

Issue 12, December 2014



ACS ALUMNI Magazine

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Contents



2 From the President

3 Editor's Note

4 ACS Alumni Fund Report

6 In Memoriam: Stoyan Karadgov



17 Patty Anderson: Reminiscing about ACS

19 Current Faculty: The BEST Foundation

24 Zhanina Boyadzhieva '04:
Beyond the ACS Campus

26 Student in the Spotlight:
Konstantin Karchev '15

31 Class Notes



On the outer front cover - Christmas Concert,
December 2013 (Photograph by Tom Houston)

Inner front cover – Painting by Dimana Zaharieva '17

On the inner back cover - Balkan Dance Show
“Na pazar,” 2009

Outer back cover - Waterdrops
(Photograph by Konstantin Karchev '15)

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings:

As President, I know that the reputation of ACS depends upon the quality of our employees, especially teachers, and the quality of the students we admit. Admitting students who can succeed at ACS and benefit from the type of education offered at ACS is our highest priority. To serve these students, we select and develop teachers who are intelligent, well-prepared, and highly motivated.

Sometimes I hear comments that the quality of students and teachers at ACS is not as good as in past years, especially the early years. In my opinion, generalizing that students and teachers from past years were superior to students and teachers now is neither very useful nor accurate. During the five years I have been at ACS, I have worked with amazing students and teachers just as I have met and worked with amazing alumni, some of whom are now on the Board of Trustees.

In October, a group of prominent international educators visited the campus to conduct an inspection of ACS as part of our application for re-accreditation. Accreditation by a reputable international accrediting agency is an assurance of quality to students, parents, and universities and vital to our continued success. As part of their inspection process the visiting team met with students, teachers, parents, and

alumni. I am proud to report that their assessment of ACS was resoundingly positive and that they are unanimously recommending ACS for re-accreditation. Dr. Hank Cram, chair of the inspection team, said the following in his exit comments to ACS staff, "While your school's reputation could easily lull you into complacency you have taken on the challenge of pushing both yourselves and your students to even higher levels of performance by increasing the consistency with which you hope to deliver a quality educational opportunity for all of your students. Your three goals are bold and reflect a deep commitment to continually improving upon your excellent performance. In a sense a commitment to "outperform your previous best."

Rest assured that there is no diminishing of quality at ACS. Are students and teachers different? Yes! Nothing in life stays the same nor should it. As is normal and fitting, ACS keeps striving to select quality students and teachers and to keep improving the programming, facilities, and opportunities for students. The fact that an objective inspection team concluded that we are an exceptional school should reassure alumni that ACS is a vibrant place that continues to have an excellent reputation in Bulgaria and with colleges and universities abroad.

In this issue, enjoy meeting one of the current students at ACS and some of our current employees who are extending their interests beyond ACS and providing opportunities for all students in Bulgaria.

See you at the Christmas Concert!

Sincerely,

Dr. Paul K. Johnson

President, American College of Sofia

ACS Alumni Magazine

Issue 12, December 2014

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ACS Alumni Magazine is issued twice per year (June and December) for the alumni of the American College of Sofia. We welcome all readers' feedback, submissions, and suggestions.

Letters may be edited for publication.



Rumyana Mihaylova '05

He did not seem to hear me. But a few moments later he put his hand over mine, and his eyes entreated me to draw closer to him. He then uttered these words almost in my ear. And I am quite sure that I have recorded them accurately, for his voice, though halting, was strangely distinct.

'Does it matter? Grace is everywhere...'

The Diary of a Country Priest
Georges Bernanos

Dear Alumni,

The year draws to a close and frost starts covering our windows, as if to give us a chance to look inside - inside our homes, inside our lives, and inside our souls. We fill those sacred internal spaces with decorations, gifts, and celebrations. We cross oceans and fly over mountains to be closer to our beloved ones, and quite often, before we know it, we have greeted the new year with fireworks and have returned to our old lives without fanfares.

One of my favorite movie editing techniques is the freeze frame. Choose any moment you want in a video, and use the freeze frame to make it last forever. If "forever" seems like too long of a period, make it last 10 seconds. In the greater scheme of things there is no huge difference between a moment and eternity or between an elephant and art, as you are soon to learn from Konstantin Karchev's '15 interview.

And yet, our lives are rarely governed by the principles of "the greater scheme of things." We face each minute fully aware of its transience, and it seems to me that we love each other more avidly and effortlessly when the Christmas lights go on, and the same old Christmas carols go on air. The freeze frame clashes with time, and all images start flowing again: dancing, running, flying, rocketing into space.

"Hey, wait a second... What kind of space?"

Any kind of space, really: the interval we leave between words; the air between me and you; the pauses our brains automatically insert when we are listening to a language we have mastered; the home of all galaxies; a concept with physical dimensions; a blank we need to fill in; or just... the only truly good match for time.

We filled the December issue of *ACS Alumni Magazine* with plenty of space and time. We added two entirely new rubrics - "Current Faculty" and "Student in the Spotlight" - in the hope that this will allow you to feel connected to the present of ACS the way you feel connected to its legacy. You can explore physical space with Zhanina Boyadzhieva's interview, or learn about the space Stoyan Karadjov took in people's hearts. You can go back in time with Patty Anderson's recollections of teaching at ACS, or see the future in the peaceful image of Petia Ivanova '97 with little Stellan in her arms. Read this issue for space, or read it for time. "Grace is everywhere..."

Merry Christmas!

Kind Regards,

Roumy Mihaylova '05

Chief Editor

ACS Alumni Fund Report



Dear fellow alumni,

You raised over 56,000 leva thanks to 300 gifts in the past two years. You volunteered at ACS recruiting events for potential students. You helped current students choose, apply and get accepted into top schools abroad. You participated in various ACS planning committees for setting the school's strategy. You shared your vision of your alma mater's future. You organized networking and get-together events for alumni.

All of us at AFAC are committed to helping you continue giving in the many ways you already do. We have been working closely with the school administration and the Board of Trustees, sharing your feedback with them. Demonstrating a strong commitment to listen to your ideas and concerns, the ACS Board now boasts four alumni as Trustees. New alumni also joined AFAC this year, driven by a desire to get involved and give back. We have an even more ambitious year ahead of us!

We are working closely with the Board and the administration to improve donation reporting and transparency. We are re-launching the Class Reps initiative aimed at bringing you closer together and closer with the school. We are introducing new and easier ways to donate.

You continue to inspire us! We remain committed to serving you better each and every year.

To find out more about our activities, please visit the ACS website, and if you have questions or suggestions for us, please reach out at alumnigiving@acs.bg.

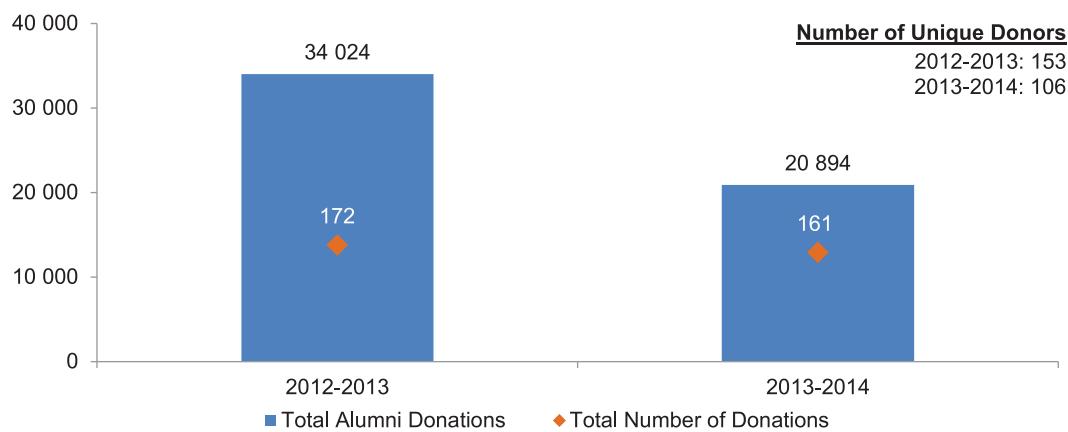
Boris Statev '03, AFAC chair for 2014/2015

On behalf of all members of the Alumni Fund Advisory Committee

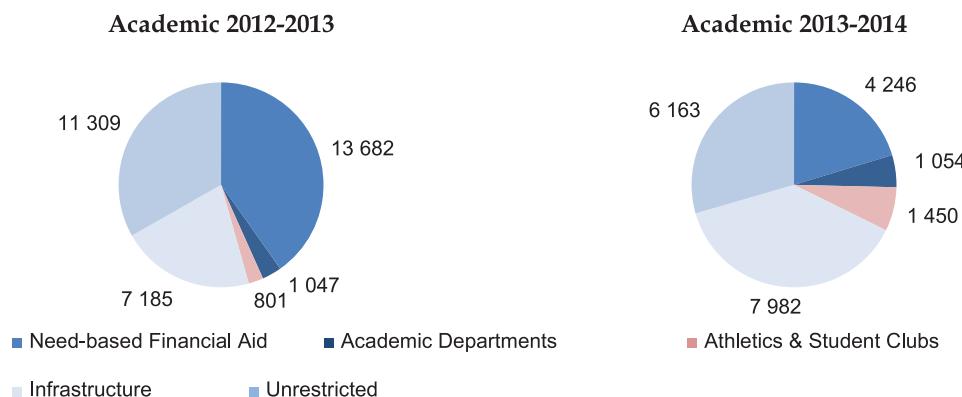
Quick Overview

September 2013 – August 2014

Donations Breakdown by Year (Bulgarian leva)



Donations Breakdown by Category (Bulgarian leva)



This year AFAC is undertaking an initiative to improve the quality of the accountability reports we are submitting to you. Please take 5 min to complete our survey. Now is your chance to have a say in what information you get! <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/88DG36J>

Dear fellow alumni,

The Alumni Fund Advisory Committee (“AFAC”) completed its second full year of assisting ACS alumni in giving back to our alma mater. In 2013/2014, you raised circa 21,000 leva by making 160 gifts. This adds up to an alumni participation rate of 5.5% in the past year, compared to the 9.0% participation rate achieved in AFAC’s debut year. We know you are not tired of giving back and we know this year you will beat first year’s results and pass the 10% target participation rate! In the meantime, you gave back in more ways than one: you participated in the ACS Open Days for the recruitment of new students, worked with the Parent and Teacher Association to fund student projects, aided current students with college and university choices, participated in various ACS strategy committees and many more... AFAC continued working to help you give back: you are now able to subscribe to make recurring donations, allowing you to continue giving despite your busy schedules. We did an alumni wide survey and shared your feedback with the Board of Trustees and the administration. Throughout the year you continued engaging us with more feedback. We discussed the feedback with both decision-making bodies, who have taken keen interest in it. The Board, now boasting four ACS alumni, together with the school administration, are fully supportive of our initiatives.

We would especially like to acknowledge the alumni Class Representatives, who have helped us spread the message and engage with you. We are planning on re-launching this wonderful alumni initiative, so look out for the new and revamped Class Reps organization!

This year marks the departure of three members, Maria Hristova '98, Maria Popkovacheva '03 and Trayan Trayanov '01. Furthermore, Nedko Kyuchukov '03 will now solely be focusing on his responsibilities as ACS Trustee. We thank each of them for their tremendous help and efforts in setting up AFAC. We welcome Hristo Popov '01, Ivan Peykov '09 and Mariela Vacheva '04 on board. Lastly, Boris Statev '03 was elected as AFAC Chair for 2014/2015.

We have an ambitious year ahead of us. We plan on working closely with the Board of Trustees and the school administration to improve reporting and transparency and deliver it to you in a format suitable to your busy schedules. We are hoping to introduce new and improved reports to you soon. We will re-launch the Class Reps initiative to empower and better inform Class Reps and alumni. We are working to introduce more ways for you to give in an easier manner. Lastly, we will continue soliciting your feedback and channeling it to the relevant ACS stakeholders.

We want to re-iterate that ACS needs your help! The school has embarked on a number of new initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education and student life. Furthermore, alumni donations are a key funding element for most US educational institutions - high schools, undergraduate and graduate alike. In addition, they are an essential metric for institutional donors (state and NGO) who use alumni participation rates to determine the eligibility and the levels of funding they provide to schools such as ACS.

We look forward to working with you and to finally passing the 10% target participation rate!

To find out more about our activities, please visit the ACS website, and if you have questions or suggestions for us, please reach out at alumnigiving@acs.bg.

The Alumni Fund Advisory Committee

In Memoriam: Stoyan Karadjov

(1965-2014)

Materials Collection by Natalia Manolova and Rumyana Mihaylova '05



Arts Fest, 2012

I have many memories with Stoyan, all of them quite unforgettable, but the ones I want to share are the very first ones. Alex, Atanas, Lyudmil, and I were looking to sign up for an elective and while standing in front of the big board with all the different descriptions, we saw “Balkan Dance” with Mr. Karadjov. We did not know our current grade level PE teacher that well, as it was the beginning of the school year, and none of us had any previous background with *boro*, but after much laughter and with no serious intentions, we decided to risk it.

The first time we entered the room in the basement of The Science building, we saw a hall filled exclusively with girls, who looked at us strangely. Mr. Karadjov, on the other hand, gave us his signature warm smile and welcomed us. In the

beginning, the four of us spent most of our time laughing and ripping on each other for total lack of rhythm, but instead of confronting us or sending us to the Dean (quite deservedly at times), Mr. Karadjov quietly and firmly worked with us, bearing that same smile on his face. By December the Christmas Concert had arrived and in spite of our tragic dancing skills, Stoyan gave us the chance to perform on stage as a “human-swing support.” To this day I will remember his encouraging look as he was coordinating our entrance onstage, and by the time we were dancing *Dunavkso* in the snow after the show, I was sure that this was just the beginning of a great experience called the Balkan Dance Club.

Anton Konstantinov, Class of 2007



Some 15 years ago, when I was still a young and inexperienced librarian at ACS, I won a three-month scholarship to the Library of Congress. It was a program for librarians from Eastern European and ex-USSR countries. I knew I would meet a lot of people who hadn't heard about Bulgaria or Bulgarian culture. Because of this, I thought about bringing aspects of Bulgarian culture with me, and Bulgarian folk and orthodox music was one of my top choices. The problem was, I knew only three hora dances. If somebody asked me to show some more steps, I wouldn't know what to do. So, while arranging for all the necessary documents, I started looking for somebody who could teach me more steps. That is how I learned there are Bulgarian folk dancing classes here at the college.

That's also how I met Stoyan. He was the resident fierce fan and master of Bulgarian folk dancing and music. There were electives and clubs for students and teachers. So, when I entered the dancing room in Science (there was no dancing room in Abbott at the time) for the first time, I was surprised that there was a way for me to officially become a student of folk dancing. Stoyan's first words were „Корато можеш,



Balkan Dance Show "Na pazar," 2009

тогава идвай. И с учителите, и с учениците!“ (Do come when you can. You can join the student group or the teacher group or both.) Those were his words to me, and I eventually heard him repeat them to newcomers again and again. At some point, I realized that almost every day, if not literally every day, he spent all his free time here at the college either teaching folk dances, coaching basketball, or preparing participants for concerts. Some years, there were so many candidates for dancing that the stage wasn't big enough for them to gather all at the same time. Stoyan never turned anybody away, and he found a place for everyone who wished to learn and participate. At some point, he decided to unite all the groups under the name of Ensemble "Bor." Ensemble "Bor" gave three special concerts during three consecutive years at its height (2008- Svatba, 2009 - Na Pazar, 2010 - Folk Dance Fest.)

Alexandra Alexandrova, Head of Library

fun and turned every potential disaster into a great story - from the elaborate rehearsal falls and clashes that he celebrated with regular "Golden Shoe" awards to a last-minute realisation that we had no stage backdrop, which was quickly rectified by putting some picnic blankets up and tree branches together.

Mina Kasherova, Class of 2007



The run-up to the very first "Bor" ensemble concert in 2007 is my favourite memory from ACS, with Mr. Karadjov to thank for that. He managed to constantly motivate and bring together over 40 students from all five grade levels, who prepared 11 dances from across the Balkans. With this event Mr. Karadjov gave us the opportunity to raise money for folklore costumes and leave something behind to remind us of the love for traditional dancing he had instilled in us. What's more, he managed to make it feel incredibly easy and



Arts Fest, 2012



Reunion of the Class of 2005, June 2010

club, he confessed to me that he had attended my old club only to “steal” some new ideas in order to enrich the repertoire of his own group. I was impressed by his dance group: unique people, with open, honest, and friendly relations; a group in which everyone has his place and everyone is important. A group in which, through dancing, people celebrate the moments of joy together and overcome the moments of grief together. Thanks to Stoyan, I am happy to be a part of this group.

**Dany Todorova,
ACS Teachers, Parents &
Friends Balkan Dance Club
instructor**



I met Mr. Karadjov when I was on the 8th grade basketball team. He was coaching the ACS girls’ varsity team and allowed some of us from the 8th grade team to come practice with the upperclassmen. Even though it was difficult in the beginning, he encouraged us like a real coach would. He never yelled during practice or made us feel bad for losing so many games.

I will always remember one instance on the varsity team, when one of the upperclassmen girls and I got into a bad fight during practice. Mr. Karadjov stopped practice and got everyone to gather and calmly said that we would not continue practice until the two of us stopped acting like we were rivals and not teammates. It took about 10 minutes of teenage anger and sulking for us to realize that he wasn’t kidding and would actually rather lose one practice than have his team acting like spoiled children. We got back into practice and, thanks to Mr. Karadjov, we remain good friends until this

day. He not only coached us to play basketball, but most of all he taught us to be good people and to take important things into perspective even when we are competitive or angry! He will be forever missed!

Darina Spasova, Class of 2005



I was in eighth grade when I first met Mr. Karadjov. School had just started, and I was excited to play basketball for the ACS team. I went to the first practice, and he introduced himself to us. Truth is he was one of the best coaches I have ever had the privilege of working with. He was always calm and poised, supportive and understanding, never angry at anybody for making a mistake.

During one of our games, we were down a few points, and there was almost no time left. Then, somebody passed me the ball, and I scored. In the meantime, however, I had committed the dreaded



ACS Girls Basketball Team, School Year 2009-2010

offence of traveling. I could not believe it. I lost my nerve, and, infuriated, told the referee that he was wrong. The referee just shook his head. Then, I turned to Mr. Karadjov. I expected him to go to the referee table and to fight for these two points. Instead, he just smiled softly and said: "Well, there was traveling." I will never forget how gently he made the comment. He did not want for me to feel discouraged, but he also could not overlook the fact that I indeed had made a mistake.

I do not remember whether we won or lost the game. It was not until after it that I realized what an amazing person my coach was. Even though we were losing, and we needed the points, he did not pretend that I had not violated the rules. Mr. Karadjov never jeopardized his integrity; this is why I am so lucky to have had him as a coach.

Victoria Angelova, Class of 2014



Whether it was practicing for Christmas Balkan dancing, playing guitar and singing by the campfire at a late night campus party or playing basketball on Wednesday nights in the bubble, Stoyan Karadjov was always a treat to be around. Realistically, we could write a novel about how fun and optimistic Stoyan was in so many situations.

Stoyan truly went out of his way to be a friend and make us



Stoyan Karadjov and Derek Tellis, Reunion of Classes 2001 and 2006, June 2011

feel safe and as comfortable as we could. In our second year at ACS (2006) Stoyan helped us to purchase a 20-year old OPEL Rekord automobile. Stoyan did everything he could to help us get the car to run reliably. He even found a mechanic to work on the car, which frequently needed work. In his words he found "a trustworthy OPEL Rekord expert" to fix it when the problem became too much for the normal mechanic. Who knew that there was even such a thing? But without a doubt, if there was, Stoyan would be the man to find him.

A few years later, when the OPEL Rekord was on its last legs, Stoyan helped us purchase a Volkswagen Golf. Fearing that we would be faced with similar situations as our last purchase - Stoyan took it upon himself to

put the ownership of the car in his name, have us notarized to be the primary drivers on the car and had local Sofia-Bulgaria license plates put on the car. His logic was that we would get pulled over by the police less frequently if we did not have the XX blue foreigner plates on the car. And what do you know... he was right! Seeing as our car purchases were never really in the greatest conditions, it was very common to see Stoyan outside of our house working away at replacing a belt or checking the battery charge. Often times he would come and go without even telling us that he'd been there until long after.

Each action he took was truly giving in nature. We never really asked Stoyan to take care of us or accept the responsibility that he did. He just seemed like he always wanted to make our experience of living in Bulgaria a little more comfortable. To this end, our extremely fond memories of ACS and Bulgaria are often connected to Stoyan Karadjov.

**Lovingly remembered by
Derek and Jennifer Tellis
[2005-2011]**



Dance seminar in Kostenets, February 2011

Four years ago, in the cold month of February, we, the dance group of teachers, parents, and friends, decided to warm our hearts with a two-day dance seminar in the beautiful village of Kostenets, Rila Mountain. Stoyan Karadjov, our club advisor, initiated and organized this seminar. Many people (even from other dance clubs in Sofia and the towns around) joined the event with lots of enthusiasm because it gave us the opportunity to combine dancing with walks in the open, surrounded by the splendid nature of Rila.

There were many newcomers in the College dance group for parents and friends and this dance seminar was a good chance for us to learn more about each other. This was when I felt what an amazing person and teacher Stoyan was. He was so in love with Bulgarian folk dances!

He was dedicated to conveying his love and emotions to us - and he succeeded. Stoyan taught a new dance in the same way he would educate a kid – always

looking for the appropriate approach, always smiling and encouraging, and, of course, always using the right words to show our mistakes to us. A true Psychologist and a Teacher! This first dance seminar turned our dance club members into a team and inspired many new friendships. And all of this was thanks to our Stoyan.

I did not mean to use words of praise for Stoyan. But it is inevitable. It is not surprising that he has so many friends – he left a tiny bit of love in each and every one of us. This love that we will carry with us forever...

**Ivailo Cherkezov,
ACS Teachers, Parents &
Friends Balkan Dance Club
member**



I have many excellent memories of Stoyan - traveling to Romania with students for a basketball tournament; his smile helping me deal with sitting through faculty meetings; he and I, along

with Phil, Dancho and a few students, using a huge rope to try and get a dangerous amount of snow off of the Bubble - but the best times by far involved music.

The last day of work before Christmas vacation, some of us gathered in one of the offices in Abbott. Vlado and Stoyan brought guitars and we stayed many hours playing tunes in English, Bulgarian, Spanish and all in-between. Stoyan always had the same, wonderful, peaceful look on his face, no matter whether he was playing or listening - the look that said "nothing is better than being here right now."

Practicing for Faculty Follies, Stoyan, Vlado, Rob and I practiced in the dance room. Rob had this crazy idea to do an American-folkified version of "Ludo Mlado." At first, Stoyan couldn't wrap his mind around it - he kept thinking it should be in its original, brain-bending Bulgarian rhythm. Once he saw what was going on, he leapt into it and organized these amazing



Faculty Follies, 2013



Christmas Concert, 2005

vocal harmonies for the four of us to sing. It was really magical. But where he really kicked it into high gear was when we learned “Clandestino” by Manu Chao in Spanish. Without knowing the language, Stoyan learned all the lyrics in a matter of minutes and sang a flawless, haunting harmony over my lead vocal. When the performance rolled around, it was a truly beautiful moment to perform both of those songs by his side. I will never forget the fun of transitioning from “Ludo” to “Clandestino,” jumping up out of our chairs with hoots and hollers, singing, “McEvoy - Clandestino! Marinov - Clandestino! Karadjov - Clandestino! Noskerov - Illegal!” I know we were communicating on a deeper level with that music.

That's who Stoyan was to me - a man who understood the beautiful spirituality of music, and who lived that peace and happiness in every day of his life.

Kevin McEvoy [2011-2013]



Many people will no doubt speak about Stoyan's enthusiasm, skill, and dedication to folk dancing and all of the great shows that he put together. I believe that it was my second year at ACS, after seeing so many international faculty happily prancing away and having a great time at the Christmas show in my first year, that I decided that I had better get involved. Stoyan gave us an “easy” dance, as he called it, knowing how difficult it was for some of us. He very patiently tried to teach us, week after week, until show time arrived. I am such a dancing klutz that I could barely mimic some of the steps, screwing up most of them. Wisely, Stoyan put me in the back row.

Afterwards, I told Stoyan, never again, it was too awkward and embarrassing. Kindly and smartly, as he always was, he didn't really try very hard to convince me to re-join the troupe, much to my relief. But I loved watching other more talented dancers perform at all the school public functions, under his direction.

Lou Perske, President of ACS [1997 – 2007]



On my second day at ACS, Stoyan took me to the dance room he had lovingly created on the 3rd floor of Abbott. I had requested a place to teach salsa dancing during prep week. As I took in the mirrored walls, the smooth floors, and the hodge podge of cobbled together stereo equipment, I realized that Stoyan had just handed me the key to a place that would become another home to me.



Staff Christmas Party, December 2011

As I inspected the speakers and cables, he perched on the edge of a table and quizzed me about dance. Rather than asking about competitions or qualifications, he asked me what it was exactly about salsa that I loved so dearly. Our conversation spiraled into a philosophical one about dance, sublimity, community, and connection. And to when and how I would begin my education in Balkan Folk Dance. I felt dumbfounded when I returned to my classroom in Sanders to have come somewhat blindly halfway around the world only to immediately and effortlessly find a dance space, community, and more importantly, a kindred

spirit and mentor.

To this day, I'm still dumbfounded at my luck. What a gift to have known him! Thanks to Stoyan, I have found myself through dance in a new culture, become a part of a new community, and experienced new kinds of joy. It will be an honor and privilege to carry on his fire, kindness, and spirit both on the 3rd floor of Abbot and in the world.

Laurel Zmolek-Smith, ESL Teacher



Thank you for replying!

We have enough people to start our dance activity. Looking forward to our first session on February 12, 2008.

Regards,

Stoyan

Thus began my acquaintance with Stoyan. This was the message I received in response to my desire to join the ACS Balkan Dance Club for parents. What followed were many new friendships that I made with most of the members of the group with whom we shared the common love for dancing (at the beginning it was a little strange to dance Bulgarian folk dances hand in hand with international faculty members, part of whom were my daughter's teachers).

Together with the group, we traditionally made appearances

on stage at the Christmas concerts. Before each concert, all of us – teachers and parents – were so concerned that we would make mistakes. Every time, Stoyan successfully reassured us, "Trust me – we will make many students happy if they see us make a mistake!"

Over the years, our group of parents, teachers, and friends organized a lot of informal gatherings: we celebrated holidays and birthdays together, went to dance clubs and two-day dance seminars. For me, our dance sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays were most important: an hour and a half just for myself. Some magic happens when you dance: you forget all your troubles, everything seems in the right order, the world is finally in synchronization and for a perfect moment you feel fully alive.

At every Christmas party of the group, we give special awards to acknowledge people for their special skills or contribution to the Balkan Dance club. Always on the run not to be late for our dance sessions, I used to forget my dance shoes quite often. So, one year I was given the award for the person who most often appeared in the dance room without shoes. The award was a beautiful (the most beautiful I've ever had) pair of socks defined as unconventional-and-easy-to-carry-in-the-bag dance shoes.

And again, the dance hall was where I solved a problem of



Staff Christmas Party, December 2011

"vanity." There is a belief in Bulgaria that people should not celebrate their 40th birthday. I love holidays very much, and when my 40th anniversary happened to coincide with a day of dancing I went to the dance hall with some light treats for my friends without announcing the reason. As a result, I experienced the happiest of my birthdays and one of the best moments with Stoyan that I will always remember.

**Milena Dimitrova,
ACS Teachers, Parents &
Friends Balkan Dance Club
member**



My first memory of Stoyan is connected to a very embarrassing situation for me. It was in the early summer of 2005, just a week after I started the new job at ACS, when I met Stoyan. I'd rather say – when he insisted on meeting with me in order to give me a lesson.

Excited and challenged by my new tasks as a PR officer at ACS, I organized a TV interview with some students who had just returned from an international

science competition. I decided that the interview would take place on the green field, in the middle of a sports class with Mr. Karadgov, totally ignoring the students and their teacher. Stoyan reorganized his class and patiently waited until the interview was completed. Then he approached me, introduced himself, gave me a firm glance and told me, "Now that you are a part of ACS, you should always remember that here the students are most important. While in class – no matter which class – students cannot be interrupted. Students are here to develop their skills and knowledge and everyone, including you, should respect their efforts." Needless to say, I burnt with shame. From that moment on I've never interrupted a student activity without asking for the teacher's permission. What is more, Stoyan infected me with his love for our students.

In the years that followed I received hundreds of lessons from Stoyan – lessons for work and lessons for life. "Natalia, listen about my new project. And don't tell me it's going to be hard or it's impossible because everything is possible, you'll see," I've heard that so many times, his smiling eyes glittering with excitement and mischievousness. Yes, Stoyan - my mentor and friend - everything is possible for someone with a heart as big as yours.

Natalia Manolova, Alumni Relations and PR Office Coordinator



I was devastated to learn of Stoyan Karadgov's death just a day after submitting my memories of teaching in Bulgaria to the alumni magazine. Stoyan was kind, patient, friendly, and upbeat - and these adjectives have been repeatedly used to describe him as I remember him with old friends. He was up for anything, and could almost always be

family, ACS, and dance will truly be missed by all. The world has lost a good man." Bill and Gittan Cattelle remember Stoyan as "a man who always wanted to do the right thing, especially for his students; a fierce competitor during the winter olympics between the Bulgarian faculty and the North American expats; and a dedicated teacher who



ACS Open Basketball, School Year 2009-2010

counted on to come play a game of Ultimate Frisbee or pick-up soccer with other faculty members. As a new parent, I've been thinking of Stoyan's pride in his sons. I know only one of his two sons [Alexander], but if I can raise a daughter with even a few of Sasho's qualities, I will have done very well.

Stoyan was beloved of his colleagues. Mike Massey says, "Stoyan Karadgov is one of the best men I've ever known." Mark Reynolds recalls "Stoyan's sincere passion for dancing yet his calm demeanor and gentle instruction to those of us whom were cursed with two left-feet," and reflects that "his encouragement, friendship and dedication to his

worked to be innovative in his strategies yet conventional in his love for his Bulgarian dancing heritage" and mention that "it was a privilege to have the opportunity to work with such an outstanding educator and person." Andrew Ulrickson speaks of Stoyan's gifts as a teacher beyond the classroom, saying "Stoyan was one of those individuals who taught me to be generous - generous of spirit, time, thought, and heart. What a remarkable man! He would give the best of himself to friends, family and colleagues daily without giving a second thought to doing so. He was a man of strength, compassion...so many things. He will be so missed."

These are words from only a few of Stoyan's friends on other continents; many others are mourning his loss. I am so sorry for the future ACS students and staff who won't have Stoyan in their lives.

**Patty Anderson [2002-2005],
Mike Massey [2002-2005],
Andrew Ulrickson [2000-2004],
Mark Reynolds [2002-2009],
and Bill and Gittan Cattelle
[2001-2006]**



I have many fond memories of Stoyan and here is one. Just a few weeks after I first arrived at ACS in July 2010, Stoyan organized the yearly party for the adult Balkan Dance group. Typically it is held outside, around the Fountain. Stoyan invited me and I met many people, some who I still see regularly. He was such a gracious host, translating for me, introducing me to various people, and generally making me feel comfortable. Stoyan always invited Teresa and me to subsequent ACS Balkan Dance Club parties, scheduling the party so that we could attend, and even having us teach a western swing dance to the people at the party.

Dr. Paul K. Johnson, President of ACS



The first time I attended Stoyan's Balkan Dance group, I was nervous because I had never done Balkan Dance before and



ACS Open Basketball, School Year 2009-2010

there were many people there that I didn't know: parents, people from the MBP, community members. I gradually felt more comfortable, even though Stoyan mostly gave instructions in Bulgarian (he repeated them in English for me when he remembered to), because his physical demonstrations were very clear and I found I could mostly follow along.

As class was winding down, Stoyan gathered us together for one last dance. But then the music he put on was much faster than anything we had previously done, and the steps he performed were incredibly complicated! I was about to panic, thinking I'd have to drop out of the group if I couldn't keep up. Then I looked around and saw that everyone else was laughing in disbelief as well, teasing Stoyan for surprising us with this difficult dance at the very end of class, when we were all tired. Stoyan just smiled...and insisted that we dance anyway.

I loved that Stoyan's Balkan

Dance group brought together so many different people and unified us around music and dance. It didn't matter if you didn't know a single step or a word of Bulgarian; Stoyan would sneak up on you and take your hand and all of a sudden you were dancing, whether you wanted to or not! Making mistakes was just part of the fun, and I will always remember that.

Pei Pei Liu [2010-2013]



Stoyan loved dancing and it showed and it spread out to anyone who had the honor to dance with him! The dance club was one of my favorite parts about life at ACS and Stoyan made us all (beginners and advanced, Bulgarian and not Bulgarian) feel so welcome. He was patient with those who needed help and he pushed the others who were excellent dancers in their own right. The times that he couldn't participate in the dancing I could see him bouncing on his toes, dancing the steps in his head. And when

he returned to dancing after a long absence, he practically shined with joy - the bounce in his step and the smile on his face said more than words could have. I loved to watch him dance. I loved dancing with him. In my head he will always be dancing.

Shannon Savage [2009-2011]



My heart goes out to Stoyan's family and friends. I have been deeply saddened by the untimely loss of that exceptional man. Yet I am deeply grateful I have had the chance to meet Stoyan in person and consult him in some of his many capacities: as a faculty member and teacher of Svetleto, my daughter, and as my first Horo Dance Teacher. May his soul rest in peace.

Tanya Kostadinova, a parent of an ACS alumna



Mr. Karadjov was always smiling, fresh and methodical. He was our PE teacher, basketball coach, folk dance choreographer, and friend. He always gave his best and inspired us. May your soul rest in peace, Mr. Karadjov.

Maria Mitova, ACS Class of 2005



I have many memories of Stoyan that I will always cherish. But, if I had to choose one to share, it would be the time I participated



Arts Fest, 2014

in one of the regional dance competitions that Stoyan signed us up for in Studentski Grad. Those of us who had only been dancing with him for a short time were quite nervous, especially when we arrived donning our multi-colored tee-shirts and black pants while other groups were dressed in traditional folk costumes. After seeing some of the groups dance, I was petrified. Noticing the tentative looks on our faces, Stoyan gently reminded us that it wasn't about competing. It was about dancing, watching the dancers, and learning the dances. He reassured us, as only Stoyan could in his calm, gentle manner, that we need only have fun because, after all, any opportunity you get to dance IS fun, isn't it? We danced and learned so much from watching the veteran dancers that day. It was a wonderful day! A day on which I often reflect because I saw the joy that dancing gave to so many, including Stoyan, who typically smiled while he danced. His smile emanated his joyful spirit and it is this spirit, along

with his kindness, that I will remember about Stoyan. And, just thinking of Stoyan makes me smile. This was his gift to me!

Teresa Monicken, President Dr. Johnson's wife



Of the infinite priceless memories I have of Mr. Karadjov, I actually want to share a recent one - the day the Alumni Balkan Dances Club danced at the Arts Fest (in June 2014) for the first time. We hadn't shared a stage in six years. He was already diagnosed and had been fighting for a while, but not many knew. From what he'd told me, he wasn't supposed to dance or do any physical activity until at least another month after the Arts Fest was supposed to take place, so it was a surprise to see him in a nosia. I had a 39° fever and could barely stand. I was sweating like crazy. The only thing I could think of was, "I can only imagine how he feels... me with my stupid cold or whatever... He really shouldn't

be doing this; there will be so many more opportunities to dance together in the future! He should be taking care of himself and resting..."

...Then the horo started. He was leading it, which was something he rarely did. That was the sort of kind, selfless, me-in-the-background-others-in-the-limelight man that he was. We exchanged just one quick glance, but the eye contact was firm, as firm as a decided nod. And then suddenly my fever was gone, and my feet were off on their own, and my heart was riding them like never before. And I suddenly understood. I knew that of all the people in the world breaking doctors' recommendations, he had the most right to do so, and only he knew how big in fact our modest but hearty, smiling dance was. If only I had known it was to be our last...

Alex Melamed, Class of 2007



На Стоян Караджов

Беше Стоян
и стоеше напето,
Беше Караджов,
сиреч бързоног кат' сърна,
Хорото той водеше,
че беше Воевода,
Кой ще ни води сега....
Сбогом, приятело,
со Богом Воеводо,
свободен се рееш
във светлина,
сега си Душата,
танцуваща волно,
танците български

в небесна дъга.

19.11.2014

Emilia Peeva, ACS Librarian



And now... it's time for one last change!

This usually takes place a day or two before a concert or an official stage performance of ensemble "Bor." Supposedly, the dancers have learned the steps, the choreography is clear, and the group has (sort of) mastered dancing in sync. All participants shiver with stage fright. Spirits are high - this is probably the last rehearsal before we go on stage. That's when Stoyan Karadjov appears and instead of announcing the start of our final rehearsal in a controlled voice, he says with a wide smile on his face: "And now...it's time for one last change!"

People try hard to hide their mixed emotions while Stoyan explains the point and necessity of this change, and its importance to the whole performance. The point is usually quite straightforward: "There is always space for improvement. Always."

This was the main driving force in all his endeavors. Later, when this scene had taken place again and again, we realized it had become a continuous trend. Often on days preceding the concert the dancers would predict: "It's the last rehearsal, just watch Mr. Karadjov enter the dance hall to announce that the time has come for one last change."

This is how things always turned out better and brought satisfaction and excitement to all the people who expected to hear:

"And now... it's time for one last change!"

**Vlado Marinov,
Sports Teacher**

**Former member of ensemble
"Bor"**



ACS Open Basketball, School Year 2007-2008

Patty Anderson: Reminiscing about ACS

Introduction by Rumyana Mihaylova '05

Patty Anderson taught English Language and Literature at ACS between 2002 and 2005. Many students remember her as the teacher who introduced them to Classic American literature and baked the most delicious chocolate chip cookies for our quarterly book discussions. Nothing can beat an inspiring conversation about literature in a room that smells like cookies! I still have a collection of Patty's awesome stickers – the perfect award for scoring high on a test or writing an excellent essay. Patty Anderson has now agreed to share some of her favorite ACS moments with you – enjoy the read!

I doubt that anyone will be surprised to hear that the **approach** to ACS was bleak. After a seven-hour layover in Budapest that required us to clear customs and take a lumpy nap atop piles of luggage, we finally arrived. We were gratified by an enthusiastic greeting from Ivo, driving the beat-up blue van that had belonged to ACS since its re-opening, and Kirk Kahu and Julie Cook, who'd arrived earlier in the day. Ivo was particularly tolerant while I, sleep-deprived and a bit hysterical, babbled about possibilities for new, more Slavic nicknames. "Will you call me Patski Andersonova?" I asked. Answering as only appropriate when posed such an absurd question, he replied "No-I won't," without cracking a smile. Once I shut my mouth and opened my eyes, though, I was daunted by the approach-to-ACS corridor. The array of cell phone ads, surprising 'Flirt Vodka' signage, and careworn high rises lining the way were **not** the pastoral landscape at a mountain's base I'd been promised. However, I was charmed when we arrived on campus. The houses reminded me of the neighborhood near San Francisco where I'd lived as a child, and the care that Evgeni

and the rest of the grounds crew put into maintaining an environment that was more park than prep school was immediately apparent. I couldn't wait to get washed and rested before exploring the city that was to be my home. I rambled all over Sofia for the next three years, and though my escapades didn't always match my initial expectations, they invariably made for a good story. For example, there was that time that I decided to hop an unfamiliar bus expecting that everyone would think I was oh-so-clever to have discovered a new route downtown. I was surprised to end up in Samokov, but now I'll always know the answer to this trivia question: What is one of the primary crops grown in Samokov? *

My experiences teaching 10th and 11th grade students at ACS rival the best of my career, but the real highlights were extracurricular. I remember watching the girls in the modern dance club work out their choreography before I grabbed a quick dinner and attended folk dancing practices with Stoyan Karadjov, possibly the most patient teacher in the world. "But Stoyan, why does

Mike get to brandish a sword and yell lustily while I hold a wineskin and gossip in the background?" I'd whine. "It's tradition," he'd reply, eyes laughing, and then he'd put us through our paces again, silently praying that we'd pull it off in time for the big performance.

I hate mornings with a bitterness they don't deserve, but the few when I managed to roll out of bed at dawn to join the hiking club for an out-of-town excursion were well worth it. I often think about warm afternoons spent



Being sporty with my section, Spring 2005

with the softball club or watching the boys playing one of those harrowing games of soccer on the blacktop - I still cringe when recalling the asphalt burns some players sustained.

There are so many moments to recount: watching films with the film elective, choosing poems and stories to publish in *The*

Fountain, inexpertly slathering make-up on the actors in *Once Upon a Mattress* and *The Music Man* (sorry everybody!), baking hundreds of chocolate chip cookies using one sad cookie sheet, and eating pizza/bowling with/or hosting a BBQ for members of my section.

My life at ACS naturally revolved around the students, with whom I spent most of my time, but I also appreciated time with colleagues. The international staff's tradition of making a Thanksgiving feast for our Bulgarian counterparts was reciprocated in the St. George's Day feast, and I think that we got the better deal in that exchange! The students probably didn't know much about staff parties, but they were fantastic. Along with our roommates Anne Spaete and Patrick Love, Mike and I hosted Halloween and St. Patrick's Day extravaganzas featuring excellent bonfires and Vlado Marinov's renditions of "Nyama Bira." Mike and I, usually accompanied by colleagues, traveled to Austria, the Czech Republic, Russia, Croatia, Romania, and made multiple trips to Greece and Turkey. Even so, some of my favorite get-aways were intra-Bulgarian: I'll never forget Bansko, Nessebar, Veliko Tarnovo, Melnik, Rila Monastery, Borovets and Pamporovo (among other places). Despite understanding about 40% of any given conversation when socializing with Lyuba Ivanova and Dessi Yordanova after work, I have vivid memories of sitting around cramped tables and

enjoying myself as much as I ever have. It's been a decade since I savored the excellent dinners Vanya Sheneva and Angel Miloshev prepared for Mike and me, but I haven't forgotten how tasty they were or how much the rakia initially burned. My days began and ended with the Stoils, my two favorite campus guards who never failed to cheer me up with a cookie, savory snack, or a cup of warm tea in dismal weather. These experiences, brief though they were, grow in nostalgic significance whenever revisited in my memory.

I am a terrible correspondent, but Mike and I have managed to keep in touch with some former colleagues since leaving ACS. We've visited Bill and Birgitta Cattelle, Kate Oliverson, Chad Schwaberow, Andrew Ulrickson, Travis McKeen, and Julie Ham. Though our tenures at ACS didn't overlap, we've gotten to know Steve McCallum and Darlene Frketich through mutual friends. I hope to maintain these friendships and to rekindle others before allowing too much more time to pass by. I'm not employing hyperbole when I say that I think of my friends in Bulgaria all the time.

Mike and I left Sofia for Central Virginia expecting to move abroad again after a couple of years. Now nine years have passed, and this is the longest that I've lived in one place! We're older and not too apparently different, so I don't have many real secrets to divulge, though as a couple, we seem to be trading

roles. He used to work with younger students, something I swore I'd never do, and now I teach 7th and 8th grade in a local Quaker school. I was considering pursuing a PhD, something he hadn't expressed interest in, and now he's in graduate school earning his PhD in social work. I ran avidly and occasionally coerced Mike into accompanying me, but I rarely break a trot these days as he runs marathons. Mike was a lifelong athlete while I never played sports, but this season, sidelined with a broken leg, he cheered me on as I played soccer every weekend. Scruffy spends lots of time on the couch and probably doesn't remember her time on the streets of Mladost 2, but she can still be goaded into action if you yell "Xaide!" with just the right intonation. Our biggest news is small in stature. Mabel, our daughter, will be six months old when this goes to print. She keeps a low profile--she's the rare baby that doesn't have a social media presence--but her few acquaintances already include two members of the class of 2006 (Svilen Kolarov and Viktoria Vutova). I look forward to watching her taste her first spoonful of Tarator next summer, and I'm so excited to have an excuse to return to Bulgaria sometime in the future. Mabel will want to see for herself what all the fuss is about, and we're already more than willing to oblige her in that wish.

* Potatoes. Duh.

Current Faculty

The BEST Foundation: Building a Community among Students with Passion for Speech and Debate

Material by Natalia Manolova and Roumy Mihaylova '05

Our kick-off interview in the “Current Faculty” section presents a very special group of young people who have joined forces in the belief that they can change the world, one student at a time. To give you a hint at what makes the BEST Foundation unique, here is a brief fact sheet:



All 10 members of the executive board are Fulbright Grantees. Three of them currently work at the American College of Sofia. ESL teachers Hannah Allen and Michael Deegan are among the founders of the BEST foundation. ACS alumna Roumy Mihaylova '05, who has recently joined the ACS Alumni Relations and PR Office, serves as the manager of the foundation.



In 2013 their project Bulgarian Forensics League wins funding by the U.S. Department of State's Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund, thus becoming the first Bulgarian project to be awarded this prestigious grant.



In June 2014 the Bulgarian Forensics League sends three Bulgarian speech and debate champions to compete at the National Speech and Debate Association's National Tournament in the USA. They are the first European participants in the prestigious event. Two of them are Katherine Krem and Georgi Dumanov - ACS alumni from the Class of 2014.



In August 2014 the Bulgarian English Speech and Debate Tournaments Foundation is established. In September 2014 Hannah Allen, Michael Deegan, and Roumy Mihaylova are invited to talk about their organization at the U.S. Embassy - an honor given to the most successful state alumni project of the year.



The BEST foundation is a volunteer-run organization. It uses its entire funding to provide financial and logistical support to Bulgarian high-school students and their speech and debate coaches.



We asked Hannah Allen, Michael Deegan and Roumy Mihaylova '05 to answer a few questions for the ACS community.

How did you come up with the idea to create an English speech and debate organization based in Bulgaria?

Michael: In the fall of 2012, I was looking for a way to engage my students in English in a unique way outside of the classroom. After talking about some ideas with other Fulbrighters, what started out as just an idea to have a cross-school English debate competition, turned into the Bulgarian Forensics League. The amount of passion that myself and the other founders of the organization had brought forth made our first competition at AUBG something bigger and better than any of us could have imagined. We all knew then that we had done something special and we wanted to do whatever we could to do it again.

How did Roumy join you?

Michael: As we were applying for the AEIF fund, it turned out that we needed a native-Bulgarian who was a US State Department Program Alumni to lead the project. We contacted Roumy through mutual friends, none of us having ever met her before, and talked to her about our idea. She was interested in what we had to say and agreed to apply with us. After applying for the grant, I don't think that any of us could have predicted what was in store for us and Roumy graciously led us through the process. We are so thankful to be friends and colleagues with her and we literally would not exist as an NGO without her tireless

commitment and assistance to the project.

Tell us more about your events.

Michael: Our national tournaments consist of five different speech events including: Prose, Poetry, Original Oratory, Duo, and World Schools Debate. Prose, Poetry and Duo are all interpretive events meaning that students perform works that they have not written themselves, but have "interpreted." This means that they dramatically present a piece in a creative way that doesn't detract from the original

and research and present their cases in debate.

Overall, our events are completely in English, so it offers an immersive experience for all of the participants. BEST has also sort of developed into a community of teachers, students, and volunteers that really value personal growth, critical thinking, and the successful future of Bulgaria!

Do you think that your belonging to the ACS community has benefited the BEST Foundation?



Cultural attaché Mr. Richard Damstra awarding ACS students Katherine Krem and Georgi Dumanov from the Class of 2014, April 2014

message of the piece. Katherine Krem and Georgi Dumanov did this with their duo on *The Little Prince*. They "cut" the piece: meaning they strategically chose the most important parts of the book for their performance, pieced it together and prepared/choreographed their presentation of the work. Original Oratory and Debate are different in that participants actually write their own speeches for Original Oratory to present

Roumy: The ACS community has always been largely supportive of our work. ACS always sends teams to compete in our tournaments, fully covering their travel expenses. Last year ACS printed the ballots for all our tournaments for free, enabling us to allocate the money we had saved for printing to a different and much more meaningful category - student accommodation. For an organization like ours - a non-

profit with very limited resources, every cent makes a difference. I think it would be safe to say that by donating printing and by paying for its own team, ACS has helped us cover the expenses of at least two small school teams.

We always try to recruit ACS teachers and alumni to judge at our tournaments, and most current international teachers have sacrificed a lot of free time and energy in support of our cause. With the establishing of a non-profit organization, we went through a process of rebranding, and Adelina Mihaylova from the Class of 2007 volunteered to assist our Marketing team in building a fresh and memorable brand identity. During our US-trip fundraising campaign, there was a moment when I had started



Michael Deegan coaching the ACS Debate Team, December 2013

to lose hope that we would be able to raise the full amount fast enough. It was an ACS Alumna that I had not heard from in years who saved the day by simply donating all the money we needed to reach our target. This was an act of mind-blowing kindness. As I found out much later, she had been unemployed at the time.

Why did you change your name from The Bulgarian Forensics League to BEST?

Michael: We have decided to change our name so that someone new to our community can easily understand the purpose of our organization. "Forensics" also has the second and more-widely known meaning of crime-solving. Thus, The BEST Foundation came to be. In Bulgarian it is: Фондация БЕСТ – български турнири по английска реч и дебати.

How has the organization developed since the first competition in May 2013?

Michael: Our network of coaches, judges, teams, and schools hasn't stopped growing.

grantees.

Roumy: I think the Student Ambassador program is probably our most interesting new initiative. It aims at fostering a sense of community among students who participate in BEST tournaments. In October our Programming, Tournament and Marketing teams joined forces to teach students how to take leadership roles at their schools: how to organize club meetings and fundraisers, how to analyze their own progress and act towards improving performance and how to inspire their classmates and help them achieve their goals. The Student Ambassadors have made a tremendous difference in our lives: we know that whatever happens we can rely on their honest feedback, inspiring ideas, infinite amounts of energy and refreshing sense of humor.

What are the greatest challenges you face?

Hannah: It is our goal for any student who wants to participate in our tournaments, to have the opportunity to do so. However, one of the greatest challenges that we've experienced as an organization is the lack of funding to support every team involved. Our program is growing rapidly and is reaching every corner of the country, yet we still are unable to fully provide financial assistance where needed. Each team is expected to fundraise the costs of accommodation, tournament fees and food while a small

We have had an overwhelmingly positive response from our participants, and more and more schools want to get involved. We have increased the number of people working on our board, and have offered additional programs such as the Student Ambassador Program and the Speech and Debate Coach Training for new Fulbright



Group photo 2014

portion of BEST's funds can cover their transportation costs. However, as the organization grows, we are unable to keep up financially in order to ensure that each qualified student who desires to compete can do so.

Roumy: I would add that it's pretty challenging to find Bulgarians who can join our team. Currently I am the only Bulgarian board member. It's a volunteer work and, at the same time, hard and demanding.

What do you call the greatest success so far?

Hannah: I think that our greatest success so far has been sending three Bulgarian students to the United States in order to compete in the National Speech and Debate Association's annual speech and debate tournament last year. The students were the first European competitors that the NSDA has ever allowed to compete in the tournament and

were incredibly well received. In addition to the intense competitive atmosphere, the students also were able to get to know other students from the United States who have a passion for speech and debate. Of course during their free time they even explored Kansas City! We are excited to see the success of our students this year, and hope that we're able to have the finances to send even more students on this unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience.

How does your organization function today?

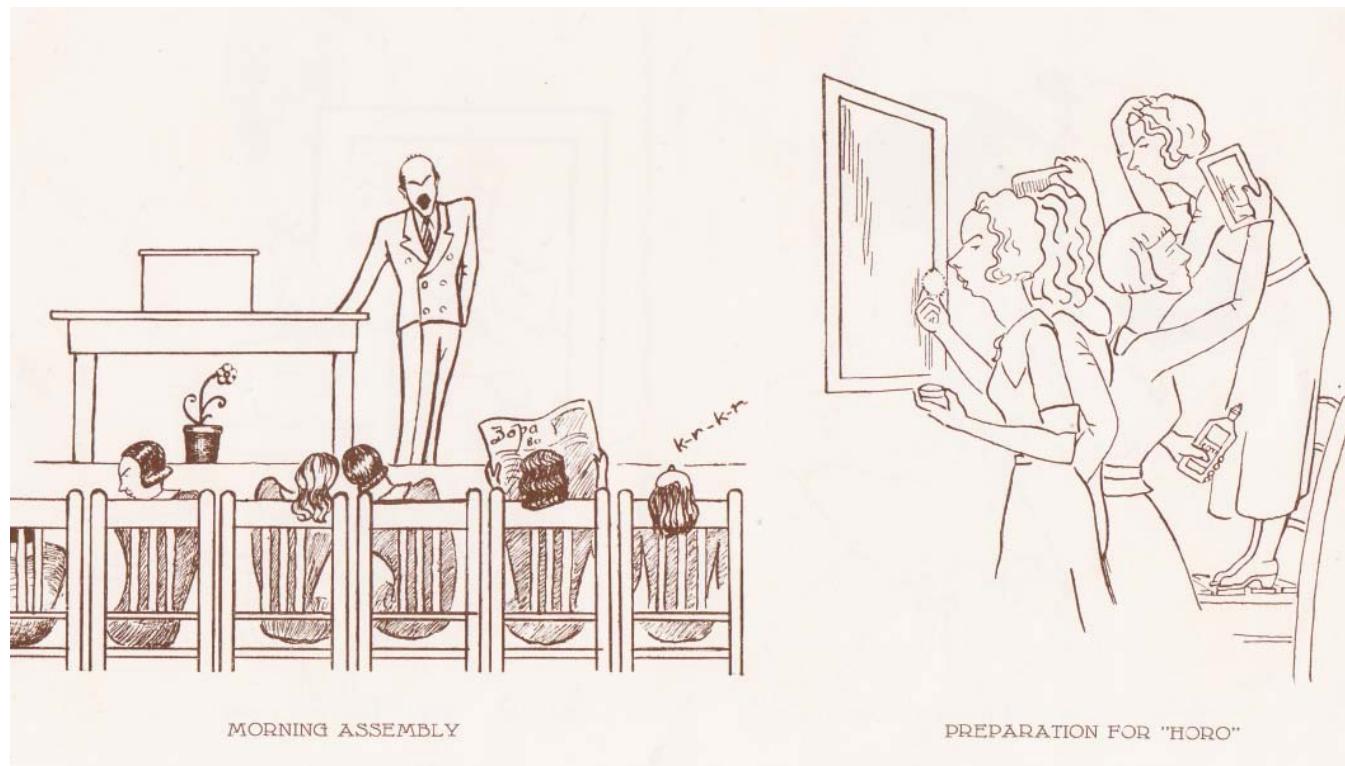
Roumy: I think we operate almost miraculously. We live on two different continents, in three countries, and in 7 cities. Michael, Hannah and I are very lucky to work at ACS, because we get to spend time together. The three of us almost never meet the other team members in person, but we keep in touch with all of them via e-mails and regular online meetings. Our executive board members serve on several committees - we have a Programming Team, a Fundraising Team, a Tournament Team, a Marketing/ Communications Team, and a US-Arm in charge of maintaining our relationship with the NSDA. We discuss challenges and solve problems together. We are united by a goal inspiring enough to keep us together despite the distance.





Hannah and Michael running a tournament, December 2013

Comics, ACS Yearbook 1936



Zhanina Boyadzhieva '06: Beyond the ACS Campus

Interview by Rumyana Mihaylova '05

*Zhanina Boyadzhieva is an ACS Alumna from the Class of 2006. In 2014 she received a Master's degree in Architecture from Harvard Graduate School of Design and presented an overview of her thesis project *Collective Individuality: Reconstructing the Public Realm* during the TEDxBG 2014 Conference in Sofia. We approached Zhanina with a special request: to look at ACS through the lens of her research, and tell us what she sees.*



Office photo at Leers Weinzapfel Associates Architects, Summer 2014, Boston, USA

Zhani, you gave a very inspiring talk at the TEDxBG Conference in Sofia, analyzing how social, economic, and political patterns are reflected in our environment. How would you interpret the ACS campus spaces in the context of your work?

ACS is a very particular oasis within the fabric of the city. It has preserved a lens of urban thinking which was typical of 19th century Sofia - an integration of a well-designed ensemble that bridges the disciplines of architecture (consistent classical buildings), landscape architecture (the parks and gardens) and infrastructure

(the paths between buildings). If you look at maps of Sofia from the 19th Century, you will see many parallels between ACS and Sofia as a whole. Of course, when it comes to the scale of the city, things are very dynamic and continuously changing. Sofia has gone through various ideologies (Socialism, Post-Socialism, etc.), which have been reflected, in its physical environment. Unfortunately, much of the thought combining these various fields into a coherent approach to design has been lost. ACS, however, has remained as a landmark and memory of this, mostly because it has been a gated island separated from

external forces. I am curious how the campus would be if it was more open to the rest of the city.

If Sofia is colorful, what is the color of ACS?

I see ACS in three colors: green, blue and light beige. Green stands for all the lush gardens and parks which I have very vivid memories of. It transformed the space into a retreat for discoveries. Blue is for the open sky that was visible everywhere on campus. It made everyone aim high. Light beige is for the buildings which projected openness. Classical campuses are always featured in light colors to

symbolize nobility of spirit and intellectual pursuit. Now that I think about it, the colors I was surrounded with at ACS very much influenced the kind of characteristics and personalities my friends and I value.

What provoked your interest in Architecture?

I have always had a passion for arts and mathematics. While at ACS, Nia Decheva strongly encouraged me to pursue my interest in the visual arts and stimulated my curiosity in various forms of creative thinking. Simultaneously, the studies in mathematics (of which I have always been surrounded, as my father is a mathematics professor) engraved an interest in systematic thinking and organization. Somehow, my intuition of bridging these two interests led me to architecture which I later understood as a much more complex field that brought together another passion of mine - sociology.

What place do you assign to ACS in the topography of your life?

ACS gave me a jumpstart to everything I am at the moment. It stimulated me to aim high and never give up. Most importantly, it provided me with an environment of inspirational friends. Being in one place with beautiful, smart, ambitious and compassionate minds has been a true gift.

Share with us your most precious ACS memory.

What comes to mind first is laughing loudly with my friends as we are moving in between buildings from one class to another. I think that laughter, excitement and movement will stay with me.

Are you familiar with the new Campus Master Plan? How do you think the new Campus Center will influence our community?

I recently heard about the idea of expanding the auditorium building. I am not too familiar with the details around the design but from the few sketches I have seen, it appears to be an exciting moment for campus development. The key feature would be to preserve the same type of thinking that combines architecture, landscape architecture and infrastructure. Analyzing scales is also crucial since ACS has always had a very humane sense to it. All campuses expand and adapt over time to new features. As long as the original notion is preserved, a sense of contemporary insertion, when done correctly, can be quite refreshing.

Tell us about your recent fascinations and most exciting aspirations.

Something that makes me quite excited is working with a small group of students from Boston Architectural College

on the research and design of a Youth Center for Sports and Arts in Haiti. It is very fulfilling to share knowledge and discover possibilities for a very complicated context. It is also great to see how students' thinking evolves from a simplistic understanding of the project as a design of a physical form to the realization that it should be thought of as a self-sustaining system bridging the gap between politics, economy, culture, construction, materials, form, etc. We are headed to Haiti in February to gather more observations before we delve into the design component.

Do you have a message for our current students?

Don't be afraid to aim high and follow dreams - you would be surprised what happens if you only try. Value your relationships with the people that shape you - teachers, families, classmates, friends - and always be grateful for all the opportunities you are offered. Don't be scared to test unknown grounds; the more things you try, the more you will realize who you are.



Tsvetana Dzhuvanova, Tsvetina Chankova, and Zhanina Boyadzieva from the Class of 2006, ASC Arts Fest, 2007

Student in the Spotlight

Konstantin Karchev '15: We Can Bring Space to Our Minds

Interview by Rumyana Mihaylova '05

Konstantin Karchev '15 is a co-founder of the photography club, a prominent member of the cinema group, and the student who worked on developing the ACS Creativity, Action, and Service portal. The first time he walked into my office and introduced himself, I could not help exclaiming: "Oh, so you are Kosyo Karchev! I've heard so much about you!" I quickly realized I was beginning to sound like a fan, and a fan I was indeed. I had seen his photographs, I knew about his silver medal from the International Olympiad of Astronomy and Astrophysics, and I was quite curious to ask him the kind of questions that I do not get to ask every day.



Konstantin Karchev, Class of 2015

Give me the dimensions of your place in life right now.

Eighteen floors above ground. I might have jumped already, I don't know for sure, but I am sure I will miss the ground because I have my distraction beside me. So I'll fly.*

* I feel the need to explain that, otherwise it'll sound too suicidal. With a citation: "How to fly (from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*): You must learn how to throw yourself at the ground and miss. One problem is that you have to miss the ground accidentally. It's no good deliberately intending to miss the ground because you won't. You have to have your attention suddenly distracted by something else when you're halfway there, so that you are no longer thinking about falling, or about the ground, or about how much it's going to hurt if you fail to miss it."

What helped you the most get to where you are?

Can I say "myself"? Seriously, if I choose to name one thing, I'd have to go on talking about everything else. This is not a college application essay. So I'm just going to say I did most of what I've done with the great help of myself. At least that's what I want to think. It's good to say you have done something on your own. It's also good to know that there are things you've done which you have received help for. It's good that the helpers know they've helped you, so you don't feel obligated to mention them and can go on pretending it was all your own work.

How did you get interested in Astrophysics?

I wonder when I will finally tell the real story... But here's a true story:

It was because of an egg. No, not because of a specific egg but because of the philosophical category "Egg," named for its properties (specifically, the

inherent shape). Every egg is egg-shaped.

It was also because of my father's mackerel (паламуΔ). The specific mackerel was dead, so we have to deal again with the philosophical category.

The thing is that if you want to preserve a mackerel you need to prepare brine (саламура), which is basically a solution of table salt in water. But the concentration needs to be exact. My father knew it, not in grams or moles per litre, but in stotinki. "Трябва да сложим сол на пет стотинки," which meant that if you put an egg in the brine, it would float so that the part above the surface was as large as a 5-stotinki coin. This is not a scientific way of determining the concentration of a solution. It's "бабини деветини." It might become a scientific method if an underlying theory is developed. So I set about developing the theory. It required me to investigate the shape of an egg. I approximated it to an ellipsoid. I read the Wikipedia



Christmas in the Maldives (Photograph by Konstantin Karchev '15)

article about the shape, and it was largely concerned with orbital mechanics. I decided to enter the Astronomy Olympiad and nine months later I won an international silver medal.

Where is the edge of space?

According to some, it's in milking cows. I know this is a ridiculous answer, so I'll hasten to explain where it comes from. In ninth grade my best friend and I were discussing a similar question (or at least one that would lead us to answering this one) with Duc Do (Class of 2012) while we were waiting in a traffic jam on the ring road. Initially it was a discussion about what time is, and I came to express the view that I will present in the next paragraph after announcing it as the "serious answer." I might have expressed it a bit too loudly because I had evidently vexed a group of fellow passengers with my nonsense, and so they advised me to occupy myself in more meaningful activities like learning how to milk a cow and then theorize about the Universe in a loud voice. My friend said he had milked a cow.

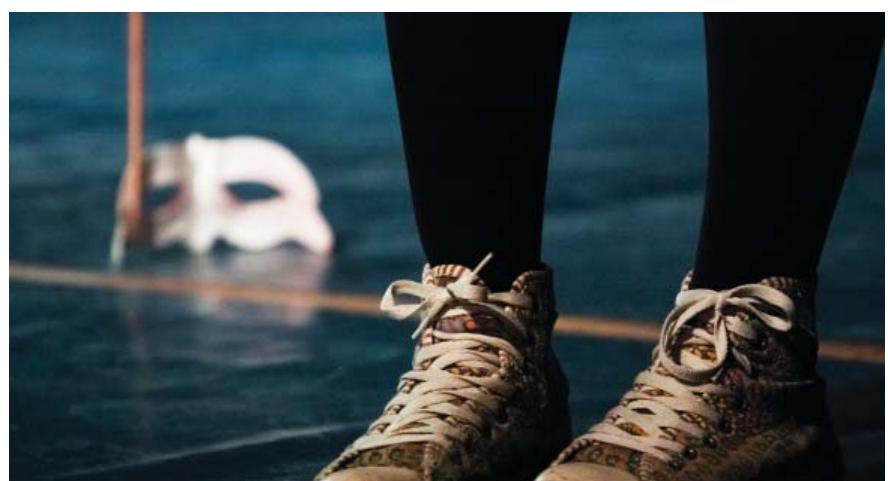
But the serious answer is this: the edge of space is, of course, everywhere you turn in much the same way as that when you

are on an island, the edge of that island (the coastline) lies in every direction. The trick with space is that it is virtually unlimited—i.e. its edge does not lie in space but in time. And so the edge is equally far away (back in time) in all (spatial) directions. We might imagine the Earth to represent our whole universe (like a whole lot of people before us did; but here we will need the Earth to be spherical), and if we start from Bulgaria in a number of random directions and travel "forward" (on the surface of Earth) for about 20000 km, we will all meet in a single spot somewhere off the coast of New Zealand. That's the edge, the furthest from the starting point you can get. And that's the Big Bang. You can't go further back in time. Of course, that would be too easy an analogy, if it were true. It is not, for on Earth the position

of your "edge" depends on the location of your initial position, and in "real life" it doesn't. We all end up in the same spot, no matter where we start from. (~ Всички сме в кюопа.)

Do you think our explorations of space aim at domesticating it?

No. You see, "domesticate" is a weird word. Do we want to train space to behave in a way we want it to? Can we? No. We certainly may use it. But we still can't. Space is just too big. "You just won't believe how vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist's, but that's just peanuts to space." Only the trips we can currently make down to the chemist's have a scientific purpose. And that's the beauty of it. We may



Mask (Photograph by Konstantin Karchev '15)



18 floors above the ground

never reach anything as remotely distant as another star, but we know about the Big Bang and galaxies and everything in-between, and before and after. Just by looking. We don't need to travel. We can bring space to our homes, to our notebooks and to our minds.

You are a fantastic photographer and a brilliant physicist. How do you view the relationship between Science and Art?

Formally, my opinion (which I have held in the course of a discourse on the topic) is that Art is an intellectual activity of a much lower rank than Science. In short, Art is an expression of Philosophy, a means of conveying Perception; as such it is subordinate to Perception and guided by it, no matter how much the expressionists aimed to achieve the opposite. And Science is, in its essence, the bridge between Philosophy and Reality which unites them (here we must provide that Reality does exist). Formally, then, Science is master of Philosophy,

Philosophy of Art, and Science is a double master of Art.

Without going into such philosophical sophistications, art is just another way of describing reality on par with mathematics. An inquirer (a thinker) who uses art to describe the world is an artist, and one who uses mathematics is a scientist. Even an abstract artist describes the world because his abstractions become part of the world. The mathematical analog is a self-supporting claim like "one equals one if and only if one equals one" because it targets itself only, just like abstract art. That is why I believe it to be meaningless. There are examples of abstract science as well: take String Theory. Meaningless. But if a form of art touches on reality, draws something from it but at the same time adds a new dimension, it gets nearer to "non-abstract" (meaningful, I'd say) science. Photography is an example. It adds the dimension of frozen time, of momentary permanence, of depth, of perspective. Science uses those as well: "the very small period

of time in which A remains constant," distance, angles.

Here is the short answer: I believe that everything can be united within a single category. In the context of that category, art and science and elephants are the same.

Do you have a favorite breakthrough in the field of Astrophysics?

Now that you've asked me, I do. I think it is relatively well known that the Universe is expanding. I don't know about the awareness of the fact (accepted opinion) that it does so at an accelerated pace. This "breakthrough" was postulated by Einstein but completely illegitimately. He just added a factor to one of his equations of general relativity. It was called the "cosmological constant" and "my greatest blunder" by Einstein. Then it was disregarded for almost a century until it was found to be a very good way of describing the accelerating universe, as observed around the turn of the millennium. In 2011 the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded for that breakthrough to Saul Perlmutter, Brian P. Schmidt and Adam G. Riess.

Incidentally, one of the team leaders of the national team of astrophysicists, Mr. Karavasilev, told me the story of how he cornered Dr. Schmidt (figuratively - they were having dinner at a conference) with the question, "What if the dwarves were spinning?" that could shake

the discovery. Nothing is certain, everything is relative.

Is there an image you have always wanted to capture?

At the moment, yes, and it does feel like I've wanted to capture it all my life. It involves me and another person. It's strange that I've become more of a people photographer. I've always thought I want to capture the beauty of the Universe. Maybe it's all the same thing.

Do you think that parallel universes may exist?

Well, sure, but there wouldn't be any way for us to know, let alone interact with them. That's the point of them being parallel: they do not cross ours. But could they be so infinitely close, that they are almost ours? Can we hop across that infinitely small distance? Sure, I think we can. I think we do it all the *time.* Think about it. Every second it's a different Universe, just a little bit different from the previous one. You exist in only one of the universes (in only one moment at a *time*), but are always on the move between whole universes.

Tell us about your most recent academic success.

I received 104% on Mr. Dimitrov's history test...

Okay, fine, I won a silver medal at the International Olympiad of Astronomy and Astrophysics. Big deal, I should have won the gold but I didn't. There were seven

Romanians with gold medals at the Olympiad in Romania and five Iranians. But I hadn't solved the problems perfectly, that's a fact. I was disappointed. I thought I had disappointed the people who believed I could get the gold. It turned out that I hadn't, but that they were proud.

And the same thing happened at the National Fall Competition in Physics, Special theme (?! — специална тема, the physicists will know). I placed fifth. But this time it was an error on the part of the judges. There's no need to be all vocal about it, though. I wasn't perfect again.

That's why I think a 100% is a bigger success than a medal. A medal is comparative. It means there weren't enough people to beat me. A 100% is absolute, objective, and nobody can deny it.

What is the best part of attending an International Olympiad of Astronomy and Astrophysics?

Being in a different country than the one your parents are in.

It's the whole atmosphere. Not so much that you are among the smartest people your age, but that you are among the smartest people your age, and you might turn out to be even smarter than them. The anticipation for the closing ceremony when you will receive the medal and head back to the living quarters and not sleep all night but instead... I'd best not give details, but the

general feeling is one of supreme exaltation.

Tell us one scientific fact that can inspire a short story.

The Earth is round. It's a tragedy with a character vs. society conflict.

Could you describe the tangible aspects of your "ideal" self — your job, your home, your social life, your hobbies, and your achievements? Your "ideal" self is not restrained by the limitations of reality.

I can theorize about them:

My home is the first aspect, because it's the easiest to describe. I have a pretty perfect home now. It's on the eighteenth floor. It has a Dark Side of the Moon fresco that I painted (nearly) myself (props to Dave for helping me). I live in it alone. That last part is both awesome and a bit "wrong" (in the sense that sometimes I think it shouldn't be so; I feel that I don't want to live alone from time to time). It's awesome because... (see the second question). It feels wrong because I know the person I want to live with. She's the only thing that's missing here. And a sign on the door, saying "The Karchev manor." Egocentric, I know.

A social life is something that I've been having less of this year in favor of a true adult life. I've never been a fan of having a wide circle of friends. Maybe of broad social interactions, often

one sided. I want to be known, I can't deny. But at the end of the day, it won't matter, I know.

With regard to work and hobbies I am extremely confused. I know I want to be involved with physics in one way or another. But it's again a very egotistic desire, the desire for knowledge. I just want to continue being fascinated by physics and mathematics (and avoid being disinterested in mathematics, if I can). I don't know what I want to do with that knowledge. With photography and programming, my main hobbies, well, I want to believe I bring joy to people (all the banality)... Yeah, but I think other people think so too, and that's as satisfactory to me as I'd like it to be.

But seriously, I am a very confused individual and rarely think about "my ideal self". No, wait, I actually do, for a huge portion of my time, at that. I do think of my current self a lot.

Does reality have limitations?

I touched on them in the question about the edge of space. The only two real limitations are the speed of light and epistemology. The former is straight-forward (and curving around massive objects). You just can't travel faster than light. That's a pity because sometimes you need to do immense amounts of work and you would very much like to be able to be a bit faster. But being faster than light requires you to do more than an infinite



Giraffes in Canada – one of the wonders of the Universe (Photograph by Konstantin Karchev '15)

amount of work, so that's ruled out.

What I mean by "epistemology" is "how do I know?" and specifically, "How do I know how long [in space or time] something is?" It all boils down to the suitable choice of a meter stick, of a unit of measurement. Have you thought about units of length? The inch? This much (showing the distance between the thumb and index finger). The foot? This much (making a step). The meter? This much (spreading one's hands a reasonable amount). They are all connected to the human body in a way. They are useful. There is something useful that is a meter long (a stick for fighting wild animals on prehistoric Earth, for example). One of my favorite passages from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* deals with the currency of a planet, and the "coins" of that currency are "triangular rubber coins six thousand eight hundred miles along each side." That's impractical. So coins are made just as large enough to be held in the hand or between two fingers. But what about time?

The second? How much is a second? It's the time it takes you to say "a second". That's natural enough. But what if you can't speak? When you are a baby, what are your natural units of time? I think it's the quickness of your thoughts. How quickly can you think of a second? If you think faster, you can think more things for a period of time, and so that period will seem longer. That's why time seems to pass very quickly to some and very slowly to others.

We usually ask alumni if they have a message to current students. Do you have a message to the alumni community?

Well, my job is way harder than the alumni's; they can give a message about life at ACS, but I can't give one about real life. But:

"If real life isn't exactly as fun as the College, you're either doing it wrong, or have done the College right, or both."

CLASS NOTES

Former Faculty



Coll with his buddy Sake, circa 2006

We would like to express our deep appreciation to all of our friends, colleagues, and former students who have kept us in their thoughts and prayers in these difficult months, and especially those teachers and friends of Coll who sent letters to the wonderful memorial article in the Alumni Magazine. We were touched and heartened by those remarks, they gave us strength to carry on. Of course, we are still struggling, but knowing that people loved Coll and care about us makes all the difference.

Coll lived and loved in Sofia for seven years before he graduated and went off to university. He loved his life in Bulgaria and at ACS, and somehow got through the rigorous academic program, with a lot of help from his friends and teachers. Coll gave up skiing and learned how to snowboard in Bulgaria and he loved playing on The College basketball team, where he was the starting point guard for three years. We traveled a lot around the country so that he got to see for himself some of the historic sites, the beautiful

countryside, and of course, the Black Sea.

It was a bit quiet and lonely in the big old "Big House" once Coll set off for university and we terribly missed him and our daughter, Skye, who also graduated from ACS. We lived abroad for 27 years in 7 countries, so as a result, we are very close as a family, we are our own best friends. When Skye and Coll went off to university, at least there was e-mail, so we did

communicate, when he bothered to write. Eventually we wanted to be closer to our children so after ten wonderful years, we left ACS and Bulgaria to return to California. We got to live with Coll in our house in Monterey for another two years before he set off for San Diego to pursue his career. The accident that took his precious life occurred while he was working at the job he loved, training sea lions for the U.S. Navy. He was known there as an extremely skilled, dedicated, and hard worker. His colleagues loved and respected him very much.

While we continue to deal with this tragedy, we know that your thoughts are with us and that provides moral support. Thank you.

Louis and Deana Perske



Family photo at Devil's Playground, Grand Cayman Island,

CLASS NOTES

Alumni

Daniella Molle '97:

My family and I live in Madison, WI, a small city of around half a million people (including the surrounding suburbs). Outside of Madison, there are corn and soybean fields and dairy farms. Fortunately for us, there are also a lot of parks and lakes. I technically work for the University of Wisconsin - Madison but not as a professor; I'm a researcher. I am very happy to only do research. I work with the teachers of students whose first language is not English and try to figure out how to guide those teachers in facilitating the

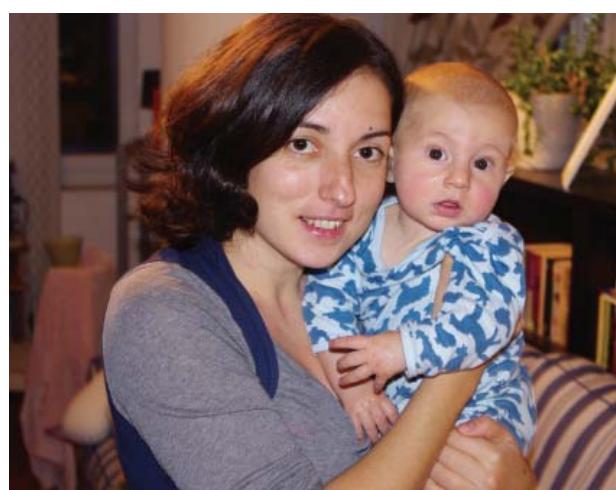
learning of multilingual students. I love my job because I am a member of a team of talented and dedicated professionals, and because I feel that my work matters. And I get to sit for hours poring over things that people said to each other. I consider myself extremely lucky, especially on days when both my kids eat their vegetables.



Daniella Molle '97 with her parents, brother, two children, and partner (behind the camera), School House Beach, Washington Island, WI (on the shores of Lake Michigan), August 2014.

Petya Ivanova '97:

Hey there! As the photo suggests, in June our family grew by one lovely baby boy named Stellan. It has been such a joy to get to know this new person ever



Petya Ivanova '97 with Stellan

since. Stellan has been as serene as his name (of Scandinavian origin meaning 'calm') suggests. I am happy to have given up on maintaining a balance in life for the moment and I absolutely cherish the time in which I have the chance to spend with him daily. I still play entrepreneur by running a parent-initiated kindergarten (a.k.a. cooperative) together with good friends of mine. Our four-and-a-half-year-old daughter Siena has played happily in

KoOpcheto for 3 years now and continues to amaze us daily with her open-mindedness and thirst for knowledge, so we must have done something right.

I can't wait to meet my dear friends Delyana (Burdjeva) Glover, Katya Vassileva and Tanya (Veleva) Popova at Tanya's surprise baby shower in Brussels in December. For Delyana, coming down from Stockholm where she lives now, Stellan, and me this will also be our first chance to meet Katya's little baby boy Martin born in July.

Happy holidays everyone! Be kind, loving and forgiving to yourselves!





ACS ALUMNI Magazine



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