

From Kindergarten to Abitur

It's 2021! With amazement I am looking back . . . to 1979! Sixty years of the German School and I have been part of it for 42 years. I entered kindergarten at the GISW, formerly DSW, in 1979 and left the school after my Abitur in 1994. However, my connection to the school has continued far beyond this date. My brother Jascha finished with his Abitur in 1996, and my mother still teaches French and Spanish every year to countless students at the school. A new generation of my family has emerged at the school with my seven year old daughter Ariel, now in second grade, and my four year old son Ori in kindergarten.



Figure 1 Birgit Fields, Jessica's mother and GISW French teacher with Jessica's children, Ariel (2B) and Ori (Kindergarten: Seahorses)

After my Abitur, my education continued with two Bachelor of Science degrees, a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Master of Healthcare Administration degree, a Master of Business Administration, at the University of Maryland, and ending with a Doctor of Medicine, specializing in internal medicine, in 2002. Since 2002 I have worked in Washington D.C.'s largest hospital, the Washington Hospital Center, in cardiology and internal medicine. I am currently also working as a physician advisor responsible for "coding and safety/quality metrics" an important aspect of a smooth running hospital.

I have fond memories of my life at the school, of Mrs. Dejong at the kindergarten and Mr. Gunther Neubecker, the principal of the elementary school in those days. I still have contact with Mr. Neubecker on a weekly basis. I visited my favorite French/Latin teacher, Mr. Ellwein and his children in Germany. I babysat them for a long time. Also, my favorite English teacher, Mr. McCauley and I still exchange messages. Mr. Neubecker recalls me as a vivacious redhead that always wanted to be a medical doctor. He was overjoyed when he found out that I fulfilled my dream!

I stayed in touch with many classmates and enjoy meeting my old teachers, like Dr. "D" (Dreher), Frau Bohls, Frau Meuschke and others at special school events. They all have always been good to me, helping me to become a well-balanced person who looks back on school life with some attachment. I hope that my own children will have the same rewarding experiences

as they move forward through school and they also develop lifelong bonds like I did. My school years were rigorous learning experiences but filled with joy. When I became a medical doctor, I never anticipated a global pandemic. Despite difficult times during the COVID pandemic I would not want my life to have developed in any other way.

I have been associated with the GISW for 42 years! Maybe I will be taking my grandchildren to the school in the years to come as third generation students? My memories of bygone days at the school will be forever cherished. Happy 60th birthday to the German School!

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