International House Newsletter Fall 2002

25th Anniversary

See inside for details
So why remember?
On the 5th November 1605, a man called Guido (Guy) Fawkes was caught under the Houses of Parliament, famously about to light at least 20 barrels of gunpowder in order blow up the King, James I, his ministers and the members of parliament. This episode of English history became known as "The Gun Powder Plot".

Two years after the death of Queen Elizabeth I, Robert Catesby and his followers were angry at the new Kings' unwillingness to be more tolerant towards the Roman Catholics. They decided that they must take drastic action.

Robert Catesby recruited Francis Tresham, one of four Roman Catholics. Tresham wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Lord Monteagle, warning him not to go to Parliament. Monteagle told the King and Parliament. On 5th November, the Kings' guards stormed the cellars beneath parliament, found Guy Fawkes, and arrested him. After two days of torture, Guy Fawkes revealed the names of the co-conspirators. There were 13 conspirators in total. They were convicted of high treason.

The punishment was to be hung, drawn and quartered, one of the most gruesome torture methods ever devised in Britain. Guy Fawkes was executed in front of the Houses of Parliament, his head placed upon spikes on London Bridge.

So what is the Point?!
Parliament agreed in 1606 to make the 5th November a public thanksgiving. Since this time, the United Kingdom and some of the former British colonies, e.g. Newfoundland Canada and New Zealand, have been celebrating the defeat of the plot by creating bonfires and setting off huge firework displays. The noticeable thing about the bonfire is the "Guy" who is placed at the top of the bonfire, representing Guy Fawkes. The Guy is made by children out of old clothes, straw, papier mache and anything else they can lay their hands on. Traditionally children would drag the guy around and beg on the streets by saying "Penny for the guy" in order to buy fireworks for the night.
This nursery rhyme is instilled into the minds of young children throughout the United Kingdom even today.

"Remember, remember
The 5th November
Gunpowder treason and plot
We see no reason
Why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot!"

The night is Bonfire Night or sometimes called Guy Fawkes Night.

Hung drawn and quartered:
The torture was more like drawn, hung then quartered. The sufferer was dragged behind a horse on a kind of fence to a public of execution where people could spit and throw things (rotten vegetables, stones) at them. They were then hung, but before they slipped into unconsciousness, they were cut down, placed on a table where their genitalia was cut off and their stomachs were slit open. The intestines were removed and burned in front of the still conscious sufferer. Being a torturer was classed as an art on how long you could keep the sufferer alive. The remaining organs were torn out and finally the head would be cut off and parboiled to stop it rotting and the body split into four pieces. The pieces were generally displayed on the various gates of London. This was done in front a large crowd, including children that would be eager to watch.
Open your eyes and discover!
As an international city, Montreal offers a lot of entertainment. So, open your eyes and enjoy your time. Have you ever taken the subway? Probably. Try the "metro" (subway) in Montreal and discover the city underground. You will find miles of stores of every kind. In fact, you can go shopping downtown Montreal without ever going outside, because all the malls are connected underground. You think it is too cold outside? Let's visit The Eaton center, The Bay, Simmons, Montreal Trust place, Les cours Mont-Royal et Les Ailes de la Mode, etc. Pleasure guaranteed!

For those who do not like shopping, don't be disappointed, because Montreal is not only a good place to shop but also a hockey city. Go encourage the Canadien of Montreal at the Molson center. You will feel the fever of hockey. Don’t forget to sing “Let’s go Canadien, let’s go!” or, with French style, “Go habs go!” (Go dwellers go!)

Winter is over and there is no more hockey? Then you will discover our passion for Formula One. We actively support our favorite racecar driver who is Jacques Villeneuve. If you want to experience the great atmosphere of Formula One’s fans, go to a coffee shop in “Little Italy”. The colors of Ferrari are everywhere.

Another particularity of Montreal: the movies! Indeed, if you are lucky, you will see the production of a Hollywood movie in the city. Montreal has become one of the favorite places of Hollywood to make their movies. Why? First, the staff are qualified to work on the production. Moreover, the mix of European and North American architecture is a great advantage. Finally, the cheap price with the exchange of money is really attractive. Sometimes, some movie productions need extras. Be aware and become a star for a day!

Smell the perfume of diversity!
Montreal is composed of people from everywhere around the world. It means that there are a lot of different cultures, different languages and different foods. Therefore, you can appreciate different odors. Visit Chinatown and smell exotic fruits or delicious pastries. Go to “Little Italy” and enjoy the smell of coffee.

In the field of your “smelling experience”, you cannot miss visiting “Le Jardin Botanique”. This is one of the most popular attractions. There are flowers and plants everywhere for the pleasure of your eyes…and your nose!

Before leaving Montreal, don’t forget to treat yourself. Visit Lush, Fruits de la Passion, or Bella Pella shops to bring with you a piece of the smell of Montreal. What about a maple perfumed soap?
Delight your taste buds!
Did we talk about maple? I am pretty sure that you have heard about how delicious our maple syrup is. For a traditional experience, go visiting a “cabane a sucre” (free translation: home of sweets), and taste all the meals with maple syrup. This tasty experience will end with the maple syrup that we put on snow. This traditional dessert is called “tire sur la neige”. Mmm…But hurry up! The maple syrup season is only from March to April.

If you are looking for a “gastronomy trip”, Montreal is a great place to visit. Indeed, Montreal is full of restaurants from all the countries around the world. You can taste exotic foods from Afghanistan, Peru, El Salvador, Reunion Island, etc. Tempt yourself!

"Did you hear that? It is so exotic!"
Yes, we speak French in Montreal! Moreover, we have a specific accent, totally different from France. You can try to learn some French words, like “merci” (thank you) or “s’il-vous-plait” (please). French speakers will appreciate your efforts. However, if you really want to impress them, you can try to say a real Quebec expression such as “Il fait fretté!” (It is cold!)

Music is a part of our culture. We have a lot of singers in Quebec. In fact, we are proud of our origin and our music. If you want to experience a Quebecois party, you definitely have to go to “Les deux pierrots”, which is a club with a band…and people who like to party! Atmosphere guaranteed!

Furthermore, Montreal is famous for it’s nightlife. You will find a club for every kind of music that you like. Actually, Latin music is really popular in Montreal. It is your chance to get into the “salsa fever”! Don’t miss it!

The softness of a caress…
Have you thought of Montreal for your honeymoon? There are many romantic activities in Montreal. First, you can begin your dreamy escape by going skiing. Afterwards, you go to a chalet and you lay down next to the fireplace. We call it “apres-ski”, which is by far the favorite part of skiing for lovers. If you want to try an even more exotic place to stay, you can find a tipi. Moreover, you can find a theme room, like “Jules Cesar et Cleopatre” or “Romeo and Juliette”. Definitely romantic!

On the other hand, if you don’t like snow, you can still do romantic activities during summer. Twice a week, we have a firework fest where many countries compete. Lay down in the grass with your partner and enjoy your night! Furthermore, you should visit the Old Port of Montreal with your beloved. What about a ride in a carriage or a cruise on the St-Laurent river? The softness of a caress can be found everywhere.

Pour le plaisir des sens…let’s visit Montreal!
Although the whole of China has the same time zone, which is quite amazing considering the size of China, parts of the country can look so drastically different. On one hand, on the coast are the rapidly developing cities and metropolitans; yet, other places may be so behind that a color television could be considered as something very luxurious and rare. This summer, I spent six weeks in Beijing for an internship and a visit to my relatives. It was perhaps one of the most meaningful summer experiences I have had. As the Chinese capital, Beijing always gave me the impression of an ideal communist city. Everything state-owned, total government control, minimal modern developments, and the effort to keep anything foreign or anything that does not follow the communist ideal as far away as possible. However, I was quite wrong.

As I walked out of my international flight from Hong Kong (it was interesting to find out that although Hong Kong is now part of China, flying from Hong Kong to Beijing was still considered an international flight), I was quite impressed by the newly renovated airport, which was very modernized and fully equipped with up to date equipment. I was also very shocked when the customs officers treated me with manners and a friendly welcoming smile as they checked my travelling documents. As I hopped into my uncle’s car, I saw a rapidly developing city with a great infrastructure complete with an excellent system of transportation including a subway station. I had never thought of Beijing having a subway system. Everything just looked amazing, except for the extra crowded streets full of traffic with private cars, taxis and buses instead of the well-known Beijing bikes. I also couldn’t stop myself from counting how many McDonald’s restaurants there were as I went from the airport to my uncle’s home.

Beijing pretty much reminded me of other larger cities in China, such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen, which are cities very close to Hong Kong and became developed due to geographical advantage. However, the development of the city was not that shocking compared to how friendly and helpful the people of Beijing were. Years ago, when I travelled to China with my parents, there was no way someone would apologize to you if he accidentally bumped into you. You would be lucky if they didn’t bump into you in order to try and steal your possessions. My colleagues were wonderful, not shy at all to talk about the weaknesses of their government or complaining about their jobs, criticizing their leaders and joking about society. I also read newspapers from Hong Kong through the Internet everyday and had no problem connecting to CNN or accessing other media. One rumor I heard about difficulty to purchase a bible in China was definitely false too.

However, I do think a lot of the development needs to be better planned and organized and that the government should form an organization to keep corruption down. A lot of the time, construction or engineering projects are stopped in the middle due to weak planning, and projects are usually given to those that are “friends” or have a “good relation” with the company. Moreover, although a lot of companies claim that they are solely private, you could be sure that the government is always a shareholder. Last but not least, it was quite boring to read the Beijing times as it never reported any bad news, except if the news was so bad and serious that it was hard to hide.

Looking at the brighter side, life in the capital city was pretty good, lots of great museums, and perhaps the best historical sites in China, and lots of cultural activities. I also had no problem finding plenty of great and inexpensive restaurants to dine in, both western and Chinese, great libraries and sporting facilities and huge up-to-date malls with all the fancy brand names, great clubs and discos, and it was very safe going around even at night. To top it all off, all these great things come at a very low price, as the cost of living in Beijing is still quite low compared to that of other well developed cities such as Tokyo or Hong Kong.
This story started a few days after I arrived at the International House last August. I was walking around the basement, looking at the posters showing pictures of former residents when I saw, on the 1989 poster, the picture of a woman I knew. But it’s only after I had a look at her name that I realized I didn’t know her because I had ever met her, but because everybody in France knows her! Her name is Muriel Hermine and if you have no idea of who she is, let me give you a short biography of this amazing athlete.

Muriel Hermine found her vocation early, indeed, she started swimming at the age of 8, and at the same time she was also taking ballet dance classes. However, she quickly realized that she was too tall to become a professional dancer. She was 12 when her swimming coach created a new synchronized swimming section. This was a revelation, the young Muriel could finally combine her two biggest passions: swimming and dancing. Two years later she joined the French National Junior team of synchronized swimming. From this moment, she started collecting titles: Muriel Hermine was 12 times French National Champion, 4 times European Champion. She also earned the bronze medal during the World Championship in Madrid, and she was 7th at Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984 and 4th at Seoul Olympic Games in 1988.

After all those awards, Muriel Hermine finally got some rest and came to San Jose State University to study for one semester, which actually turned out to be a major turning point in her career. I decided to interview her to know more about the second part of her career and to see which memories she still has about this place more than 10 years after her 6 month stay in the I-House.

How would you describe your 6 month experience as an I-House resident?
My 6 months living in the I-House were mostly been about joy, sharing and ingenuousness, everything “normal” teenagers live but which I hadn’t been able to live because I spent most of my time training for the Olympics and the World Championships.

Do you have any anecdote or particular memory about your I-House experience you would like to share with us?
Yes, I remember for instance the gap between my roommate and I; she was preparing for her Ph. D and I was only there to learn English. But I also remember that I was studying as hard and with the same strictness as during my swimming trainings.

Could you summarize your career since your “I-House experience”?
One year after I came back from San Jose (June 1990), I created my first show called Sirella, which was performed at the same time on land, in water and in the air. In 1992, we started a tour around France, followed by a 6 month tour around Japan. After that, I created Crescend’O, which was a combination between the world of circus and the world of water. The concept of this show was used by Le Cirque Du Soleil which put on a show called O in Las Vegas. And I’m now working on my next show starting in Paris in March 2003, which deals with integration and tolerance. Surprisingly, there won’t be any water in this show; to me, it symbolizes the result of my change of occupation process started 15 years ago.

What does the I-House represent to you?
The I-House is an opportunity to meet people of any age, from every background and every nationality but with the common goal to learn a language, discover a culture while at the same time sharing their own experience and culture.

Do you think your stay in the I-House had any influence on your career?
Yes I do, because this is where I experienced everything my career as an international athlete prevented me from experiencing. Moreover, being immersed among people who didn’t know me allowed me to be myself, with my qualities and my failings, and not to be an image people see on TV anymore. That was life, real life…

You now know a bit more about this uncommon International House resident, but if you feel like learning even more about Muriel Hermine’s life and career, you can visit her official website at www.murielhermine.com.
I know you have a hate for me within,
’Cause you only see the colour of my skin,
Now tell me, is your hate justified?
What makes you think that you are right?

Black, white, yellow, red!
Your hate is only in your head,
We’re all part of the human race,
Yeah I know, it’s a real disgrace.

If you looked past the skin, you would see
We’re actually not that different, you and me
We both have feelings
And hate to have them hurt

We laugh when we’re happy,
And cry when we’re sad
So really the only difference
Is that you feel the need to judge me

And I accept you for you.
I am so happy to see my name on the acceptance list of St. Mary’s High School, one of the most prestigious private high schools in Indonesia. It has been my dream to play for St. Mary's basketball team and play in the Regional Championship. St. Mary's basketball team ranks number 5 in Nationals and getting onto the team will be my first priority. People don't really see me as a basketball player. They say that I am too feminine to be one. I am 5 feet and four inches tall, weighing 120 pounds; well, I know my capability and I am going for it.

The first three weeks are the most hectic weeks of the school year. This week will be my basketball tryout. "Alegra, Alegra Winarto," the assistant coach is calling my name. I answer quickly and proceed to have an interview with the Head Coach, the men's team captain and the women's team captain. Twenty minutes of questioning and answering seems so long. They are finally done with the interview and invite me to come tomorrow to play on the basketball court. I smile and assure them that I will be there at 4:00 P.M. sharp ready to show my skills. I turn away and catch him looking at me. The most beautiful eyes I have ever seen. He throws a smile at me. He is the men's team captain, Adrian Hartono; a tall, handsome, smart, nice guy I have heard. I am suddenly breathing very fast as he approaches me. "Hi, I am Adrian. Nice to meet you," he starts the conversation. "Looking forward to see you play tomorrow. Don't worry you'll do well," he encourages me. When they call my name and group me with a temporary team, I give them the best point guard performance I have ever played. The next thing I know, I am officially a St. Mary's basketball player.

A year has passed by. This is my second year at St. Mary's and Adrian's last one. Week after week, practice after practice, tournament after tournament, Adrian and I have become very close to each other. We often go out together in a big group to parties, dinners, movies, and road trips. We even flirt with each other. My parents adore him and his parents are crazy about me.

This month will be my second Regional Championship Tournament. Both of us are busy with our own tournaments and practices. We rarely see each other. It is strange because I am starting to miss him a lot and think about him often. I want him to pull me in his arms and never let me go. I try to stay focused on the game and erase him from my mind. I see him at halftime. He smiles and hugs me gently. "What are you thinking? You are not concentrating," he says. I just smile at him and say nothing as we stare silently at each other. "Bring home the trophy Alegra, just like last year. I know you can do it," he supports me. I return to the game with confidence. I know we will win; we have come this close and we are not giving up. At the end of the second half the score is 80 to 76; St Mary wins. I hold my second Regional Championship trophy with my hands proudly.

We spend a great week together in Bali; his grandparents are wonderful. One night after dinner, Adrian and I decide to walk on the beach. We share stories, experiences, talk about basketball, and the future. We just lay on the sand and enjoy the extraordinary view of the sky; a view that we seldom see in Jakarta. He holds me tightly and gently whispers, "Alegra, you are the most beautiful girl in the whole world. You are talented, smart, kind, passionate, a wonderful friend, and a great sports player. Do you have any idea?" I blush and my mind flies to the deep end of the beach trying to find the meaning of what he just said.
Two months pass by and school starts again. My classes are getting harder, so much work to do. On Saturday afternoon I see Adrian arrive in the middle of practice. I can feel something is terribly wrong. He approaches me after practice; he looks very nervous. "Alegra, I really need to talk to you," he says, "My dad has arranged for me to continue my studies in Australia. I decided to go," he continues. I find out that he has been making this plan to study abroad for years. He is leaving in a week. I feel so miserable and I don’t know why. Is it because I never told him that I love him more than just a friend, or is it that he is going to leave and we may never see each other again?

On a rainy day at the airport, he kisses me goodbye. He holds me tightly and whispers in my ear, "Alegra, I have always loved you and I will continue to always love you forever. You will be my one and only special girl in my heart," He kisses me again. I whisper back at him, "I have always loved you too." That rainy day at the airport I watch him leave and take my heart with him.
My friends have always claimed that I am a very adaptable person. Since I was young, I have been to many states within my own country, Malaysia, because of my national athletic schedule in competitions and races. Whenever I travel to one place for merely a week, I always get used to the people, food, scenes and weather. I never feel strange in a new environment. The same applied when I started two years college life in another city in my country.

As I headed to the U.S to study, I confronted all my fears about coming to America to study. Soon, I stepped on the United States' soil, a country that I spent 17 hours on a plane to reach. Everything went wrong; 'culture shock' I might say, had fallen on me. This surprised me. I couldn't believe it.

First, I was used to people with black hair and yellow skin, speaking either Malay or Chinese in my surrounding areas. However, here, the scenario in front of me is just like watching western movie clips, white people all around speaking English. This made me feel like I am a bit conservative and perhaps a bit like typical Chinese.

Next, I was aware and accepted that U.S customs on kissing and hugging differ from Malaysia. Kissing and hugging in Malaysia symbolize different meanings, depending on the person being kissed or hugged. I even practiced many times with my siblings at home. However, things didn't go as smoothly as I expected. When I first reached San José, a white friend gave me a big hug as a welcome gesture. I was shocked, really shocked, but after that, when I recalled back, I smiled to myself, and thought luckily he didn't give me a KISS (definitely I would not think like this right now; remember, I am a kind of person who easily adapts to the living environment).

Following was the food. It is really hard for me not to see chicken at least in every day's meals; I mean fried chicken anyway in the fast food restaurant. Mexican food is easily found here. I have gotten used to the meals eaten with rice and vegetables at home. Although Chinese restaurants are easily seen in California, most of the food has integrated with the custom of Americans. Most important is the quantity of food for a person here, which should be a two person's plate for me. I am not able to finish up a regular plate here and if I keep pushing the food into my stomach, sooner or later my stomach is going to burst.

These are my experiences during the first few weeks in the United States, a very personal experience. Although many difficulties have been faced during the early arrival, I never think of turning back to Malaysia. This is because to tackle an obstacle is not that tough, as long as one is determined and confident in oneself, finally everything will come to a solution. Just try our best and let God do the rest. Things may not go as perfectly as one expected, but if you never encounter hardship in your life, you will never grow, and you will never learn!
In the moonlight of the night, I sit weary, pondering my plight
Listening to the fluttering birds, flying towards the flourishing oaks,
From the woods across the stream, I see souls sleep in peace.
In the end, does it really matter, which side of the shore, I was to slumber?

What is the use of life? Where is the joy of life?
If the ecstasy of living is to become the pain of leaving
What is the purpose of life, love and learning?
If in the end, it should rot in my grave.
Why do I think about this life, and the one beyond?
If it doesn't even matter, after the inevitable hour has gone
In the end, does it really matter? Cause at the blink of an eye our lives go by.

The greatest force is that of Nature, against which I feel so deprived,
So this is all a law of Nature! That is not to be commanded, but to be obeyed!
As I thought throughout the dullness, emerged the sun creating brilliance,
In this brilliance returned birds, soaring towards the shining sun.
Rays of wisdom from the sun, played some magic on my mind,
Looking at the busy birds, I felt like a blooming bud.
In the end, it does really matter; for grieving the inevitable does least matter

In the end! I have seen the light,
As the beaming light and perching birds have killed my plight.
If Nature should keep on living! How could I think about not living?
In the end I am convinced, life is too precious for not craving,
In the end I am convinced! In the end life does matter.
Age. How often do you think about your age? I had never considered myself particularly concerned with the subject yet I have certainly become more conscious of it during my time as Director. Keep in mind as you read this that I have been here for most of 10 years which I break into the “early and late periods”, i.e. I-Center years and I-House years.

I do remember that when I started working at I-Center, many residents were older than I and one of my early concerns was whether these older residents would respect my decisions. What I found was that respect had less to do with age than with maturity.

I remember that in my early days at I-Center, one of the American residents commented, “You got your Driver’s License (at age 16) before I was even born! Another noted, “Oh my goodness, you graduated high school when I was just a year old!” As the years wore on, “high school” evolved into “college” and then “grad school”.

Last semester at I-House, as we finished a cross-cultural workshop on intercultural dating, one of the Kenyan residents pulled me aside and laughingly asked “Was dating the same for you as it is today?” As I told my husband about his comment, I realized that when we were married, this student was only 12 years old. Then, the other day as I spoke with a young resident from Australia, I realized that when I was backpacking on my own around Europe and Israel, she was 2 years old!

I know, I know. I sound like a dinosaur and you’re wondering how old is she anyway?! Yet when I speak with colleagues and friends who are twenty years or more older than I am, they regard me with little sympathy. To them, I am still so young; I was the one who was just born when they were in college!

Getting in touch with alumni has provided comfort. After all, I was attending college at the same time as those who lived in the I-House in the “early” years of the ’80s. Some alumni are older than I, some are younger. Regardless, some have continued on to graduate school, most have entered the professional world, some have traveled, many have started families, and as the years pass, age takes a back seat to our myriad of other concerns.

I know that the first meeting of the alumni planning committee last month was a really exciting experience. Twenty alumni spanning most of the years of the I-Center/I-House existence came together and it was as if they had never left. Although they didn’t all know each other, they shared similar experiences of a very wonderful time in their lives. The energy was so high. I hope that all of you will be here this summer July 2-6, 2003 to join us and make our reunion as incredible as it promises to be.

Which of these alumni who participated in the first Alumni Reunion planning meeting do you know?

Gloria Chen (85-87), Jan Oelschlager (98-00), Bob Aron and Kevin Howard (81-86), Dan Reyes (90-91), Toshiyuki Nemoto (98-00), Jaime Margason and Sylvia Lim (98-99), Adina Friedman, Marion Schinn and Drew Weeks (early 90s), Christophe Roche (87-88), Jason Yeo (88-91), Maggie Lee Morelle (94-97), Cyrille Morelle (96-97), Mehrdad Banihashemi (89-95), Tom Boothe (88-90), Marge Sung (95-97), Huy Nguyen (98-present), Helle Gram and Danisha Rankins (99-present), Peter Chandra (01-present)… Lisa Arieta (early 80s) and Paul Belasky (mid-80s), Erika Faust (early 90’s), Henrik Hulten and Marge Sung (mid 90s), and others are also involved in the planning.
Come to San Jose, California for the Alumni Reunion
July 2-6, 2003!!!!

We’re planning many events. Check the website for details www.sjsu.edu/depts/ihouse, send us your e-mail address at ihousesjsu@aol.com, write us, or call us

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Some of the alumni who told us they’re hoping and planning to attend reunion:

Tom Metz (South Carolina), Yoko Watanabe (Japan), Nina Schelderup (Norway), Christine Frankendal Gunnarsson (Sweden), Yuling Liu (Taiwan), Ee-leena Lim and Wendy Couch (Australia), Laura Salas (Venezuela), Cliff van Amen and Nanette van Empelen (The Netherlands), Rie Ichigawa (Japan), Risto (Riku) Moilanen (Finland), Jerome Oudoul (France), Jo Stuart (coming from Costa Rica)…

This list won’t be complete until your name and those of your friends are added to it!
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