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# insider

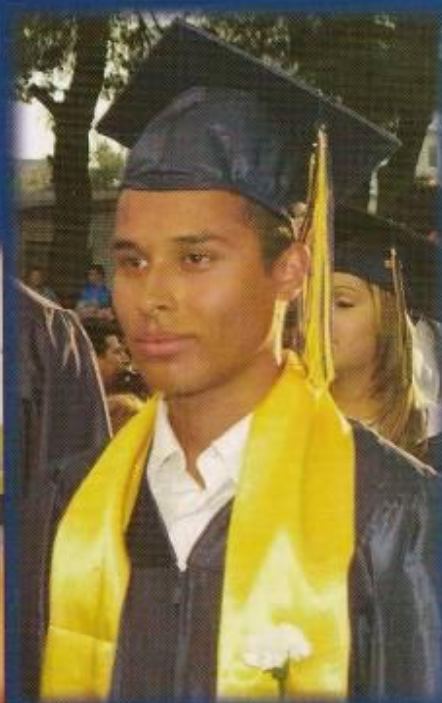


## Ahead of the Class: International Education

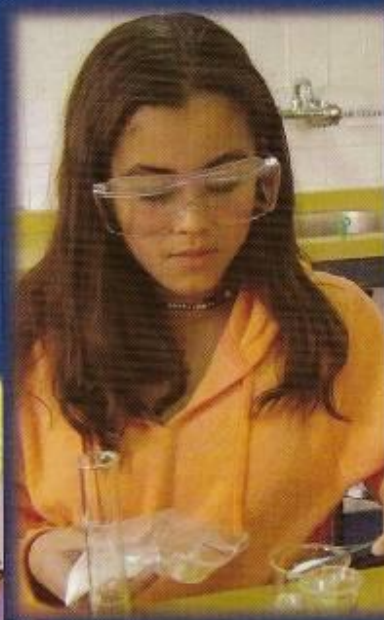
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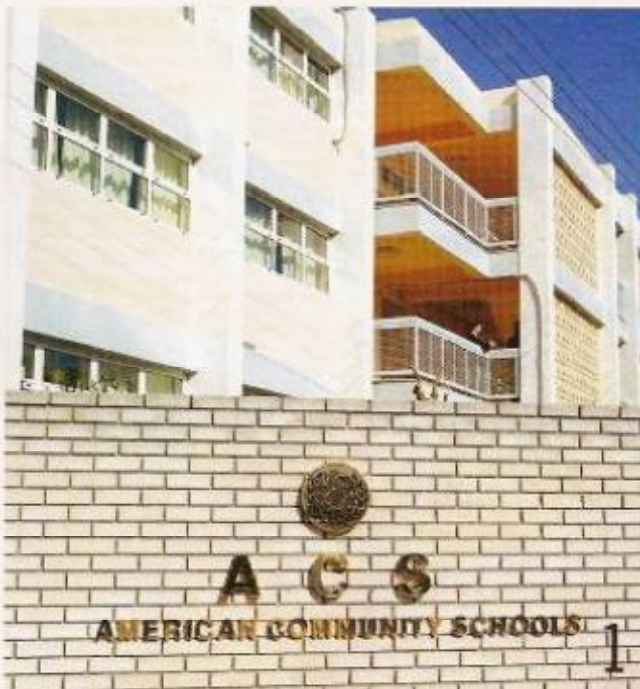
# Kudos for ACS!



The American Community Schools of Athens celebrated its 60th anniversary in style during a gala dinner at the Grande Bretagne. The pioneering school once again innovated by introducing the concept of a silent auction to Athens, including sport memorabilia, artwork and lavish holiday packages. The elegant dinner was followed by a live performance by singer Julie Massino and dancing under the period chandeliers of the landmark hotel's ballroom. Here are some of the event's attendees smiling at *Insider's* flash.



- 1 Guests of Honor. Celebrated ACS parent and author Nicholas Gage of *Eleni* and *Greek Fire* fame who flew from the States for the occasion seen with Julie Massino of TV's *Fame Story*, who managed to escape for one night only from the popular reality show in honor of ACS.
- 2 Dr. Stefanos Gialamas, CEO of ACS, and wife Dr. Sofia Hilentzaris
- 3 Thomas M. Countryman, US Deputy Chief of Mission, and wife DeeDee
- 4 US Embassy's Cultural Attaché Gloria Berbena
- 5 US Embassy's Commercial Attaché Steve Alley and wife Kristal
- 6 Tim Ananiadis, General Manager of the Grande Bretagne and wife Jennifer, the event's co-chairwoman and PTA Representative
- 7 Dimitri Linos, MD with wife Athina Linos, MD, with Dr. Stefanos Gialamas and Nicholas Gage
- 8 ACS mother, the NY based gallery-owner Kelly Mitropoulos with brother entrepreneur, Christos Intzidis and his wife architect Alexandra Platsouka-Intzidi and *Insider's* editor Takis Karpoutzoglou
- 9 A happy group of ACS parents including Vanessa Adams, Eric and Evanne Sharp
- 10 Julie Massino with Jennifer Ananiadis
- 11 Bill Peneros with alumna Paola Katrantzos
- 12 Baring Olufsson and friends
- 13 Nick Giavaras of Deree College with Dr. Thomas Rocco from HAU and wife Helen
- 14 The GB Ballroom was decorated in grand style
- 15 ACS students all dressed up
- 16 Lambros and Deborah Papaeconomou
- 17 Artist Erietta Vordoni-Potamianou
- 18 Auctioned uniform of Annie Constantinides, of the Greek National Women's Basketball Team
- 19 Konstantinos and Annette Sioulas
- 20 Photographer Costa Picada and wife Christine
- 21 Christoforos Voglis of the GB with Tina Trangaki



# Commitment to Excellence

**Cheryl Novak** accounts American Community School's 60-year old rich history, filled with success stories, actors, astronauts, politicians, scientists and athletes, all shaped by the best of Greek and American culture in an international setting

PHOTO BY C. PICADAS, COURTESY OF THE ACS ARCHIVES

The concept of the American Community School can be traced back to 1945, nine years before the school's actual inception. At the close of WWII, Athens was inundated with British soldiers and their families, struggling to adjust to Greece and desiring to provide a proper education for their children. The families improvised and organized small schools out of several homes in Glyfada, officially establishing the British Army School. A tide of American forces soon arrived in Greece as the British mission receded, transforming the British Army School into the Anglo-American school. With great numbers came organization and the establishment of more suitable educational facilities in Kolonaki and Psychiko (later moved to Filothei). Former ACS Athens teacher Mrs. Aphrodite Allsebrook, who was with the school from the British Army School days, recalls the seemingly unquenchable need for English speaking teachers in those days. "In 1950, I was asked to teach Greek in Psychiko and Kolonaki. Before I knew it, I was teaching everything! I didn't have a teaching degree; I was a chemist!"

During the 50's, Allsebrook recounts that, "There were thousands of Americans in Athens with their children in those days, but at the school, we were like one big family...The teachers, mostly foreigners, supported one another as they adjusted to Greece. We had parties at one another's houses and everyone had a great relationship. The students had their fraternities, homecoming activities...everything that normal students in America had." In 1952, a new high school was founded in a rented villa in Kifissia which was almost immediately at capacity, demanding the installation of Quonset huts - prefabricated military shelters with semicircular roofs made of corrugated metal.

Allsebrook dispels rumors and mystery around the short-lived Junior School in Kalamaki during the 50's. Belina Makris, Alumni Affairs at ACS Athens, "heard that a plane crashed on the Kalamaki School." Setting the record straight, Allsebrook recalls that, "One evening, we weren't there thank goodness, an airplane crashed in a yard right next to the school. It was two American pilots from the Vouliagmeni air force base and unfortunately, the plane caught on fire and they both died. After this, the school recognized that it was not in a safe location and they indeed packed up and left overnight! We couldn't have children there when we had the fear of planes falling on our head." The Junior School was transferred to a building on the American base until a more suitable location could be had, a dream that ACS Athens would finally realize in 1960.

In 1954, the Anglo-American school officially became known as the American Community Schools and was chartered in the US State of Delaware as a private, non-profit educational institution for the children of American diplomatic and military personnel, operating on tuition fees. Despite the name, ACS Athens has always been international; 1954's graduating class represented nine countries. In 1960, ACS Athens fulfilled its dream to find a home which could grow with the students and purchased the current property in Halandri, which then contained two buildings. The two buildings immediately housed grades 1-6 and grade 7-12. Makris laughs as she recounts alumni stories that, "at that time, the two buildings were separated by a main road and surrounded by farms. Fortunately, Dr. John Dorbis, Superintendent at the time, was responsible for convincing the Greek government to let them buy that road in 1988 because it was constantly filled with gypsies selling their goods!"

Allsebrook recalls the years from 1962 - 1985 as "trying years." She admits that, "while the school was constantly developing there were always talks of closing...But I never believed them. The only time we 'closed' was for a few days during the coup...We were so scared...But in reality, life went on like normal inside of the school and we were never bothered." Despite political turmoil in Greece, ACS Athens continued with its improvements. In 1964, the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges accredited the high school (K-12 followed in 1980). A branch of ACS Athens even opened on Rhodes in 1968 for the thirty children of Voice of America stationed there (this eventually closed in 1981). During this time, a bridge was built to connect the high school, also called the Academy, and the Middle School. The bridge contained science labs, administrative offices, a conference room, the current cafeteria (originally the library), the current library and fine arts rooms. In 1976, ACS Athens became one of the first schools authorized to teach the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program. The 80's followed with the school's invaluable official recognition by the Greek Ministry of Education.

Perusing the 1960's and 1970's *Evzone*, ACS's Yearbook, one will notice that as the years pass, each graduating class seems somehow older. While always involved in community works programs, sports and special clubs, the students start showing more awareness and concern for the world around them, evidenced in the inclusion of historical and political information in the yearbooks. For example, 1964's *Evzone* is dedicated to the late President John F. Kennedy and also contains a receipt of the class' condolence letter for the "King of Hellenes, H.R.M. Pavlos the First." In the late 60's, the space race was brought to ACS Athens by astronaut James Lovell who presented photos from his Gemini VII flight in 1965 and Gemini XII space walk in 1966. 1969 closed out with a visit from then US Ambassador to Greece, the Honorable Philips Talbot. 1974's *Evzone* offers a sharp demarcation from years past by including photos of tanks rolling through Athens and suggestive song lyrics, mostly by David Bowie, Raymond Douglas Davies and Shel Silverstein, questioning recent political events and the students' own roles in a corrupt, uncertain world.





1 The ACS Main Building 2 The school's on indoor swimming pool 3 Sport has an important place in American Education and that holds true for ACS 4 Inside a classroom 5 A flash from 1974's freshman class 6 ACS CEO Stephanos Giannos, PhD, seen here with students 7 Mrs. Allsbrook teaching a class in the 1969 Yearbook which was dedicated to her for her then 16 years of teaching 8 Hollywood superstar Jaye Macfield dropped by to teach a class at ACS while filming a movie entitled "It happened in Athens" in 1961 9 ACS students in front of Airforce One during then President Clinton's 1999 Greece visit 10 Photo of a former ACS school in Kifisia, located on Tatoi Road 11 Former US Ambassador to Greece Nicholas Burns welcomes President Clinton at ACS 12 In 1999, astronaut Scott Parazynski, class of '79, visits ACS to present a plaque which he flew in outer space in honor of the school 13 1961's ACS Trojans-Flouris 1- This fraternity created the Athenians and boasted 1st and 2nd place in all intramural activities 14 Visiting astronaut James Lovell at ACS, second from left, in 1968 15 In 1968, The Honorable Phillips Talbot, US Ambassador to Greece, visit ACS

Perhaps in reaction to the turmoil of the 1970's, ACS Athens fought back with strategic growth strategies in the 80's and 90's. In 1986, ACS Athens closed the Kifisia Elementary School, consolidating all educational facilities in Halandri. ACS Athens' education initiatives landed the school two awards from the Carnegie Commission for Promoting Excellence in Education. With the closing of the American bases in 1992-93 and over 45 countries represented at the school, ACS Athens officially became "The International School in Greece." At the same time, it launched ACS 2000, a five-year strategic plan that would eventually make ACS Athens a full JK-12 International Baccalaureate school.

Since the development of ACS 2000, ACS Athens has embarked on a steady program of curricular innovations, which has prepared students to enter the top universities in the UK, North America and around the world. For the past five years, the ACS Athens senior class college acceptance rate has hovered between 90-100%. "The best thing about this statistic," comments Middle School and Academy Principal Steve Medeiros, who has been at ACS Athens since 1981, "is that nearly all of our students have found themselves in their first or second choice schools. This is the consequence of strong academic preparation, extensive counseling services and the opportunity to participate in a wide-range of cultural, social, athletic and service activities."

Another milestone in ACS' history occurred in 2004, when ACS Athens was authorized by the Greek Ministry of Education to offer classes and examinations leading to awarding the Greek Apolytirio.

Now, 60 years after the school's founding, Dr. Stefanos Gialamas, the new Director of ACS Athens has even more ambitious plans for ACS Athens' future. The school's most recent developments include a stunning state-of-the-art theater, conference rooms, an Olympic regulation swimming pool and a gym, funded by generous donors. By 2008, the entire school will be wireless and provide lap-tops for all students. Dr. Gialamas relates that, among other things, the objective of ACS is "to develop leaders." He adds, "ACS Athens' rigorous academic program will be enriched by the presence of the ACS Athens Summer Institute which will present innovative college courses in conjunction with Bentley College, Williams College, Tufts University and York University."

Makris can substantiate the school's focus on leadership development through recent alumni leaders in their fields. Such as class of 79's Scott Parazynski, Astronaut Parazynski returned to ACS Athens in 1999 to thank the school for his education and presented it with a plaque, which he flew in outer space in ACS Athens' honor. In addition to an astronaut, ACS Athens boasts Academy Award Nominee for Best Supporting Actor in *As Good as It Gets*, Greg Kinnear; Academy Award Winning Producer of *L.A. Confidential* Mark Wolper; Sally Quinn, award winning journalist and author; and class of 83's NBA basketball star Ronnie Seichaly.

So what is it that makes ACS Athens able to produce so many brilliant minds? From an outsider's perspective, it would seem that, however beneficial, the key cannot be the school's ever changing facilities, but rather the constants in ACS Athens' history. ACS Athens' priceless gems are the international nature of the school, its commitment to academic and social excellence, its dedicated teachers and the school's location in a country which stands at the cross-roads of civilizations. Examining many graduation addresses, one will find that speakers pick up on this last point and offer life lessons to be learned from Greece. In 1989, William D.E. Coulson, Director of the American School of Classical Studies, explicates some Greek wisdom, which still resonates today in this time of terrorism, religious conflict and cartoon controversy. He stated: Next year marks the two thousand five hundredth [now 2,516th] anniversary of the birth of democracy in Greece...What is the nature of the democratic process? It is a process that demands, above all, respect for one's fellow man. You do not have to like your fellow man, but you must respect him, his ideas, feelings and beliefs...The word 'democracy' means, of course, the rule of the people; this definition does not mean, however, a rule in which every person can do as he or she likes, but one based on mutual understanding and, above all, respect.

If ACS Athens' graduates can glean such priceless information from their experiences in Greece meanwhile retaining their exercises in academic rigor, multiculturalism and compassion, we will see many more leaders pass through the halls of ACS Athens in the future.



For more information visit [www.acs.gr](http://www.acs.gr)

