled *Memoirs of a Good-for-Nothing* (German: *Aus dem leben eines Taugenichts*).

Kotse was the only possible competent editor-in-chief of *Bor* 1938; our class chose him unanimously. He had a knack for dealing with people, probably inherited from his father, a dealer in the tobacco trade, equally capable of negotiating with the growers of tobacco and the big international tobacco firms. Bulgarian tobacco, though not the best in the market, was simply a necessity, because without it, cigarettes would not burn, or not properly at least.

My bond with Kotse came also from *cooperation* or *prompting* in class. When examined, say in Latin, Kotse counted on me to whisper the answers to him. He heard admirably well and Miss Steele, even if suspecting *foul play* was glad to hear Ceasar's *Gaelic War* thus learned, for one learns even through prompting, as in theater.



¹ Note from Mr. Lambrinov as of October, 2017: Hooray! Contact with Mosach Cordoba restored! In late September this year my granddaughter Asy made a 3-day visit to Israel, bringing to Mosacho a copy of the present story. Like Mosacho, Asy holds a degree (from London) on book publishing. Mosacho sounded happily surprised on the line. He told me he had a very helpful English-speaking personal assistant in his total glaucoma-caused blindness. We exchanged small presents. Should auld acquaintance be forgot!

Kotse had a sister in the College, and a daughter in Canada later. Both were blondes of angelic beauty. Kotse himself was highly successful in matters of the heart. He tragically died of cancer, treated at the end by Prof. Dobri Kiprova '39.

This one, Moshe Baruh, emigrated to Brazil and 30 years later, when we made a reunion of the class, he came back with his son but tragically, without his thick hair, as a result of the chemotherapy he had gone through.

About a dozen from our class later became medical doctors – Vessa Kiselkova was a doctor, Radko Rachev also a doctor. They both came from Dobrudja and when Dobrudja was Romanian, they had to cross a border to come to the American College. Of course, they lived to see Dobrudja liberated but are no longer among us.

This is a girl from Samokov, Zlatka Kuzmova, she married Angel Haytov, M.D., from our class. We had 3 or 4 families, classmates that got married.

Here George Georgiev, the son of the Math teacher. His younger brother Dobrincho studied at the College as well. As was the tradition, the teachers put their children through College, it was very popular. The faculty of ACS enjoyed a *powerful* incentive: to put their own children through College, tuition, books, board and possibly lodging included, at cost undisclosed. Aside from the two sons of Mr. Georgiev, there was one daughter of Math Director Yankov, one son of Physics teacher Bezak, one of Registrar Zaharieva, the shoe-maker's son, too, and the manual instructor Toskov's daughter, to only name a few.

Mr. Toskov, the cabinet maker who had come from Samokov, taught us for two years, in first and second form, how to work with wood. I made for myself a wooden rack with 3 or 4 shelves, still in use. But I couldn't remain in the work shop for the third year because I joined the choir led by Mr. Goncharov and I had to choose just one big

afterschool activity. By the way, Mr. Toskov's daughter, also a College graduate, married an English soldier, who later turned out to be a grave digger, posted in occupation of Bologna. Her knowledge of English acquired at ACS made the union possible, of course.

This is the College ski team – here's a Jewish boy, #41 in the picture – he was a great skier. Look at him standing on the left, a meter apart from the line that includes Krum (Krumcho) Konstantinov (in the middle of the picture). This *apartheid* was typical of David Madjar '39. He was a loner. He had an elder brother in the Class of 1936. And, significantly, a first cousin girl, the famous Daisy Levy of our class. He remained a lone skier, even after



The College ski team

graduating as a Medical Doctor. Divorced from his fickle wife, he tried to work in Venezuela and elsewhere in America, but kept returning to Europe's Alpine snow slopes and also Bulgaria's. You see, we were everywhere, all around the world.

In 1942, I was on leave for New Year's Eve and Christmas, and went to ski on Borovets, in the Rila Mountain. On January 6, 1943, after an enjoyable day on the slopes, I met Davico Madjar at the tea house situated at the foot of a steep slope. Davico descended it in a slalom and we were soon at a table. I proposed to treat Davico with sweet baklava in honor of my father Hristo's name day. Davico did not wear his yellow star of David, but the breach of this absurd regulation went unnoticed. Davico, said a few words, then sighed and uttered, *It is going to finish very soon*. Indeed, less than a month later, the ongoing war in Russia

turned. Another man had, only on New Year's Eve, made a similar prophesy that came out true. Hitler had said, *Wir sind in Stalingrad und werden auch dort bleiben*, meaning *We are in Stalingrad and will also remain there*. His toast came out prophetic, with only one small difference: 600,000 German troops remained in Stalingrad but as prisoners of war. I had heard Hitler's broadcast in his not very good German: he mixed sonorous consonants with mute ones, as many unschooled Germans do, saying for example *Schtalinkrat*, and I reflected on his predicament. Davico became a doctor. When he died of cancer, he left a legacy, lots of money, and he asked for his dust to be spread over Mont Blanc's fabulous expanses over 6,000 m altitude.

Ah, Leda Mileva, I remember her as a one-act play actor, she had to act a girl in a kind of fantasy, a girl who had been drowned. They put all sorts of sea plants on her and do you know what she said? *I won't appear unless I'm beautiful*. She won. According to me, her father was not exactly a communist, he was just an idealist, and a great progressive poet for which he was also killed.

Favorite School Subjects, Extra-curriculars, Teachers

My favorite school subjects were, of course, languages. I liked English very much because as soon as I started English, I saw that it was half French and half German and I knew both those languages, so it



Vera Bagryanova, English Instructor



was just a matter of *walking over*. I had a very good beginners' teacher in English, Bagryanova. She was the first to teach me the subtleties of English speech.

Goncharov was a great Music teacher who sometimes played the piano for 12 hours in a row. At the same time, he was a very good trigonometry teacher. Our choir was a mixed choir, for boys and girls. And we had, of course, romantic couples. On Christmas night, we would go to the President's home and sing carols. I always went before that to the library to take out *A Christmas Carol* by Dickens, a favorite read. Every year I read it, it somehow warms the heart.

I remember that in the choir we were engaged for a month to sing in Sofia for the British minister plenipotentiary (now Ambassador) who organized a performance of the *St Matthew's Passion* Oratorio by Bach, a 4-hour oratorio, a really great thing. Every now and then, they would take us by bus from the College to a building in Sofia, just off Dondukov Blvd., I think it is Goethe Institut now. There we rehearsed because this oratorio requires at least 3 choirs: male, female, and a youth choir plus soloists. The British ambassador was an old man called Bentink, if I remember well. They said that he had chipped in a lot of money for that performance because he thought that this was going to be

the last thing in his life. They had given him a part to sing but he sang it only at the dress rehearsal because he saw that he was too moved to sing, his voice was trembling so; all he sang was (*singing Bentink's line* "And now the Lord to rest is laid.") This was a very special piece for me, so, so intense.

When later working in Lybia, I had some work to do in London and it was in the spring, when they perform this Bach's Oratorio there usually. In the last minute, I bought a girl's spare ticket. During the performance, I kept using my handkerchief. The girl next to me thought that I had a running nose but I was crying. It was something I will not forget. The same thing that we had rehearsed for months, I was so moved (*tearing up*). Do you know that this oratorio could have been lost? When Bach wrote it, paper was scarce and when he died nobody paid very much attention, they took the paper and sold it to a man who sold meat. And there, somebody had the luck to see those notes and buy them. Incredible luck!



Paul Rowland, English Professor, 1936

At the College, in the house closest to the pool, lived Mr. Rowland, a very interesting teacher, a Phonetics expert, who taught us for only 2 years, 1933 and 1934. He left a book which you must still have in the College library. There is conversation inside and exercises to instill the difference between *men* and *man*, *bed* and *bad*, you know. There was a time in Bulgaria, when these two things were made one and when you

heard someone speaking English at that time, I don't know why, I call it a virus, they said "I lie on my *bad*." Those who came from Samokov used to say *myan* for man and Blyak for Black, as well. Mr. Zaharieff for example, my tutor in first form, he didn't know English very well, so when he spoke he said *myan* or "You're a *byad* boy." Rowland, for two years, insisted on making the difference.

It was in the College that skiing and swimming opened a life-long attachment for me. When I came to the College they had just hushed-hushed an accident, a College boy had died while skiing. The unfortunate student of our College, I think he was of the Class of 1934, his name was Pavel Romanski, apparently from the town of Roman, on the railway to Varna. In January 1931, he went to ski in a snowstorm and died close to the present-day Prostor Hotel, 100 meters or so. On that spot, his schoolmates of the Class of 1934 erected a statue. That's where the lift going up to the Malak Rezen Summit began, exactly there, at his statue and that's why it was called Romanski. You see, he remained in the memory of Sofia with the lift named after him. The story made an indelible impression on my imagination.

I skied until very old age. I liked to go up in the winter mountain alone. There's this very well-known summit Ravni Chal, it's a *chal*, a pasture, which has a very steep, almost vertical northern face, ending in a beautiful lake, Ravnichalsko. And at the other end of the lake is a very popular hut, Belmeken. One winter, I went there alone, the hotel-keeper had a son born in Kostenets, who told me, *Go there and find the key under the mat*. So I did and spent a week. He had told me how to get water from the lake, too, and had broken the ice, and I scooped water there. I sometimes think it was foolhardy of me, because I was absolutely alone. What if I had broken a leg or something? In fact, I had previously broken my leg skiing, twice.

I had a classmate, Ilia Ikonov,

he left the College early though. He became a very, very good doctor (*laughing*) of broken legs. He spoke very good English as he had come from the American Grade School, so his father didn't see any point in him continuing at the College and he had to quit.

(*We've come to the first swimming contest pictures and the pool.*) This is one of the best memories I keep. We made that pool, we paid for part of it. Avid swimmer as I was, I worked like mad digging it. I'm not in that picture because I had already left the College, I'll explain further on.

I was one of the winners of the Band of Mercy contests. They usually asked us to hand in a piece of writing on some theme and I always won. My half-brother was also in the club, its President in fact, for a time.



Band of Mercy

The Reluctant Soldier

(*after flipping pages for quite some time, he exclaims*) There! (*The page says Ex Members of College Classes and it shows 7 boys, 6 of them in military uniform, the smile from Dimitar's face from the 1936 photo gone on this one. I finally get it, he quit the College to enroll in the Military Academy.*) Here Zlatka's man Angel Haytov, who became an airman and then later a doctor. This is the boy who rang the College bell, Boyan Harizanov. And here is the son of the College doctor, Grigor Chakalov. (*Coincidentally, I'm to interview Grigor's nephew Georgi in a couple of weeks.*) And this is Zahari Tutmanikov, a boy with a very unfortunate destiny. You see, he was an airman and had to fly a captured German plane back from Hungary, but the Germans had put explosive of some kind inside, so on his way back from Hungary to Bulgaria, flying over Serbia, it blew up in flames and he died, burned

outside the plane. I also had to speak at his funeral. Zahari was a close friend, extremely popular, as was his brother, also a College boy, Class of 1935, killed in the war before Zahari and renamed Planinski.

How I hated the Military Academy! I absolutely **hated** it. I had to do it, because my father, I suppose, didn't have the money anymore for my education at the College. I finished sophomore year and then all of a sudden it was declared, *Whoever wants a secure life, pay, and so on, and so forth, let him apply for a contest to enter the Military Academy.* So, my father said, *Go and apply*, and I did it. Of course, I was an A-grade student, I didn't have any difficulty getting in.

When I had been there for one month, I tried to walk away. I declared that I don't want to serve anymore. Then my father told me, *You're shaming me.* He was a captain in the Reserve, you know, he had done 8 years of war, because he was first in the war against Turkey, the First and Second Balkan Wars, and WWI. I still wanted to walk away. They said, *Alright, remain just for now, only for a while.* That while continued until 1941 when I was promoted to officer. Six days after that, the Germans invaded Russia. We were commissioned on 16 June and the war began 22 June. I was sent to serve in Shumen, as an infantry sub-lieutenant.

Bulgaria remained semi-neutral by refusing to send its armed forces to the East (Russia). When the Russians, winning the war, came to Bulgaria, they said, *Now you go and fight the Germans*, so I went with 100 boys to the front as their company commander. Fortunately, it was a short thing and the war ended soon after.

Career Path

I became an army officer, though I didn't like it. Actually, I was appointed to teach Topography at the Reserve Officers' School, so most of the time working in the army I was a teacher and I enjoyed that. I taught Karlo Ognyanov '36, who later became a doctor and professor in Medicine.



Dimitar at the Military Academy in 1938

He was married to a girl, Lina Vassileva, from his class. Her father, Grigor Vassilev, was a member of the government, as Minister. He was the man who founded the export of Bulgarian tomatoes, eggs, and grapes, a famous man. Once Bulgaria began to export these items, the Bulgarian lev became worth as much as the dollar. That was in the 1930's, a time when Bulgaria actually came out of the crisis and became a self-supporting economy.

I taught at the Reserve Officers' School for several years, until in 1946 they said, *Thank you, good-bye now*, and threw me out. So, I started studying Law which I also finished. At some point I was told, *If you use a foreign language you can get 10% pay increase*, and our pay was meager as non-members of the Communist Party. Mr. Kabasanov, our class's adviser in 1938, then at the university, was proud of me. In one day of exams in Sofia University, I sat for three languages – German, English, and French – and I took them all. They asked whether I spoke Russian, and I said yes, when in fact I knew very little. When I read a Russian book for the first time, I found out that it was very near to Bulgarian. I have a collection of Pushkin's works and I enjoy them every now and again. In the end, I asked for an examination in Russian, too. They appointed a Russian girl to examine me and she told me I had a Russian accent. Yes,

of course, because during our 4 years in Paris we lived among Russians. The French called me *Le Petit Russe*, The little Russian. I protested it; I said I was Bulgarian and do you know what they said, *C'est la même chose*, It's the same thing. This way I had 4 languages and 50% higher pay – Russian knowledge gave 20% pay increase – which somehow made my pay tolerable.

Another thing the almighty State employees told me was, *If you want to be a lawyer, we have a place for an advocate in Kurdzhali*. I had already two kids, a boy and a girl, I had to think of my family. I met my wife back when she was a child. She worked for some time as milliner with my step-mother, then she left, started working somewhere else. I think she chose me, like so often is the case. We were very happy together. She passed in 2002. My elder child, my daughter, was a nurse; she died at age of 60.

I worked at the Sofia Radio first and then at Sofia Press as a journalist. I stayed there for the rest of my working days. I wrote about everything. I have a huge library at home. Happily, I met a family from Vienna at the Radio, and the wife kept furnishing me with all kinds of books, mainly English and German. I'm still looking for my copy of *Our Man in Havana* by Graham Greene, a spoof – something to laugh about, a ridicule of spying.

At some point in my life, I worked for 2 years on a construction site in Libya. Officially, *juridical correspondent* was my position. But I was in fact in contact with airport, bank, everything, on behalf of my boss, who had the greatest confidence in me. I even had a chauffeur. My boss received a lot of correspondence in English, of course. He just wrote *Lambrinov* across the title and knew that on the next day all his answers would be ready, typed away by me in the course of the night. He knew English alright, he was an engineer. Later he told me that he didn't trust me right away, because he realized I was a lawyer.

One day, as we sat down in the

heat of Lybia, he treated me to a Mirinda and said, "You have to tell me who wrote you such a good recommendation." "Why? What's wrong with it?" "Well, for one thing, in the construction business, we only write good recommendations to those we want to get rid of," he said laughing. The truth was that my Sofia Radio bosses, who had written it for me, knew me very well, I had done something good and important for the radio, and they had been genuinely happy with me. They even received me again after my two years in Libya.

Staying in Touch with College Classmates

We did stay in touch after the College, of course. While I was studying law, I had to work and I was supporting myself selling international train tickets for a French company. So I worked and studied and worked and studied. One day my classmate Boris Lolov '40 from Varna, the president of his class and a lawyer himself, was buying tickets from me and I told him, *I can't do this anymore, I'm quitting*. He then suggested that I try studying by correspondence. They had just made this available at the university.

I went to the university and Slavcho (Svetoslav) Piperov '35 – let me see, *(turning the pages of the Rilski shopot, 1935, which looks very much like a yearbook; yearbooks came only every other year – 1936, 1938, 1940 being the last edition)*, here he is, a very good man, he died last year. So he was part of

the university staff and, of course, opened his door for all College boys and girls but for that, was sent to concentration camp. You see, those, who had studied at the College, we had an invisible link holding us together, a solidarity. "Ah, College boy," "Ah, College girl," they would say with a smile.

On Happiness, Achievements, and Regrets

You want to know what makes me happy. The fact that I'm still alive maybe. My children are the greatest love and joy of my life. My grandchildren, too – my son has two girls who work in Great Britain, one has a Master's, one – a Bachelor's degree. To tell you the truth, they make me happy and they make me worry, too. My grandchild, the one with the Master's degree, is now on assignment in Romania and she is coming tomorrow here and I worry about the weather, because she's flying. I worry also because they get older and older, one of them is 27, the others 25, and they have no children. The one that flies in tomorrow works in a company, a publication, and all the time she flies to Germany, the Baltic States, Russia, Spain, Switzerland. Publishing in print today is a little bit endangered because of the internet and all the electronic devices people use to read.

I was probably happiest when I had so much work that I didn't have to think about anything else.

Then I recall this one moment of



Classmates from the American College visit Dimitar at the Military Academy

pure happiness. I taught myself body surfing, while spending a year working at a construction site in Nigeria, where the waves of the Atlantic Ocean sometimes reached a height of 5-6 meters. Basically, you surf without anything, just with your body. You stretch your body, then you wait for the top of the wave to arrive a little bit behind you, and you plunge coastward. From that height the wave carries you at a speed and throws you out on the sand. That was the thing I enjoyed the most, it made me incredibly happy. And our workers from Varna, allegedly expert swimmers, watching the surfing trick performed by a Sofia land lubber, learned modesty.

As per regrets, I have none.

My greatest achievement is maybe reaching this age. And being able to speak and write in English, French, German, and Italian. I have friends in Austria, I communicate regularly with them per phone mostly, but they also visit me sometimes.

Another personal achievement is that I built a villa, a three-story summer house with a garage underground, with the help of a friend from a Samokov village, Okol, and my own two hands. This friend and I had been together working in construction abroad. I did the finishing works. What you do with your hands is something that cannot be replaced by anything else and that was one of the greatest advantages of the American College over the French College.

The French College was managed by the clergy, all they knew was, *Let's go to pray!* Around Plovdiv there were many villages that were Catholic. The songs they taught us: "I have only one soul which I must save from the eternal flames." "I am a Christian, this is my glory, my hope, and my support." They taught us to pray to God, so that we could save our souls in order not to go to hell, but then they also said God is omnipotent and he pardons everything. How? He pardons you, then sends you to hell, if you sin? You see, this is nothing but a myth,



Class of 1939's 30th anniversary reunion, 1969

popularized by Dante because he hated some people who banned him life-long from Florence, and put them all in hell, as a revenge.

And then compare this with the College, where we sang: "We march and sing, and all along the lines we raise our College cry" or that one with lyrics by College PE teacher Krumcho Konstantinov himself:

*Come slide along, glide along skiing,
The sport with a thousand thrills,
We're from the American College,
Excelling in muscle and mind.
So start along, dart along
And leave all our rivals behind.*

You be the judge.

Message to Younger Alumni and Students

Do read Mr. Rowland's book about Phonetics. I was invited many times to your commencement ceremonies and at each of them I listened, I have hearing aid which I used, to the students that gave the valedictorian speech and each time I had difficulty understanding them. And then there came along a teacher I didn't know until then and he began speaking and I heard every single shade of sound and I learned his name was Whitaker. He speaks like an erudite Englishman, not American. But then, in America, on the Atlantic seaboard of America, they speak excellent English.

Also, remember that love (but not

sex), love between people is the only thing worthwhile. I'm very happy that your generation thought of this word sex, to distinguish between love and sex. Love is something else, sex may help it or may spoil it, it's alright, but love is everything.



Daisy and Dimitar 30 years later

In Memoriam: Ivailo Dimitrov (1966-2017)

Rest in Peace, My Love!

Dr. Zornitsa Semkova, ACS History teacher, Mr. Dimitrov's wife

Ivo was my beloved, my husband, the father of my child, my best friend, and my colleague, for twenty eight years, during which we lived, studied, and worked together. We were at each other's side for so long that for decades we had lost track where either of us ended and the other began.

Mr. Dimitrov, Ivo, Ivcho, was unique in all of his forms. A student of his once jokingly asked him to be more humane, which he instantaneously countered with, "I am not humane, I am a humanitarian." He was both, however. He was my walking multipurpose encyclopedia for history, cinema, music, art, and sports. He undertook everything eruditely, be it work or hobbies, with passion and attention to detail. He adored his profession, the College, his students, and playing table tennis.



Ivailo Dimitrov and Zornitsa Semkova, 2013

Ivo sought out and treasured the inner light in the hearts and minds of everyone around him. He was unshakably loyal to his family and friends and was always ready to strike up pleasant conversations with good people. Vulgarity, cynicism, and ignorance disgusted him and often fell victim to his phenomenal sense of humor, as well as serving as a goad that inspired his sardonic works.

Ivo liked and knew how to enjoy himself, to travel, to love, and he lived life to its fullest. I think it was the class of 2001 that gave him a T-shirt, embroidered with a phrase he often used to repeat in class: "Attention, we are wasting precious seconds!" He never wasted them, not a single one, neither in class, nor in life.

Rest in peace, my love!

A Man for All Seasons

Dr. Richard T. Ewing, ACS President

Of all the many fine people I have come to know in the ACS community, Ivo stood out as a man for all seasons: a scholar, thinker, writer, speaker, coach, teacher, colleague, friend, devoted husband and father. As a scholar and a teacher, he possessed both a deep understanding and an encyclopedic knowledge of Bulgarian history and culture, which he reveled in sharing with his students and colleagues. Remarkably, almost all Bulgarian graduates of ACS since our school's reopening 25 years ago had Ivo Dimitrov as their teacher. And even more remarkably, he could, and would, tell you about each and every one of them. He was a teacher who knew his classes, knew his students, and deeply cared for all of them... and the feeling was mutual.

Ivo was one of those rare people who combined high-caliber intellectual gifts with a fierce competitive streak (he started, developed, and led the ACS table tennis team to national level excellence for both boys and girls) along with a great sense of fun and enthusiasm. He knew how to savor life. Such a man – devoted to family and friends, dedicated to students and their development, and devoted to preserving and passing on the rich heritage and culture of his country – creates and shapes a school environment. Ivo shaped the ACS that was re-born 25 years ago and reestablished since that time as a truly great school. We often speak of the extraordinary qualities of ACS students. Let us now praise the remarkable man and exemplary educator, Ivo Dimitrov, who did so much to teach, guide, and mentor our students and graduates!

Alumni and Former Faculty Remember Mr. Dimitrov

Mr. Dimitrov was hands-down the best historian I have ever had the pleasure of being lectured by. While many would slumber due to the depths he went into, I would have gladly traded in most of my other classes for more 12th grade History with Mr. Dimitrov. I love history to its fullest extent. By extension, I loved Mr. Dimitrov's classes.

Mr. Dimitrov was my best friend's table tennis coach. He could easily go into the most complex of historical topics while playing against any of the best table tennis players in the College. He was strict when he needed to be and just as hilarious when he didn't. He was a true intellectual, the kind of man whose knowledge could simply leave you stunned. His humor was refined and spot on; it turned what were otherwise very serious and complex topics into something unique. His articles were as much fascinatingly detailed and well written as they were a pure joy to read for anyone interested. An indulgence in passion very few historians or authors have ever made me feel.

During his classes, I did not feel like I was in one of the toughest high schools this side of the world. I was right at home. I didn't care about grades or finals, I just wanted to hear more. His academic and objective attitude left a deep impression on me and has been one of the guiding lights in my academic career as an international lawyer. I can write thousands of words explaining why I respect him so much, why I feel like I learned so much from him, and this for a man I barely knew outside of class. I feel I need not say anything more.

I will miss him greatly.

-Goran Georgiev, Class of 2012

P.S. The materials he wrote for 12th grade History should be available for every Bulgarian to read.

One of my favorite moments was at the beginning of the school year in 12th grade. My profile was Humanities, so I had History (regular class) with Mr. Dimitrov and History

(elective) with Mrs. Semkova. When introducing us to the material for the school year, Mrs. Semkova told us that we will cover the material from the 1300s until the present in the History elective that she taught. She said, "The idea is that Mr. Dimitrov will teach you the history

Mrs. Semkova) tells it with all the anecdotes and logical links not written in the textbooks. Even today I remember some of those fascinating stories, and I tell them to my international friends. They often remark, "Wow, you really know Bulgarian history in depth!" And I



Mr. Dimitrov at Faculty Follies, 2013

of Bulgaria since its beginning until its fall under Ottoman rule, and I will teach you the history from the beginning of the Ottoman rule until the present. Whether he will actually get to Bulgaria's fall under Ottoman rule... we'll have to see. He hasn't managed to get that far in previous years."

When introducing us to the material for the school year, Mr. Dimitrov said, "We will begin with the state of the Balkans before Bulgaria was set up and we will learn Bulgarian history all the way until the fall under Ottoman rule. Well, probably we won't get that far... I will try, but I haven't managed to get that far in previous years. With that said, let's stop wasting precious seconds and get started! I've written the outline here on the whiteboard..."

In the end, we didn't quite get to Bulgaria's fall under Ottoman rule, but I learned so many interesting facts in the process. Bulgarian history has never been so interesting as when Mr. Dimitrov (as well as

think, "That's because it was taught to me like a fairytale with amazing passion by Mr. Dimitrov."

It was very nice to talk to Mr. Dimitrov about history, life at the College and after, and what not. Even when he didn't have time he found time to talk to us, his students, whenever we needed advice. What a unique human being!

-Mariya Manahova, Class of 2010

I recall this one time, an early morning, we had History with Mr. Dimitrov the first period and I was falling asleep. Mr. Dimitrov came to my desk and said to me something along the lines of: "You're sleeping through history, you're sleeping through the present, at least make sure you don't sleep through the future. Think about it and go back to sleep." Sounded annoying to me at the time, I did not know better. Only after some time, I realized he had been right, as always.

-Alexander Karolev, Class of 2007



With ACS President Dr. Paul Johnson at the Alumni Reunions, 2011

Mr. Dimitrov was my History teacher in 10th and 12th grade and taught us European and Bulgarian history. Though the nature of his subject required us to remember a great deal of dates, and the right consequence of events, Mr. Dimitrov had his unique way of making it not only very interesting, but funny as well. Whether it would be with short quips such as, “following the French Revolution Louis XVI grew shorter by one head,” or his general anecdotal and witty commentary of historic events, Mr. Dimitrov always held mine and my classmates’ undivided attention.

Mr. Dimitrov’s youthful charisma and sense of humor made him so relatable to his students, that it was easy to love his teaching style and personality. I love history and always looked forward to stepping into his classroom. What made Mr. Dimitrov so special is that you were excited to be in his classroom and to talk to him, even if you were not particularly keen on history.

He was one of those teachers that I loved talking to on a variety of topics – history, film, and of course table tennis. He never declined a request for help on history, keen to spend his time with each one of us. Whether it was in our History classes, or during our senior dinner at the end of 2010, Mr. Dimitrov simply loved spending time with his students, and that meant the world to me.

Mr. Dimitrov’s unique teaching style, charismatic personality, and very natural likeability makes him one of the most fantastic educators I have ever known.

Rest in peace, Mr. Dimitrov. For those of us who knew you, you will never be forgotten or replaced!

-Nicola Nanev, Class of 2010



He was a great teacher, but he was also much more than that. He was a man to whom students could turn to at difficult times. He was a role model. I am extremely grateful for everything he has ever done for me and for all of his students, as a teacher and as a person. I will not forget him.

-Simona Zahova, Class of 2012



One day during the break before a History class, I noticed that Mr. Dimitrov’s arm was bandaged. I asked him how he had injured himself to which he replied: “Unhealthy curiosity, Boris, sort of like yours right now!” He then admitted to have come home hungry, seen a pot on the stove, and lifted the lid to have a look to have the hot steam burn his arm.”

-Boris Vassilev, Class of 1999



It was the beginning of our last year at ACS, when every student would storm into the classrooms to pick the seat that would be theirs

throughout the school year. We had already heard some scary stories about how strict Mr. Dimitrov was and how he filled the whiteboard with the tiniest handwriting one can imagine. However, my friend and I had decided that we were going to pay attention in class this year (our last one, after all) and we picked the front row desk in the middle.

Unfortunately, our History classes were placed first morning block on particularly tough-schedule Wednesdays, every senior’s worst nightmare. Pulling all-nighters on Tuesdays became a tradition and not a forgiving one and every Wednesday morning during History class, as I was sitting right in front of Mr. Dimitrov, I would rest my head on my right hand and start dozing. Every time I would wake up after hearing my name, my heart beating fast, only to see Mr. Dimitrov’s disappointed look. During the small five-minute break I would go out and eat my daily apple to wake up. I am telling you, this apple had some magical power over me and the second period I was unrecognizable. This happened every week.

One time Mr. Dimitrov asked me: “Okay, Nelly, I get that you have a lot of work and you are sleep-deprived but why on earth won’t you eat that apple before the first period?” Good question, Mr. Dimitrov, a very good one indeed. One of the many I wasn’t able to answer.

I was not good at History; half of my test made the exam howlers (Mr. Dimitrov’s famous *biseri* collection) after the first semester, but I didn’t have to be good at History to respect a teacher like him and be respected back. Thank you for everything – for helping us become thinking individuals, and not sounding boards. Thank you for being not only our teacher, but also our friend!

-Nelly Afzali, Class of 2017



“Every second is precious. We shouldn’t waste a minute on empty words! We should move forward!” Those are words that every ACS student has heard. Those are the words I also often catch myself saying. And every time I say them, I recall both the image of Ivo and



Mr. Dimitrov and the rest of the faculty taking part in the Fund Razor initiative, 2013

the atmosphere he created in the classroom – creative, inspiring, productive, and compelling. Ivo was a natural at encouraging, teaching, and if necessary, even disciplining. With his encyclopedic knowledge and rich experience, Ivo guided not only students with ease through the complex labyrinths of Bulgarian and world history, but also introduced me as a newbie to the College, taught me to be better, changed me. Our walks around the campus, the stories he told me of students, teachers, even the history of individual buildings and rooms – everything was fun and enlightening.

Sharing a room with Ivo for three years was, no doubt, a challenge and a blessing. We would sometimes begin a discussion in front of the students and I would read in their eyes how much they enjoyed the heated conversation between two teachers with different points of view – these discussions I miss now. Really quickly, we formed a team and started helping each other, learning from one another, exploring together new technologies and practices in the classroom, grading tests together. We became friends quickly, naturally, sharing good and bad news, everyday life and important events. Ivo and Zori became part of our family. My wife used to say I seemed to have a funny story a day featuring Ivo. She, too, loved how he appreciated every minute of his life, not wasting any,

“a most noble knight of modern history.” We both miss Ivo dearly.

-Vasil Ninov, ACS History teacher (2014-today)

...This body wasn't big enough to fit him for Ivailo is a giant! Goodbye, my friend, I hope you finally found out whether the Huns are a Finnish, Turk or Mongol tribe...

-Nikola Nikolov, Class of 1998

A legend, an erudite, a wonderful and inspiring teacher and human being, so humane, cheerful, enthusiastic. My memories of the College are to such an extent associated with him that it's very hard for me to believe he's gone. He will remain in our hearts, always...

-Kornelia Kozovska, Class of 1999

...Mr. Dimitrov was a wonderful person and I've never met another person who loved history as much as him!...

-Darina Spasova, Class of 2005

...I am grateful that he was our teacher – he retold historical events with such fascination as if they had taken place yesterday and he had been there – the most inspiring teacher!

-Aneliya Lacheva, Class of 2009

An exceptional man and professional, endlessly devoted to teaching, loving what he did. I admired his knowledge and the way he presented it to us. At the same time, he always found time to talk about football or play table tennis with his students. Thanks for everything...

-Nikolay Lachkov, Class of 1999

He taught history, yet taught us to be human at the same time. I bow to you, Mr. Dimitrov!

-Liliana Velez Vazquez, Class of 2003

The man who made me fall in love with history! Thank you for everything! It was an honor and a privilege for me!

-Theo Spassov, Class of 2013

I will never forget our table tennis practices after classes until late in the evening. Thanks for the shared moments, Mr. Dimitrov!

-Stefan Videv, Class of 2004

I am a better person because I was his student and because I had the pleasure of knowing him as a teacher and human being...

-Anna Antonova, Class of 2008

...Bulgaria lost one of its best teachers...

-Adam Saligman, ACS ELL teacher (2013-15)

...A warm, intelligent, and witty man from whom we have all learned a lot (especially about humanity and how important it is to do everything with love and dedication)...

-Nadezhda Trichkova, Class of 2012

...Ivo was extraordinary: brilliant and kind in equal measure.

-Garth Greenwell, ACS ELL teacher (2009-13)

...I believe that the world is a better

place because of Mr. Dimitrov. He touched each one of us!...

-Dora Nikolova, Class of 2010



...Mr. Dimitrov was a mentor to us all. He inspired us in the most important moments with his genuine sense of humor, his dedication to students and his profession, his endless kindness. These past couple of years I've been sharing with friends my funniest memories from our classes with him, just some small proof of the enormous influence he still has on us all...

-Maria Zlatkova, Class of 2014



Ivo helped to define the College in so many wonderful ways.

-Roger Whitaker, ACS Founding President (1992-94), ACS Chair of the Board of Trustees

I'm so glad I got to know Ivo. He was so good. I'll not forget him, and neither will the other thousands of lives that he touched.

-Laurel Zmolek-Smith, ACS ESL Teacher (2014-today)



...We've all been endlessly lucky to have had the opportunity to learn from Mr. Dimitrov and to have been infected at least to an extent with his passion – for history and life.

-Kristiyana Kalcheva, Class of 2011



...I know of no other teacher who could make you gladly get up at six o'clock on a Monday morning to go to a test period in History...

-Siyana Ivanova, Class of 2013



He shared most generously his wisdom, sense of humor, and

kindness; he taught us not only history but also how to be decent human beings. So many of us keep memories of him and we will continue to remember him with love, no matter the number of years or miles that stand between us, no matter if he is still with us physically... I bow to you, Mr. Dimitrov, and to the memory of you, with gratitude for every moment you dedicated to us...

-Chrissy Tencheva, Class of 2009



...I remember that when we played tennis last summer, Mr. Dimitrov did not spend a single second talking about his illness or the problems he must've had – he was only angry at ending up second at the ACS Open. A real fighter and a life mentor for me. I'm grateful that I had the honor of knowing him...

-Nikolai Pashkunov, Class of 2009

Mr. Dimitrov's Follies

"Starting something like Faculty Follies in a country outside of the United States always poses some interesting challenges. One of the first ones that I experience everywhere I go is the inability, at least in its early years, to get host country teachers to participate. However, Ivo had no such hesitation. For the first Faculty Follies at ACS, Ivo was the only Bulgarian to participate in a solo act, and only one of a few to grace the stage that year. Ivo was born ready for that stage and he rocked the mic that night with one of his poems and participated in every FF afterwards. There is no folly there, just pure class."

-Michael Branch, ACS ELL teacher (2009-11)



"[Ivo's FF performances were] one reason I wished my Bulgarian were better. No other Faculty Folly performance could rival. I didn't understand it, but I remember in my first year thoroughly enjoying Ivo's performance still."

-Colin Boyd Shafer, ACS Geography teacher (2015-17)



Michael Branch makes no mistake about Mr. Dimitrov participating in every edition (2010-2017) of the hilarious adored-by-the-students teacher talent show Faculty Follies (with a worthy cause, too, as the money raised by selling tickets go to the Protected Home Together Foundation). While in 2012 and 2017, Mr. Dimitrov toiled making literary-philosophical analyses of the lyrics of a song by pop-folk star Preslava and Bulgarian pop's teen sensation Gery-Nikol respectively, in 2015 he even went as far in the shoes of his students, as to author pop-folk song lyrics, a brilliant piece called *Values*, which we wouldn't be surprised to catch on the radio in a Sofia cab ride, should anyone in the pop-folk industry get their hands on it. In 2013 and 2014, Mr. Dimitrov participated with a golden collection of student howlers (known as *biseri*) – imagine the hours he must have gladly spent over the years putting those in a safe place, – while in 2016 he recited his own poems, one of which he admitted to writing especially for the Class of 1999.

We include it here, as according to Mr. Dimitrov "it could be applied to any ACS class, really, its sound is sort of universal." At the show in 2016, Mr. Dimitrov recalled with affection how the poem came into being, how the Class of 1999 had invited all teachers to the Auditorium on one of the days between the finals and their graduation, to surprise them with various awards at a special Academy-Award-like ceremony. The best possible occasion and audience for Mr. Dimitrov's poem *Doubts(?)*, originally written in Bulgarian, here translated by Georgi Iliev:

Съмнения(?)

Когато с мойта историческа секира
повалям ученик след ученик,
във себе си понякога се вирам
и питам се: „Защо го правя мъченик?“

На сън ми се явяват колежани,
след теста гаден, със отчаян вик!
Посърнали, нажени и разревани,
един след друг, със нервен тик.

И често се събуждам сред кошмари,
на мойта съвест зъл съдник,
обхванат от съмненията стари:
„садист ли съм или пък неразбран комик?“

Но следващият изпит се задава!
Еуфоричен съм отново и велик!
И демонично, със запретнати ръкави,
на пишещата си машина сядам в миг.

И скоро с трескав поглед ставам,
споделяйки поредния ужасен трик,
а Зора снизходително ме наблюдава
и цъка съжалително с език.



At a Faculty Follies rehearsal, 2010



At Faculty Follies in 2010 - Photograph by Konstantin Karchev '15

Doubts(?)

Whenever my historian's axe
Cuts student after student down
I turn my gaze inside and wonder
Why do I send them off to martyr town?

After the sucky test, with cries bewitching
The students show up in my dreams
Dejected, bristling, weeping,
Marching in a line, and twitching.

And often nightmares wake me up,
To harshly judge my own intent:
The old doubt: am I a sadist,
Or simply a comedian they just don't get?

But a new test is coming fast!
Again, I'm euphoric and so great!
And demon-like I roll my sleeves
And type away, oh it's a blast!

And promptly, fever-eyed I rise
To reveal this thing of dread,
While Zora gives a patient look
And shakes a disapproving head.

As mentioned, Mr. Dimitrov's Faculty Follies performance in 2014 included students' *biseri*, but it also included "teachers' *biseri*, and funny stories from ACS (but not only) that happened mostly to [him] (but not only)." Here an excerpt:

Heard of the "the Ministry of the Outside Affairs" yet?

"The English sheep, being more maneuverable, managed to defeat the Spanish sheep in the English Channel." – We all know that in the 1500s the English started raising sheep for wool and thus, for the textile manufacturing. I didn't suspect, however, that they were used in sea battles as well. I can't understand what the Spanish and English sheep would fight for. Were the battlefield an actual field, it would have made some sense – for the grass – but like this...

On the last semester exam for 10th grade, there was an exercise requiring single dates or periods to be correctly matched with an event or period name. According to one student, the above-mentioned battle took place between 1566 and 1609. If it were true this would have been the longest battle in human history. I tried to imagine how the surviving sailors were getting older and older, then retiring to be replaced by others. Maybe by sheep, although life

expectancy of sheep is quite low for such a long battle, maneuverability and all.

Also quite often, according to students, Henry VIII was desperately wanting a male *hair*. Just imagine him in front of the mirror: "Oh, no! Still not male!"

I think Bulgarian idioms or slang expressions with no direct or obvious equivalent in English deserve some special attention here:

I, for one, usually say that in the late 1500s the western political theorists of Absolutism, developing the Doctrine of the divine rights of kings, actually *rediscovered the warm water* because initially this doctrine was developed by Constantine the Great in the 4th century.

My favorite *biser* of this type was from the mid-1990s when a Bulgarian teacher told a student (in English): "*Don't explain yourself much-much!*" Few weeks ago, I double-checked this with an alumnus from the class of 1998 and he said: "Oh, no. She actually said: "*Don't explain yourself many-many!*"

Again in the late 1990s: after finishing the in-class essay, a student wrote after the text: "God! Give me a 3!" (in Bulgarian). My written answer below was: "I don't know about Him but I won't."

And I saved my favorite story for last: In February 2010, in History (profile) class I was explaining something from the Early Bulgarian Revival until I noticed that the only interested person was... me. Very discouraging for any teacher, believe me! So, frustrated, I said: "Hey, was there anything that was interesting for you during these last five years, even for five minutes? It doesn't have to be History, any subject." Then (probably) the laziest ACS student I've ever taught said offended: "But, *gospodine*, in 12th grade we've been studying like animals!" "Oh, really," I said, "And how exactly did you study before that; like plants maybe?" Then another student said: "Like amebae, *gospodine!*" at which the first student jumped from his chair and cried: "Like a moss! I am like a moss above all, *gospodine!*" I remained speechless but the appropriate response came to me a little bit later and, of course, I delivered it to him the following day: "Listen, X, we need to talk: you know, man to... moss." („като мъж с мъх“)

Thank you for your patience!



Thank **you**, Mr. Dimitrov. It has been a honor and a privilege, indeed. And so much fun!

Materials collected by Petia Ivanova '97



At the Alumni Reunions in 2011

Maria Grozdanova '18: Happiness Is Perfect in Its Own Way

Interview by Petia Ivanova '97

In the period between 2014 and 2016, I enjoyed seeing Maria perform in three different Bulgarian Drama shows. When I learned (I have my sources) that off-stage she is the intelligent, sort of quiet young woman, who gives a great deal of consideration to everything she says, I thought we should put her in the spotlight once more before she graduates. And so we met one day in late November right after classes. While Maria likely had plenty of university applications and school assignments to work on, it didn't show. She was calm and cool, in no hurry, and full of laughter.

Maria, what is the life of an ACS senior like? What are you up to these days?

It's much easier than I expected. Most of the teachers are pretty understanding of our situation. Universities and colleges are confusing though. I know what to expect from teachers, the Dean, and administration here after five years, but I have no idea how people all around the world are dealing with students like me and everything else, and this is stressful, as I am applying to universities right now. Actually, I already applied to five universities in the UK, I'm working on my US applications at the moment. January through May of next year it will be the Netherlands' turn.

It's also kind of sad because you realize how fast the time passed, those five years. You remember how at first you didn't know anyone or have any friends, how hard it was to talk to all these new people in your grade level, but now you know everyone.

What is your current state of mind?

I am sort of stressed right now because I'm waiting for an email from a university in order to know whether I got an interview or not, so I'm constantly thinking about this. It can happen any minute. I'm checking my spam box, regular inbox, every day, twice a day, perhaps more.

How did you and your family choose ACS?



It's a funny story actually. Before actually enrolling here, I had never thought about studying at the American College, so I never prepared for the exam or anything. It was one of my closest childhood friends that was very into the American College. He had been

preparing for two years and was very, very excited before (and after) the admissions exam, so I decided to try it out, as well. It could be great to study together, after all, plus I liked the challenge this exam would present for me. The funny thing is I got accepted, after initially being

on the waiting list with him, and he didn't. I was very confused because I was sure I would stay at my previous school, the Italian Lyceum, and I had just three days to make up my mind. My mom thought staying in my previous school was the way to go, it was going to be less stressful and I was going to do less homework and tests and such. *(laughing)* But I said to myself *I need something new; after studying with the same people for 8 years, it was time for a change.*

This year marks your fourth as part of the Bulgarian Drama cast here at ACS. When did you first appear on stage?

We had many opportunities to perform at my previous school as we celebrated the school's birthday every year at the National Palace of Culture, so I was kind of used to performing, though we mostly danced and sang traditional Bulgarian songs. In 5th grade, I was part of a theater group in *Salza I Smyah Theater*. We were doing short stories, acting things out among ourselves but no performance in front of an audience or anything. At the beginning of 8th grade, I thought *Not a single chance for me, a fresh new student here, to go and perform in front of everyone.* None of my friends were going to join the group, so I thought *Next year, maybe.* But once I saw the BG Drama performance, I was so amazed by the work of the students, I clearly remember Matthew Loukanoff in the main part, I knew I was definitely going to join the year after that. In 9th grade, we were working with Hristo Cheshmedzhiev, who was great to work with, so understanding, he was our friend, we used to share everything with him. It was so much fun, a very big group where I had the opportunity to work with people from all grade levels in addition to the 10 or so people from my own grade, friends my age and older. How could I not stay for the next three years as well!



Rehearsing *Black Comedy* with director Hristo Cheshmedzhiev, 2016

Is there a role you dream of playing?

Not really. I'm not quite sure. I used to be sure I was going to be an actress. That was my dream. But then I started realizing that there are too many people studying and wanting to be actors and actresses, so I should get a safe choice as my No. 1 choice. And since I really enjoy Biology I had Medicine on my mind for some time before I dropped it for my current choice, Psychology.

So what do you want to be when you grow up?

I would gladly be known for my acting. That would be really fun. To experience new characters every day and find the similarities between them and yourself, to play and act like them. Next on the list is my safe choice: Clinical Psychologist.

What inspires you?

The feelings of self-satisfaction and happiness motivate me the most.

What is your most marked characteristic?

I'm a pretty big optimist. I'm not going to look at the negative sides too much, I'm going to pray for the best and really expect the best to happen, and when it doesn't, it's kind of sad but you're still looking at the bright side.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in your life so far?

It must be that time when I was in 10th grade and had that big, big presentation in Ethics class. It was quite a big challenge because within 24 hours – I'm a big procrastinator, you see – I had to prepare a presentation about four Chinese dynasties with their psychological effects on the society. It was very hard and I hated myself for choosing that topic but I knew that I had to

do it. At the end of the day, when I had to present I was tired – I hadn't had any sleep that night – but I was pretty proud of myself when my teacher shared her amazement at the fortitude of the presentation.

Who helped you the most to get where you are?

Definitely my mom. She was there when I was shaking, sure I was not going to be able to deal with everything. Right now, she's right beside me saying as often as needed that it doesn't matter where I end up going to study, the fact that I'm happy with my choice is the most important thing, not the name of the university or anything of the sort.

What is your favorite journey?

Maybe this summer's journey when I went to China because I was born there. It was very interesting to get to know the place where you lived the first six months of your life, for my sister – the first six years of her life. She spoke Chinese fluently as a kid but forgot most of it, so right now it's just 'nǐ hǎo' and 'zàijiàn' which is 'hi' and 'good bye,' that's all.

It was a pretty big cultural shock for us kids. My parents were going back to somewhere they lived for 14 years so it was very familiar for them – their vision of how people would act and how things are, the cultural norms, the ethics and everything – but for us it was just so different from our perspective, not a familiar, if forgotten, past thing, just a cultural shock. I was amazed to see how people from the same time period can be so different!

Also, I expected it to be a lot busier, in Beijing for example, but it's a very big city, the buildings are not as high as I had expected – I was thinking of Shanghai, I guess, or even Hong Kong. We did visit all of those cities. In Beijing it's very calm in a way, with plenty of people but not overcrowded as I expected, it wasn't that polluted either. We were staying in

a hotel near the main street which is the longest street in the world, I think, and all the time there were cars and bikes and motor-bicycles, but interestingly, the government funds motorbikes to switch from fuel to electricity, so the noise levels have dropped significantly. Strangely, if you accidentally bump into a person, s/he is not going to turn around or even notice. There are so many people on the subway for example, that it's normal for them to stay close to each other, kind of pushing and shoving everyone else. That was a very big shock.

And finally, as my siblings and I are all blond, bright-eyed, and pale-skinned, everyone turned around to stare at us. At the zoo, everyone took pictures with us, not the animals, and same thing happened at the Winter Palace, most of the people, old and young, taking our pictures.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

That's a hard one. If you had asked me some years ago I would've immediately replied that I want to be taller. I'm shorter than anyone else that I know. Okay, maybe I know two or three people shorter than me but most people look at me like this (*looking down, laughing*), but this has its positive sides, definitely. What I would change about myself today would be to stop procrastinating and stressing that much about regular things, you know, to be able to just leave it and be happy with things as they are.

Seems to me, if you get rid of one of these, both will stop being an issue.

You're right. If I lose procrastinating the stress levels will drop down immediately.

If you could change one thing about your school, what would it be? About school in general?

Something I would change that is typical to most other Bulgarian schools, that we luckily do differently here, is students from different grade levels not having the opportunity to communicate with each other very much. Here we have the block system, it could, of course, be improved further, but it lets you contact and speak with people in higher grade levels, which is fun, the whole school being one community, as opposed to several, strictly divided by grade level. Team building is very important.

At ACS, I would change the food to include more options for vegetarians. As it is, there's only tomatoes and cheese basically.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Finding friends in such a new environment for me was quite a big achievement. I was so stressed that I wasn't going to find a single friend, even if I did know a couple of students – from my neighborhood or my old school – but it wasn't the same, coming here to hundreds of new people. It happened really quickly though. I'm so grateful that my grade level had so many wonderful human beings in it. Even before the first day of school, it was still summer vacation, 50 or so of us gathered to meet in advance – we had a Facebook group already – and introduced ourselves to one another. Of course, I didn't remember half of the people because I was mostly looking at my shoes at first but then we went out, walked around Sofia, went to a park, and learned a lot about one another, and from that point we already liked each other.

What do you most value in your friends?

Honesty and that they're always there, always supportive, like even if I have a crazy idea they would walk with me.

What is it that you most dislike?

I dislike it when people play big, when they pretend to be busier, more important than they actually are. So busy you can't go out or talk to them, you know.

How do you like to spend your time?

Hanging out. And traveling, because you have the opportunity to see other cultures, other people, and the history of different places – and that's pretty big. I look forward to starting to travel with friends so I get to go to different parts of the cities I visit.

What are your favorite books?

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes. It's about a person with a mental retardation they do an experimental surgery on. As he gathers intelligence, he starts to observe different things in the society and his own life that he didn't have to observe and understand before. I love Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, too. And even if it's a cliché *The Great Gatsby*. We had an amazing teacher, Mr. Conley, who shared different insights of the book that weren't common or obvious to everyone. Now he is a famous author.

Who is your hero?

It may be cheesy but I really admire my family, each and every one of them. My brother is a mathematics genius. He's at the College, too, in 9th grade. I look up to my sister, she's 24, for example, for her way of making decisions. She just goes, *This is a good opportunity, I'm just going to take it*, no overthinking. Of all the people I know, my father procrastinates the least, doing everything on time, no stressing. And my mom has all of our good characteristics combined. It's interesting, my life with all of them, me being perhaps the crazy, creative one.

What is your greatest fear?

To be left out and not to be able to



Black Comedy on stage, 2016 - Photo by Liliya Stefanova '18

find a way out of a situation where I feel stuck, sad or powerless.

When and where were you happiest?

I don't know, I've felt like I was the happiest person plenty of times. Maybe when my friends surprised me one year when I was sick and that day there was no school, so they came to my house with cake, all singing. I was like *Oh, my God!* and became so emotional, maybe also because I was sick.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

I don't think that there's such a thing as 'perfect happiness.' Maybe happiness is perfect in its own way.

Is there anything that you regret?

There are some life choices that I regret but now I have stories to tell, so, you know... (*laughing*)

Your worst and best day at ACS?

My worst day was one of those days when I didn't have any sleep at night. I was walking just like a zombie not understanding or remembering anything, I was clumsy and even bumped my head several times – not a very nice day!

The best day? Many of the days when I don't have major assignments or tests are pretty fun. Up to this point, I've always had an amazing section, there is always someone who is going to say something stupid or funny which we are all going to laugh at.

What is ACS to you?

ACS is the place I spent most of my life – sometimes to my regret and when I feel optimistic – not that bad. You know, most of the days I'm here from 8 am to 6.30 pm. I'm a person that wants to put as many things as possible in my schedule, so in 9th grade I was in nine clubs I think – kind of impossible to deal with but I had to try it. I was in the Business Club, Friends of UNICEF, We Care Club, BG Drama, which takes a lot of time, you know, we meet twice a week usually. This year, I'm in BG Drama, Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and UNICEF again.

What would you like to take with you from your ACS experience? What would you gladly leave behind?

I would gladly leave behind the stress, the last minute stress, when something is due 11:59 and I turn it in 11:58. I realize it's likely I actually take that with me, but yes,

I wish I wouldn't. I definitely want to keep my friends. Then things my teachers told me that are useful for my everyday life not only in class. For example, our Physics teacher, Mr. Youngs, who includes a life lesson in his classes every now and then, just to make sure we are going to lead a happy life. Recently, he said that sometimes it's easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission.

What is the most important skill you learned at the College?

I think I learned to read people and their expectations of me. Each teacher has specific things they are looking for, so I think it's a useful skill to take just a class or two to know what a certain teacher wants, and then incorporate it in your work. It's like getting to know people and adapting to them faster.

Where would you most like to live?

At this point I want to travel all

around, spend time in Italy, Spain for a little while and then I want to come back to Sofia and Bulgaria, see how things are, help in some way, if help, improvement, and development are needed. But who knows where I'll end up. I'm very open.

Do you know where you're going next?

Like I said, I'm applying to UK, US, and the Netherlands, so it's going to be one of these three.

What's your message to ACS alumni?

Thank you for raising your voice when needed and improving things for us. Thank you for paving the way, for showing us that it is possible to graduate ACS and become successful. If others did it before us, we will also manage to do it, even if there have been times we were doubtful about it.



Despair Not! on stage, 2017

Now You Can Become an ACS Partner

Dear Alumni,

With each passing year our community grows stronger. You are now leaders in various sectors: business, entrepreneurship, governance, culture. You have started to chart your own paths in life and contribute in so many ways to the development of society. You have always been an integral part of ACS' success and we invite you to join forces with us. You can:

- **Offer internship opportunities to ACS students.** Sometimes talent is a natural gift, but more often it takes years to cultivate and master. Regardless of the case, it always needs an initial spark. Mentor ACS students and help them enter a professional environment for the first time. You will add to the memorable experiences in their academic life.
- **Lecture a class at ACS.** Share your academic and professional experience with our smart and talented students. The feedback of positive energy and ideas will inspire you further.
- **Organize an event on our campus.** Levitation, filmings of international blockbusters, career forums, sports fests, international conferences – our campus has seen it all. Share your creative ideas or the goals in your Corporate Social Responsibility program. This may just be the beginning of a beautiful partnership.

This fall, ACS created a special position for a person who will be responsible for attracting corporate partnerships and major gifts to the school. My name is Georgi Metodiev and I am honoured to have assumed this role and excited to be part of the ACS community. If you have any ideas or questions on how to get involved and become an ACS partner, please contact me at g.metodiev@acsbg.org

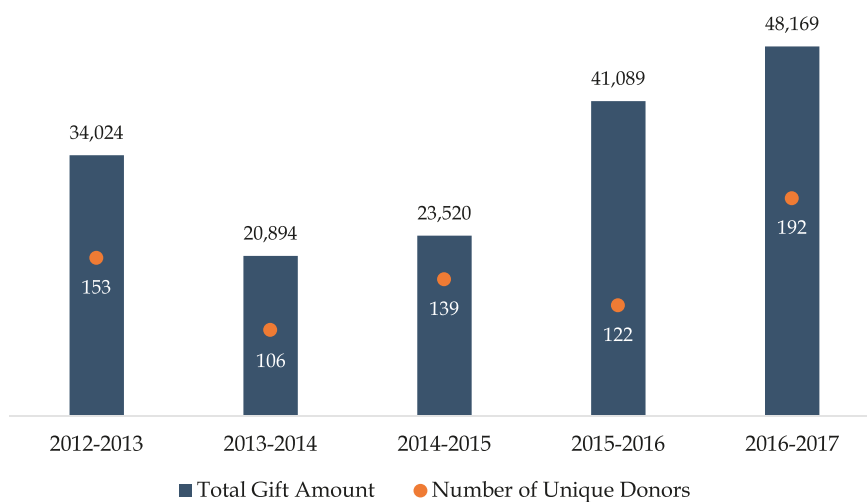


ACS Alumni Fund Report

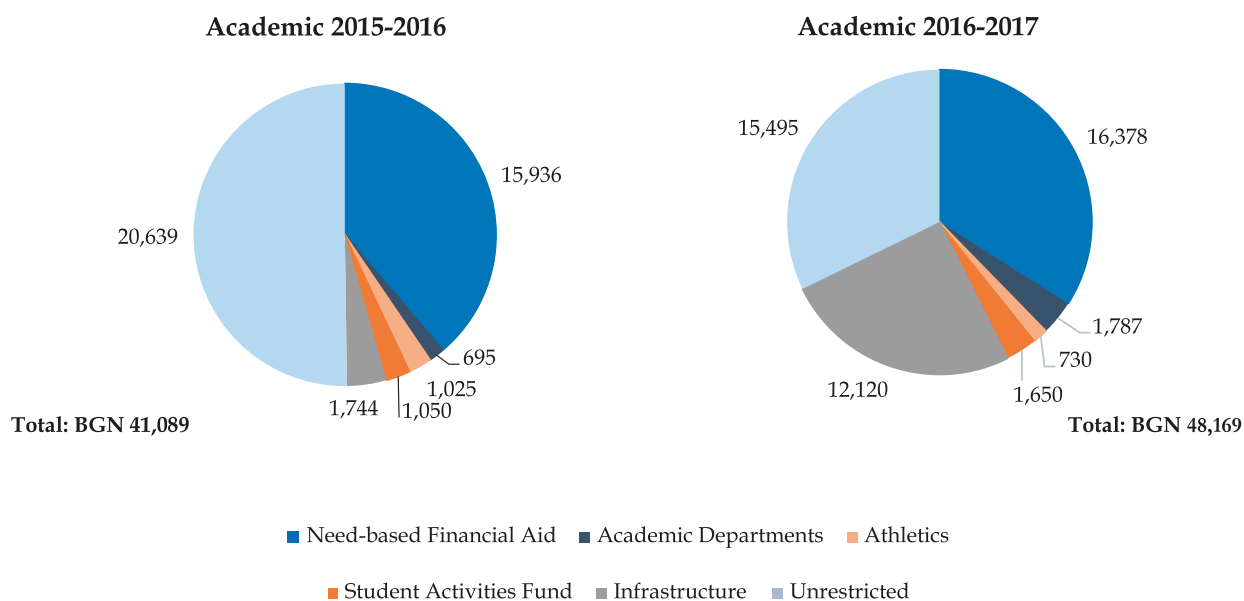
September 2016 – August 2017

Quick Overview

Gifts Breakdown by Year (Bulgarian Leva)



Gifts Breakdown by Category (Bulgarian Leva)



Message from the Alumni Fund Advisory Committee

Dear Fellow Alumni,

I am beyond excited to be writing to you this year! Together, we have made history. 2016/2017 was the most successful year of the Alumni Fund to date. For that, and for all you do for ACS, **thank you!**

A record **192** of you made a gift, beating by a large margin the original target of 157 alumni donors. It is not just that we surpassed the Alumni Fund target for the first time. It is the extent to which you displayed enthusiasm, loyalty, and readiness to give back that made this year so special compared to years past.

In the month of August, so many of you shared the link to the ACS giving page on Facebook! So many of you liked and commented on the “thermometer” infographic in the Alumni group, tracking the number of donors left to reach the goal. So many of you tagged friends, reached out to classmates, and asked how you can help, even though you did not have to!

Your gift, regardless of its size, makes a real impact on ACS students. Collectively, you gave a record **BGN 48,000**, with the largest portion going to financial aid. Our contribution of over **BGN 16,000** for scholarships is unambiguously meaningful. You can think of it as 16 families for whom an extra BGN 1,000 in scholarship funding made the difference between choosing ACS or not. Or you can think of it as one full scholarship (BGN 12,000) plus one third scholarship (BGN 4,000). Either way, our contribution made an ACS education possible for several students, whose financial situation might have been similar to yours when you attended the College.

What is more, your gifts matter not only in their absolute value. They also make it more likely for third party donors to support ACS through large grants. Alumni giving rates are a factor which philanthropic organizations may consider when making a decision to support a school. So please keep this in mind, knowing that even small gifts matter greatly.

In the record year of 2016/2017, the 192 of us who supported ACS represented **8.8 percent** of the alumni body. Is this rate encouraging from a philanthropic organization perspective? Where should alumni participation ideally stand? As a comparison, close to half of all alumni give back at some of the leading U.S. private schools, such as Phillips Exeter and Andover. Even if ACS cannot jump such a level in a year, we, as alumni, can play our part in building a strong base of support for ACS. The more of us who give back, the better! And perhaps, in five years' time, twice or thrice as many of us will be giving back!

So, **how can you help today?** The best thing to do is to set up a recurring gift. This way, you will set a payment once and secure your regular contribution, without fear of forgetting. You will become part of the base of permanent donors to ACS. The wider this base, the easier it would be to build on top of it.

With all of this in mind, we have set a new ambitious goal: **225 alumni donors in 2017/2018!** The target builds on the impressive 192 donors from last year, pays a tribute to the **25th anniversary** of the reopening of ACS in 1992, and implies a 9.7 percent participation rate. When you make a gift, please share it on Facebook with **#ACS225**.

My fellow AFAC members and I love engaging with you, the alumni, so if you have questions or ideas for how to get involved, please contact us at giving@acsbg.org

With gratitude and warm regards,

Georgi Klissurski '10, AFAC Chair

On behalf of all AFAC members:

Hristo Popov '01, Niki Kouzmanov '02, Kalina Kourdova '11, Alex Kanov '12, Yana Staneva '12, Zara Rancheva '14, and Nicole Levakova '16

CLASS NOTES

Lou Perske, ACS President (1997-2007) and Deana Perske:

Alumni from the early 2000's may remember Coll Perske (Class of 2003), ACS international student, who did his very best to integrate with the Bulgarian students and understand the school ethos. He worked on the language and had great respect for his fellow students and Bulgarian culture. He was involved in community activities inside (basketball, Science Fair) and outside the school. We hope that he is remembered as a kind, generous, open-minded, and thoughtful person.

Some of you may know that we lost Coll to a terribly tragic accident in 2014 at age 29. After 4 years of training while in college, Coll secured his dream position as a Marine Mammal (dolphins and sea lions) Trainer for the U.S. Navy in San Diego. A night session in training sea lions to locate and secure an enemy swimmer/diver was underway. The team had successfully completed the exercise several times that evening. As crew chief, expert swimmer and diver, Coll volunteered to be the target 'enemy' in the water for the last session. Coll drowned in relatively shallow water that evening. The sea lion was not involved. In fact it was the sea lion that eventually found him, but sadly too late. Coll was rushed to the Navy hospital, but all of the many attempts to revive him proved futile. Three separate investigations took place but none of them could find a clear answer to how the accident occurred. Coll's employer was cited for two safety violations by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Coll was greatly respected by colleagues for his expertise, work ethic, and sense of humor. When things got tough he was the guy who found a way to lighten them up. In fact, Coll was regarded so highly that they created a memorial fund to honour his excellent work and good name. The Coll G. Perske Memorial Fund (CGPfund) for Marine Mammals does great work in education, scientific research, and ocean stewardship. More information about the fund, its activities, and photos of Coll can be found at CGPfund.org. A small but ambitious project, CGPfund.org operates as a non-profit under the auspices of the National Marine Mammal Foundation (nmmf.org). All donations, no matter how large or small, are useful and much appreciated. Please, join us in keeping Coll's legacy alive.



ACS Boston area alumni and trustees got together on October 13, 2017 at Harvard University for an informal gathering hosted by Board member Theodora Konetsovsk, Class of 1997.

THE COLL G. PERSKE MEMORIAL FUND

On April 28, 2014, we lost an amazing friend and colleague, Coll Gordon Perske. To honor Coll's life and unwavering dedication to marine mammals, the National Marine Mammal Foundation has established the Coll G. Perske Memorial Fund for Marine Mammals.

Mission: To improve the lives of marine mammals, with a focus on California sea lions, through scientific research, education, and promotion of ocean stewardship.

In 2013 and 2014 the NMMF and the NMMP responded with urgency to the tragic sea lion stranding events. The Coll Perske Memorial Fund for Marine Mammals subsequently presented the first ever Coll G. Perske Volunteer Award to NMMF employee Pixie Rixon for volunteering the most hours worked during the crisis.

In 2016, the Coll G. Perske Memorial Fund committee was proud to present the first ever Coll G. Perske

Student Research Award to Natalie Bickett. Natalie will be producing a survey on sea lion diving physiology and training, for which Coll helped collect data while working as a U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program sealion trainer. Through the Award, Natalie will be afforded the opportunity to work under the mentorship of Dr. Sam Ridgway and be provided access to the animal care and training staff at the U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program.



To learn more about Coll and to help us to sustain his legacy, please visit the Coll G. Perske Memorial Fund website: <http://www.cgpfund.org>

Contact Perske Pinniped Health Project Director Dr. Forrest Gomez directly at: forrest.gomez@nmmf.org

Ani Kodzhabasheva, Class of 2008:

Ani continues her graduate work at Columbia in New York City, where she also regularly teaches discussion-based classes in the History of Art & Architecture. Ani will likely spend a year in Bulgaria, beginning in the summer of 2018, completing research for her studies. Do you have questions about academia or completing a Ph.D. in the humanities in the United States? Or stellar advice about navigating Bulgarian state and municipal archives? You can get in touch with Ani at k.ani@columbia.edu.





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