

Hitting a Home Run

The 60th anniversary of the German School Washington D.C. (DSW)--as it was called when I attended the school between 1983 and 1986--is a most joyful occasion for me to remember my school days. There was no other school which had such a big impact on my personal development as this one. I was about to turn 13 years old when I moved to the United States, and I spent three important years of my young life there. Not only did I learn English as a mother tongue and feel at home with students who had moved around the world most of their young lives, as I did, but predominantly I was caught-up in the school's spirit shown by persons like Anton Kasparbauer.

At the DSW, I experienced togetherness and connectedness within my class, among most students of all grades in or outside school, and also on school bus #5. There was feeling of acceptance and tolerance for individualism at the school, even though we were all teenagers who wanted to be part of the crowd. Maybe the impulse for fashion wasn't yet that strong at the DSW in the 80s. That probably helped, too.

I have many memories from my years at DSW: *Oktoberfest*, *Abschlussball*, square dancing, theater plays, and musical events. One class excursion to the National Gallery of Arts ignited the spark for culture and art in me. Maybe this event was the impetus for me to become an art historian and complete a doctor's degree.

Before receiving my Abitur in 1990 near Bonn, I had visited six schools, so I certainly had a broad experience with different schools and teachers. I stopped counting the many different teachers I had, and, in the end, there were only a few teachers who come to my mind and who strongly influenced me. For me, there were the two

English teachers--Peter Dreher and George Padaroff--as well as Chris Barker, the sports teacher, who sadly passed away recently.

I would definitely like to thank Dr. D for encouraging me to write and to find pleasure in discovering words to express a inner world in the book that we were assigned to write in 8th grade. Despite our basic English abilities, I wrote a novelle that was a mixture of adventure and love set on the Mississippi River from the perspective of a youngster. Boy, was I proud to read the encouraging and constructive comments by Dr. D. I felt seen and understood, which kept me holding on to writing.

Further, it was Mr. Padaroff who taught us how to present persuasive speeches in the auditorium in front of our classmates. He was very strict in his instructions but soft and kind on the inside, while judging us.

Back then, these were assignments that we pretended not to like very much, but, in retrospect, they challenged us, and, at least for me, are now appreciated. Of course, teachers know best, as Mr. Padaroff said almost 20 years later.

We were kindly pushed to seek our inner-selves but were still respected for our ideas and thoughts as well as for our outbursts of fantasy. Both teachers were strict in terms of quality but also fair in their own specific ways and attitudes. By speaking out loud to the inner circle of our little world back then, we had the chance to recognize our interests and our potential as well as to overcome our fears; so we turned these reflections into the strengths. Little did we know

back then, it was fighting fire with fire. Happily, I am still writing and encouraging others to write.

Mr. Barker once trained us to play softball. As a teenager trying to be cool, I was afraid I would disgrace myself in front of my classmates by missing the ball. Due to a squint, I knew that I would not be able to hit the ball, since I had no spatial vision. At the time, I was wearing a t-shirt with the word *RELAX* on it, probably referring to the song “Relax” by the group Frankie Goes to Hollywood. Anyway, this was the chance for Mr. Barker to remind me to relax, breathe deeply, and take my time. He also showed me how to hold the bat correctly and stay focused on the ball. Well, I hit the ball . . . and it flew across the



Christina Rosnersky still remembers hitting a home run at the DSW in Coach Barker’s class.

field. For me, the pitch was historic because I hit a home run, for the first and probably the last in my life. Because of the awareness of one person— Coach Barker, the home-run was a life changing moment for me.

Why do I tell these narratives? These memories are experiences and resources that have made me what I am today. I experienced challenge and encouragement, teamwork and individualism, fairness and quality, which I am able to transfer to my clients today, working as a consultant, therapist, coach, author, and curator.

A major goal in my life is to help people extend their horizons, to think outside of the box, and to assist people to live up to their potential, by helping them find new perspectives and solutions. Most of them want to create a friendly and humane world and ultimately build a more responsible future world that we will all love living in. And this is not meant to be cheesy. I often wonder what else might have been possible, if we had experienced more encouragement to develop our talents, competences, skills, and strengths rather than hearing others stress our flaws. Being part of the DSW for three years, my longest stay at any one school, gave me, as a child of diplomats, the chance to be connected and to become part of an alumni community, and, as it turns out, belonging to a special community for a lifetime. Thank you for this wonderful experience!

Dr. Christina Rosnersky

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DSW 1983-1986, 7a to 9a