



Grandma and Kristy featured in Francis Parker magazine

(see page 2 for Grandma's story)

Kristy Keith '02, a San Diego native, came to Parker's Middle School English Department after student-teaching at both Granite Hills High School and Spring Valley Middle School, while earning her teaching credential from San Diego State University. In 2006, she received a degree in English from the University of San Diego, and now she's teaching seventh grade English at Parker.



Kristy Keith

Why did she choose teaching as her career path? "It's in my blood! I love English, I enjoy the curiosity and enthusiasm of the middle school child, and I couldn't think of a more comforting, exciting place to spend the workweek than in a lively and challenging learning atmosphere."

When asked her impressions of Parker, Mrs. Keith, daughter of Lower School Principal Bob Gillingham, notes, "Although it's only been a few months since I first began teaching at Parker, this school has been a significant part of my life since I was born. I spent sixteen years here as a student, and I couldn't be more excited to be back where I started! While my position at Parker has definitely changed, my impressions will always remain the same. The Parker atmosphere has always been welcoming and comforting, and I feel so privileged to be a part of it!" She adds "I was practically born here, and now that I've come back, I feel like I'm home!"

What does Mrs. Keith enjoy most about Parker? "The community! I love to be able to share my days with such an eclectic group of intelligent, balanced, and enthusiastic people."

Outside of school, she stays in shape by training. She states, "My current goal is to complete the San Diego International Triathlon in June, 2008. Wish me luck!"

The latest news from Bruce (continued from the February RFNL)

Tuesday, Feb 13th some new things

Hi all,

Today we were so ready to come home! But....Bruce began to feel chest pains and so they started doing all kinds of test again. They discovered that his muscle enzymes (not related to his heart) are too high. Normal is 200, his as 300 when he came into the hospital, this morning it was up to 3000 and by the afternoon it was 6440. So they did not want to release him until they could figure out why that might be. Bruce and I did some searching on the internet and I read that thyroid can cause this....and they have not been giving him his thyroid medicine...so I asked the doctor and he thought that might be exactly the problem. So they are giving him his meds and I am hoping he will be home with me tomorrow. Cross your fingers. I am tired of not having my boyfriend home sweet home.

love,

Birdy

Wednesday, Feb 21 and some more

Hi Dad,

Yes, you can assume, no news, is good news! He is still home. The doctors put him on a holter meter to keep track of his heart rhythm for a month. They are trying to figure out what the problem with the electrical impulses in his heart could be. He has had arrhythmias for the past 10 years but they have never been able to catch them on a monitor. So cross your fingers that this time they will record something. They also are doing an ultra sound of his liver to see why his liver enzymes are so high and they are rechecking his blood next week. Hopefully, everything will have returned to the normal levels and we can breathe a sigh of relief.

I love you both,

Birdy

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

March, 2008

growing up in iran

By Kristina Starkey, Director of Alumni and Grandparent Relations

Mrs. Riel is a member of the Francis Parker School Grandparents' Council; in an interview with Kristina Starkey, she described her childhood experiences overseas.

Edith Merica Riel was born in Athens, Greece, on January 2, 1925.

She is one of two sisters and four brothers.

Her father operated an import/export business, dealing mostly in textiles from France, Switzerland, and England. The family moved to Tabriz, Iran, when Edith was three years old; she lived there until she was approximately 17 years old.

Mrs. Riel remembers fondly the spacious home that they rented. It was built by an American and had a purified water system. Later on it became a hospital. The property had grape, almond, apricot and cherry trees; the various fruits they provided were made into jams. Twice a month, help would arrive to wash the clothing and bedding in huge copper pots filled with boiling water. The clothing was dried outdoors on the numerous clotheslines.

When the Russians invaded northern Iran in 1939, Edith's father moved his business and family to Tehran. There they hired cooks who came from various embassies, and she remembers that in order to negotiate a price, they would provide samples of their favorite menus. A chauffeur would drive the older members of the family, but Edith often rode in a droshky—a horse and buggy. She describes the streets of Tehran, saying, "They had open concrete channels on either side that provided water for the residents. The water from the mountains was transported to the city through a series of underground tunnels, called ganats. Some were many miles long. The water was not purified or filtered; therefore, if you lived near the north side of the city you would get clean, but not necessarily pure water, but by the time it reached the south side of the city it was dirty and unsafe." The channels were used by the poor people to wash clothing, bathe in and cook with for their meals. Diseases such as Scarlet Fever were common at that time.

Mrs. Riel attended French boarding schools in Tehran run by the Sisters of Charity. Despite her Greek heritage, she said the nuns were a major

influence for her conversion to Catholicism when she was 16. She experienced a childhood of wealth and once met the King and Queen of Egypt as a young girl. She said her "upbringing has given her a greater appreciation for giving back to those less fortunate." She encouraged her father to give to the poor in Iran, which he did as long as he lived. Mrs. Riel has tried to instill this in the upbringing of her family.



In 1943, Edith met 2nd Lt. Frank Riel, an American officer in the Army. He was attached to the Persian Gulf Command whose mission was to transport military hardware and supplies from the Persian Gulf to the Russian Army. They maintained their friendship despite his return to the United States. After three years, letters were sent from father to father, asking permission for them to marry. Edith left Tehran for Egypt, where she waited for documents allowing her to travel by ship to the United States. She enrolled in college at the University of Dubuque, in Dubuque, IA. Frank was at that time attending graduate school at Purdue

University in West Lafayette, IN, graduating in 1951. They were married in 1946 and have three sons, five daughters, and 21 grandchildren. Dr. Riel earned a Ph.D. in Chemistry and had a 30-plus-year career in the aerospace industry, prior to retirement. Currently he works as a volunteer tutor as a part of the READ/Adult Literacy Program, a San Diego City Library activity.

The Riels moved to San Diego in 1953 and currently reside near Francis Parker School's Linda Vista Campus. Two of their children attended Parker for a short period of time.

Of their eight children, one of their twins, Listy Riel Gillingham, is married to Dr. Bob Gillingham, Parker's Lower School Principal. Listy's twin sister, Birdy Riel Hartman (husband Bruce), is a Senior Kindergarten teacher at Parker. The Riels Parker grandchildren include Craig Hartman 2001, Curtis Hartman 2002, Kristy Gillingham Keith 2002 (now a 7th grade English teacher at Parker), Scott Hartman 2004, David Gillingham 2004, and Annie Gillingham 2005.

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Grandpa's WWII service earns plaque at Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial Park

Some time ago Robert, acting on behalf of the entire family, made the necessary arrangements to have installed at the Veterans Memorial Park on Mt. Soledad the plaque shown in the following picture. I was able to supply him with my old army file, which contained all of the various documents which defined my various transfers and assignments throughout my military career. The park administrator for the Mt. Soledad Veterans Association commented that he had never seen such complete documentation, and it certainly made it far easier for him to verify the service record and qualify me for a place in the park. However, according to Robert, my service records still had to be verified at the DOD in Washington, D.C. Robert has told me that the Riel children all contributed to the cost, and I am most proud and grateful for this gift.



Fixon family visits San Diego

A few Sundays ago we were surprised to see our next door neighbors (from our old Lyndon Road home) Bill and June at the 11:00 am mass at St Vincent's Church. We were even more surprised to see that the presiding priest was none other than their son Patrick. He was ordained last summer and is now busy beginning his career in Peoria, Il. He has an excellent speaking voice and conducted the service flawlessly. Afterwards, there was a reception in the church hall, and we had a chance to talk with Pat, Bill and June, along with many of their friends and neighbors.

Grandchildren of Grandma's niece Maria Fairweather

In the last RFNL we printed two letters Grandma recently received from her niece in London. Along with the letters she sent a picture of her grandchildren, Jack and Georgia Breeston, children of her daughter Natasha, and Max McCullen five-year old son of her daughter Catherine.



Jack Max Georgia

Snow in Southern California!!!

Many confirmed Easterners dislike Southern California because they claim we do not have seasons like those in the East and Midwest. This is true, in a sense. Our seasons, however, are not so much calendar controlled as they are controlled by geography. If you want snow in June you can have it by taking a short drive to the high mountains. This is what Listy and Bob did recently,



when they heard that there was lots of snow on Mount Palomar.

They visited their cabin and enjoy a week-end of winter sports. Listy was busy



with her camera, and got lots of spectacular shots.

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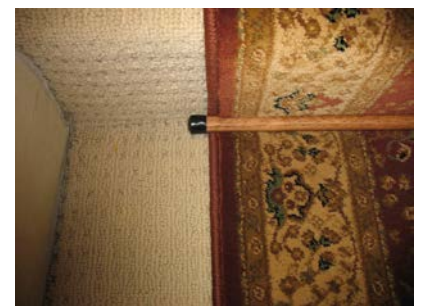
Of course, the cabin site is not high enough to retain a snow cover throughout the winter season. However, it has provided a great change of pace for Bob and Listy.

Another home project for Grandma's house

As most of you know, home maintenance projects at Cirrus Street have been going on for years. Ed Riel comes over frequently on Saturdays to take charge, and others sometimes show up to help out. The most recent project started out when Grandma announced that she wanted to have carpet runners installed on the staircase. After some serious shopping she found a pair that fit (barely) the two flights that form the staircase. Unfortunately, however, they would not stay put as soon as walked upon. Grandpa stated that stair rods were needed. A search of the internet revealed many references. However, the actual marketplace appears to be quite small. Also, advances in the floor covering industry have tended to make the stair rod obsolete as a means of securing the carpet. Its only role is decorative; hence installations



have become quite expensive. A typical installation is shown in the left photograph, and most modern installations are in luxury hotels, casinos, mansions, etc. Since Grandma was not interested in that type of installation she suggested to Grandpa and Ed that we figure out some other way to get the job done. Our first approach was to use $\frac{3}{4}$ " wooden dowels in place of the expensive brass rods or tubes and use some sort of a wooden block in place of the brass brackets. This approach was not very nice looking and did not do an adequate job of holding the carpet in position. After some more thought and experimentation we decided to delete the brackets and fasten the rods (at each end and just outside of the



rug edge) with a single screw angled at 45 degrees into the junction of the step and the riser. A plastic chair leg tip covers the screw head. The dowels were stained to improve their appearance. This design was very easy to make and install and clamps the rug very firmly in position. The following photos illustrate the result, and Grandma is very pleased with the way everything worked out.

At this point the project seemed to be completed. However, we began to



wonder if other grandmothers might be experiencing a similar dissatisfaction with the condition of an old staircase carpet (excessive wear in the center area) and be looking for a solution like ours. Perhaps there is a small market for a simple and inexpensive installation kit which makes the stair runner

carpet a practical solution. This raised the question of how to explore the market potential, and the obvious answer was a web site. This inspired a call to the family web site expert, Jason Benesch, who readily agreed to become a part of the project, create our web site, and assist in helping us understand how it operates. If there is no responses we will drop the whole idea and go on to other things. If we get a few responses it may be practical to proceed for a while and see what develops. We realize, of course, the complications involved in such an enterprise: product liability, sales tax administration, income tax impact, etc. All of these matters need to be given serious consideration, perhaps with outside consultation. We will take it one step at a time, and see what develops.