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*On the cover: President David Arnold with students on campus, photographed by Thomas Hartwell*

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## Editor's Notes

### Building Momentum

As the academic year begins to unfold, there is a new energy at AUC. With the arrival of President David Arnold, the university is poised for another active and dynamic phase of working to make its vision of becoming a world-class university a reality. In "An Agenda For Excellence," we introduce Arnold and find out about the ambitious strategy he has already begun to formulate for AUC.

While the AUC community welcomes Arnold, it bids a final farewell to its beloved John Gerhart, former president, who died on July 15, 2003.

A memorial service held on campus commemorated his life.

"Remembering John Gerhart" serves as a final tribute to Gerhart and his contributions to the university. I still recall conducting interviews for an *AUCToday* article in the Fall 2002 issue titled "Building a World-Class University" about Gerhart after he announced his resignation. Each time I would ask a staff or faculty member about Gerhart's achievements, the conversation would invariably lead to the type of genuine praise and admiration people rarely bestow so freely on a fellow human being. I was struck by the depth of the impression Gerhart was able to make on so many different people on so many levels.

Also in this issue, *AUCToday* showcases the impressive caliber of members of the AUC community, especially the special circle of faculty, students and alumni. Marking the return of Professor Saad Eddin Ibrahim to the classroom, "A Teacher's Quest" profiles his life and the link between being an activist and a teacher.

Through two features, students demonstrate that they are engaged members of the global community in the issues that matter to them. The first article, "In Solidarity," focuses on the Cairo to Camps student group and their work with Palestinian refugee children. The second article, "Bridging Minds; Shattering Barriers," highlights a unique initiative designed to enhance cultural understanding by opening lines of communication between students at AUC and other universities worldwide.

Finally, like many successful alumnae, the entrepreneurs in "A Woman's Business" have proven themselves in fields as varied as daycare services, publishing and e-business.

In the *Akher Kalam* column, Mohamed Nagib Abou-Zeid, associate professor of construction engineering and the head of the Task Force on Academic Integrity, shares his insight as a faculty member on the topic of academic integrity, which is among the university's top priorities.



*Dina Abulfotuh*

Dina Abulfotuh

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## AUCian Wins Gold Medal at Royal Canadian Henley Regatta



*Cantoni rows to the gold*

This summer, Taimur Cantoni represented AUC and Egypt at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta, bringing home a gold medal after beating more than 70 top rowers from around the world in the junior men's single competition.

Being part of the Henley is a milestone in the life of any rowing champion. The Henley attracts 3,000 athletes from all over the world with more than 130 rowing clubs being represented.

This was not Cantoni's first win this summer. Before the Henley, he received a silver medal in the Gavirate Regional Championship in Italy and in the Swiss National Championship.

"It was amazing! I really didn't expect it! I was training hard, but I was also suffering from

back injuries, so I didn't have much hope in winning any of the races," Cantoni said.

Half Swiss-Italian and half Egyptian, Cantoni was one out of four students from AUC to take part in the Henley this year. The team's

participation was sponsored by Richard Cashin, AUC trustee and former US Olympic rower.

Mohammed Taher, assistant sports director at AUC who traveled with the team, said that they have been working hard in preparation for the event. "The team has been training intensively since March and took part in the Egyptian universities' championship and earned two bronze medals. This is their second major achievement," he said.



*AUC's rowing team members Cantoni, El Hussein Ibrahim, Karim Samy and Ahmed Zahran with coaches Sheila Lindsey and Taher*

## Human Rights Activist Joins AUC



After spending seven years at the Ford Foundation as program officer for human rights, Fateh Azzam recently joined AUC as director of the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program. He also teaches courses in political science and Middle East studies.

With a master's degree in international human rights law from Essex University in Britain, Azzam recognizes the importance of human rights issues, especially those pertaining to refugees. "Refugees have long been neglected as an area of study and assistance," he said. "This area of work has to be promoted and expanded, and students need to look at the real life situation of refugees."

Growing up as a Palestinian refugee in Syria and Lebanon, Azzam immigrated with his family to the United States at age 16. There, he attended college and worked as a theater performer, choreographer and teacher. In 1985, he moved to Palestine as an American citizen and became director of the first Palestinian theater center in Jerusalem. His first entry into human rights work was with the Palestinian Organization for Human Rights, for which he served as director for nearly eight years.

## Comparative Religion Endowed Professorship Launched



Clough explores religions of the world with students

For the first time, AUC is offering courses in comparative religion. The courses are part of an endowed professorship established by the renowned Saudi businessman Abdulhadi Taher with the aim of increasing students' knowledge about the different world religions and promoting tolerance and understanding among adherents of different faiths. Thanks to Taher's generous donation, Bradley Clough, an international expert in the field, was appointed to teach comparative religion courses at the university this fall.

Clough is a specialist on Buddhist studies and comes to AUC from Bard College in New York. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Eastern Religious Studies from

St. Lawrence University and master's and doctorate degrees in Buddhist studies from Columbia University. He spent a considerable number of years in India and Sri Lanka conducting research on Buddhism and Hinduism.

Clough is teaching an introductory course this semester titled "Religions of the World: A Comparative Introduction to Dimensions of Human Spirituality." Through that course, Clough plans to explore with students significant similarities between religions along thematic lines. "The best way to begin looking at human religiosity is according to themes and patterns," he said, adding that "it is very admirable of AUC to establish a program that will bring in a study of religions other than the ones already covered here. Students learn a lot about themselves in the process of comparison and start to see religions in relation to each other."

## Senegalese Artist Brings One World Music to Campus



"Music is a form of expression — it is a way of sending messages across to the audience," said Mouhammadou Gaye, a Senegalese composer, percussionist and singer. Gaye, commonly known as Modou, leads One World Music, a band known for its distinctive fusion of Oriental African music with Sufi and jazz that performed at AUC in the fall.

"We try to do something different," said Modou, who comes from a Sufi family in Senegal. "Afro-Sufi jazz music employs the use of a mix of instruments

that express different cultural orientations."

One World Music's motto is that music is a way of bringing people together — it is not directed at a certain community, but is something for the whole world to feel and enjoy. Their motto is not only manifested in the band's fusion of different types of music, but also in the members themselves, who include people from Senegal, Upper Egypt, the United States and Switzerland.

"We come from different countries, but feel like one community," Modou noted. "We communicate to the whole world with our music and play to audiences of different cultural backgrounds. Music is our common language."

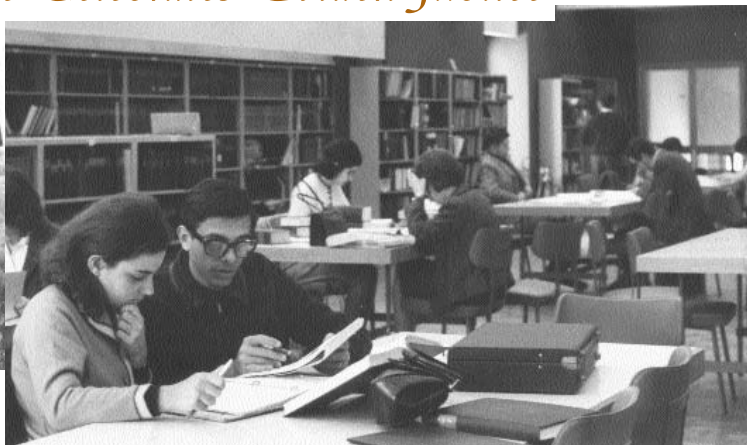
The band has performed at the Cairo Opera House, the Citadel and Beit Al Harawy in Cairo and at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria. They have recently returned from a music festival in Berne, Switzerland.



## Hill House Celebrates Golden Jubilee



The 1953 Hill House dedication ceremony



Students study in what was the Hill House library

This fall marks the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of Hill House as a student hostel. In 1959 it was redesigned as AUC's main library, and in 1984 it was again remodeled to be a student and alumni center.

The building was named after William Bancroft Hill and his wife Elise Weyerhaeuser Hill. The remodeling in 1984 was financed by the Weyerhaeuser family who also donated \$1.5 million for the original construction of the building.

William Hill served on AUC's Board of Trustees (BOT) for almost 25 years, 20 of them as chairman.

During the 1953 dedication program, much of what Douglas Horton, BOT chairman at the time, said is still true today. Articulating the position that AUC continues to hold, Horton said: "If it were wholly American, it would fail of its purpose; so also if it were wholly Egyptian. It is intended to serve as a focus for the interest of people of the two countries in each other."

## In Hope and Despair Book Reception

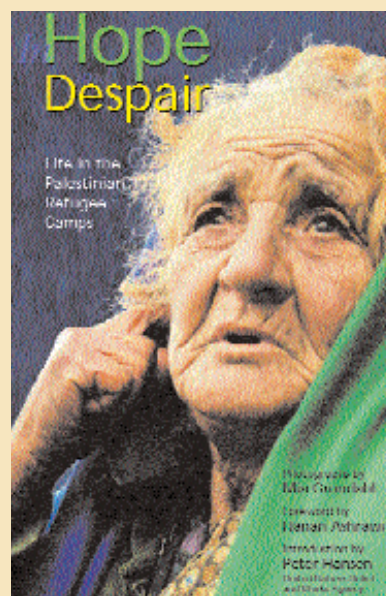
"It is an enormous privilege to make a difference for people in need. The kind of human interaction relief work entails is a very satisfying experience," said Peter Hansen, commissioner-general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) in a lecture at AUC.

The lecture, titled "From Humanitarian Crisis to Human Development: The Evolution of UNRWA's Mandating Regarding the Palestinian Refugees," marked the launch of the book *In Hope and Despair: Life in the Palestinian Refugee Camps*, published by the AUC Press. The book includes a foreword by Palestinian activist Hanan Ashrawi, an introduction by Hansen and photographs by the Swedish journalist and photographer Mia Grondahl.

Hansen highlighted UNRWA's different forms of assistance to the more than 4 million Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. With a staff of nearly 25,000, many of them Palestinians, UNRWA operates on a very large scale. "In terms of staff,

it is more than the rest of the UN system put together," Hansen declared.

By providing education, healthcare, social services and emergency aid, UNRWA is primarily concerned with refugee protection. "They need protection in their daily lives — whether it be legal protection, general assistance or protection through publicity," Hansen affirmed, adding that UNRWA's ultimate goal is to empower the Palestinian refugees and enable them to lead self-reliant lives.

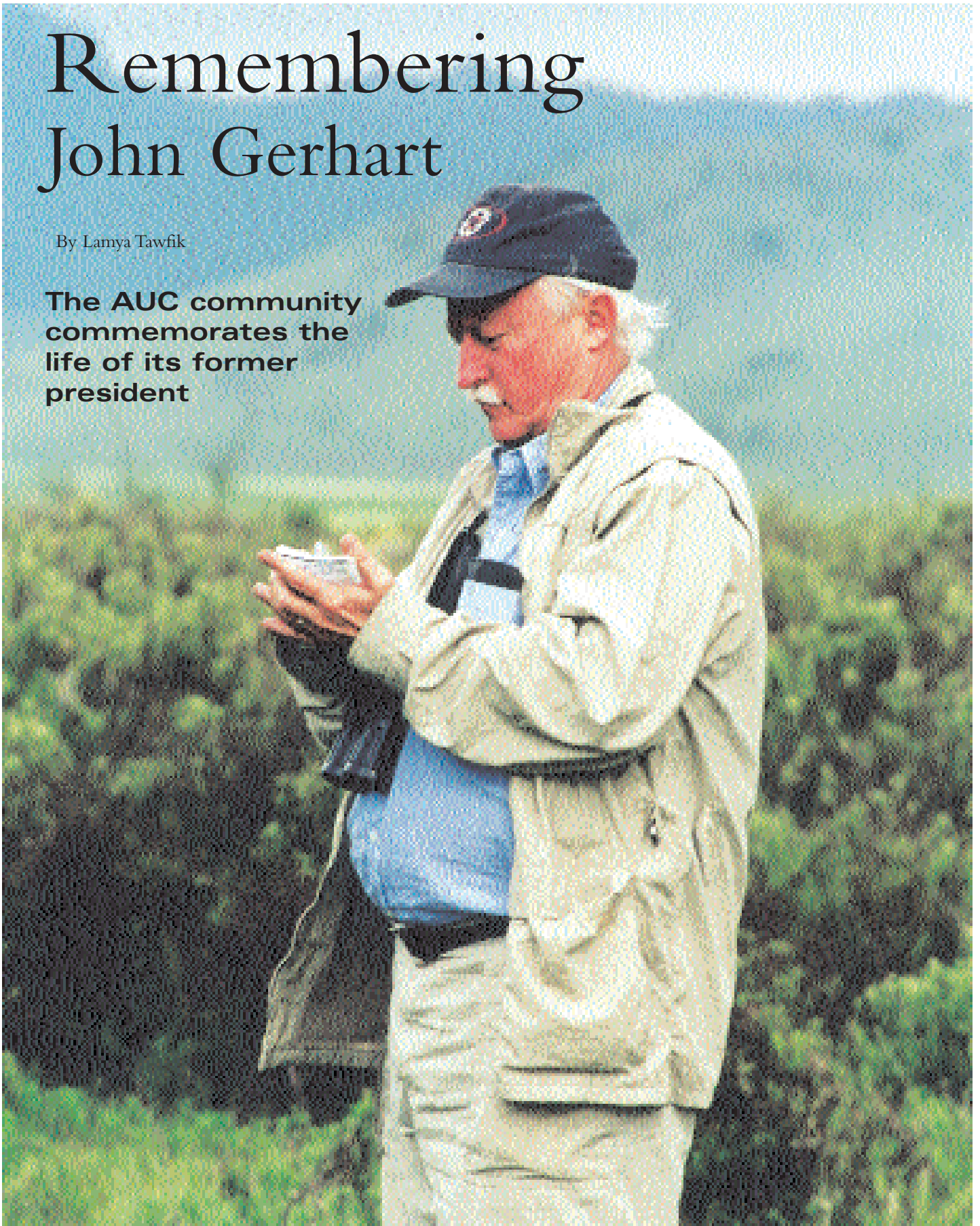


Cover of Mia Grondahl's book documenting the life of Palestinian refugees

# Remembering John Gerhart

By Lamyia Tawfik

**The AUC community  
commemorates the  
life of its former  
president**



After a long battle with cancer, John Gerhart, former AUC president and president emeritus, died on July 15, 2003. To commemorate and celebrate his life, a memorial service was held on campus this fall. The memorial service, which brought together people from different stages of Gerhart's life, captured the richness of his character, his amazing spirit and the way he touched the lives of those around him.

"He was a generous, thoughtful and kind man," said Rowaida Saad El-Din, senior assistant to the president and manager of internship programs. "If I could have extended his life with mine, I would have done so. He had a rich life that affected everyone around him."

"He wasn't a man who would see a glass half empty, or even half full. To John, the cup was always brimming to the top. Even if it wasn't, he'd make it so," said Paul Hannon, chairman of the Board of Trustees. Hannon recounted how the only time the board argued with Gerhart was over his refusal to accept pay increases at the end of the year, insisting that the money be used instead in ways to help AUC.

Gerhart served as president from September 1998 to March 2002 and was the only president to hold the title of president emeritus; thus he remained active in the affairs of AUC, raising funds for the new campus and advising university administrators and trustees.

In February 2003, he took part in the official groundbreaking ceremony for AUC's new campus in New Cairo, laying the cornerstone with Egypt's First Lady Suzanne Mubarak '77, '82. Among his accomplishments at AUC were the equalizing of pay between local and foreign hires, implementing a pension plan, introducing community service courses, creating six floating tenure positions and a phased

retirement policy. During his term, Gerhart was exceptionally active in fundraising for the university and the new campus, increasing the level of both alumni contributions and donations from all sources.

"Dr. Gerhart was a very unique person in that he combined both intelligence and a tremendous skill of establishing harmony between people working with him," said Jehane Ragai, chair of the chemistry department. "What I shall miss most is that aura of peace and positive energy that surrounded his presence."

"He was a wonderful colleague, husband and father. In many respects, John was a Renaissance man with extensive knowledge about Africa and the developing world more than

"He wasn't a man who would see a glass half empty, or even half full. To John, the cup was always brimming to the top ..."

anyone I've met," said AUC President David Arnold, a close friend and a former Ford Foundation colleague.

"For many of us, we cannot believe that the sparkle and fun that he brought into the room is gone forever. He had an amazing way of making people feel good about themselves," said Barbara Ibrahim, former Ford Foundation colleague.

Gerhart was also genuinely interested in student activities. He held regular luncheons with them, attended most sports activities and never missed an Osiris Singers concert.

Remembering her interaction with him as a student, Maha Bali '01 said, "he always cared, always remembered and always smiled warmly."

"He took pride in AUC students'

achievements and he loved working with Egyptians," said Gail, Gerhart's wife and former AUC professor. "He loved how they can be serious but also love a great joke. He respected Egypt for what it is: the cultural and intellectual center of the Middle East."

Before leaving Egypt, Gerhart received several awards recognizing his efforts at AUC. Important among them was Egypt's First Class Decoration of Arts and Sciences awarded by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. In addition, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Moufid Shehab presented him with a special award for his contributions to education.

Provost Tim Sullivan was deeply affected by Gerhart's death. "He was one of the few people that I've ever known that was virtually impossible to dislike," Sullivan said. "It's still hard to talk about him. A lot of people work together and they're not friends. This was actually a friendship."

Sullivan continued by describing Gerhart as a multi-dimensional person. "He was an expert on birds, a collector of African art and always wanted to know more," Sullivan said. "He could bring out the best in people and was enormously optimistic. He believed that optimism made him see the positive sides while people would always see the negative. He was a great leader, smart and quick, and was a people person. Working with him was a delightful experience." □

*Contributions in memory of John Gerhart may be mailed to The American University in Cairo 113 Kasr El Aini Street, P.O. Box 2511, Cairo 11511, Egypt or to 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018 or e-mailing develop@aucegypt.edu. Please make checks payable to The American University in Cairo, designated to The John and Gail Gerhart Public School Scholarship Fund.*





# Bridging Minds; Shattering Barriers

By Lamyia Tawfik

**Dialoguing initiative opens lines  
of communication between  
students around the world**





As the world experiences turbulent times on both the political and military fronts and the gap between East and West appears to be widening, never has there been a more pressing need for engaging in a cross-cultural exchange.

In the aftermath of 9/11, AUC embarked on a first-of-its kind initiative aimed at fostering mutual understanding between AUC students and their counterparts in the United States.

A videoconference held in November 2001 opened lines of communication between students from AUC and New York University, marking the beginning of a dialoguing initiative that has steadily grown to encompass a series of

videoconferences, listserves, e-mail groups and a selection of courses.

Heba Morayef, former core dialogues coordinator, has witnessed the interaction that takes place through the videoconferencing. "You learn to challenge your own stereotypes," said Morayef. "Before entering the dialogues you think that US students will perceive us as X, Y or Z and those stereotypes are challenged because, on the contrary, they empathize with us."

Videoconferencing, which was initially an extracurricular activity, has now been added to the core curriculum through two optional courses. During the semester-long classes, students conduct research and share ideas with their counterparts in US universities via group e-mails in

preparation for the videoconferences that are held at regular intervals. Some of the questions that have been tackled include: Do you think the war on terror is a clash of civilizations? Is culture a primary catalyst for conflict? What do you think is the impact of global capitalism on world cultures? Do Americans feel that military action is the proper way to promote security interests? Is an international, global governing body possible? Is it desirable?

Among the most recent achievements of AUC's dialoguing initiative is the addition of a 12-day intensive political science course held for the first time this summer. Students from AUC, the University of Washington and the American University of Beirut (AUB) spent two weeks in Tochni, a small village in Cyprus, exploring issues of national and ethnic identity through workshops and discussions.

Cyprus was chosen as a location where the Egyptian, Lebanese and American students would all be willing to travel, according to Mike Lattanzi, the political science professor from AUC who co-taught the course with professors from the University of Washington and AUB.

The topics discussed during the immersion-style course included commonalities and divergences in Arab and American identities, clash of civilizations, orientalism, Occidentalism, Islam and the West and a discourse on human rights.

Lattanzi, who personally interviewed all the students from AUC before the trip, was unsure of what to expect. In the end, however, he felt that the "contacts the students made were the biggest achievement of the trip."

"Before entering the dialogues you think that US students will perceive us as X, Y or Z, and those stereotypes are challenged because, on the contrary, they empathize with us."





Michael Zuver from the University of Washington plays the Tochni song

“The program made things personal. Now when I hear someone say something negative or derogatory about Arabs or Palestinians, it is not a nameless, faceless group I think of, but my friends; I think of Haya, Asmaa, Alaa, Ghassan, Adib, Omar or anyone from the program and how they don’t fit whatever was just uttered.”

Describing the emotionally charged final day of the course, Lattanzi recounted an activity where the students were divided into groups and asked to prepare presentations that spoke about the topics they had covered.

“One group presented two newscasts, one of Al Jazeera and the other of CNN, covering the same

news item,” said Lattanzi. “They showed the kind of guests that each station would choose to bring on camera and the audience reaction to both channels in the East and the West.”

The interest in the topics discussed was evident in after-class dinnertime discussion. “I’d overhear the students discussing topics that we talked about in class,” Lattanzi said. “It showed they were genuinely interested in discovering their identities.”

Russell Everett, a student from the University of Washington, said that the most heated debate was on women in Islam, which ended up being on women and men in Islam. Although he noted that the students were not entirely representative of the Egyptian student population, he still found the course useful in dispelling stereotypes.

“The experience put faces on the Middle East; it humanized it,” said Everett. “I will never watch the news and hear them bash Arabs and feel indifferent.”

Explaining his motives for taking the course, Everett discussed his desire to explore his own American identity, especially in contrast to the Middle Eastern identity. “I take part in anti-war protests and I’m the first one to question US foreign policies, but I just wanted healthy questioning not irrational bashing of those policies,” he explained.

Students from AUC also found the trip enlightening. Dina Khalifa ’03 returned with an entirely changed perspective. “I used to be very skeptical about things like ‘embracing differences,’ ‘accepting the other’ and things of this sort, but I came to learn that these phrases have a lot of truth in them. This experience simply taught me that if we just see the human side of one another, wars and hatred would not be the dominating characteristics of our world.”

Another student from Seattle, Alison Ensminger, said that the experience “reinforced my view that the tensions evident between America and the Middle East need to be solved by dialogue rather than violence.”

Like many of the students, Ensminger described the last day of the trip as the most memorable. “We were in Larnaka at a café waiting to go to the airport. There we were, 30 young adults who didn’t know each other two weeks before, laughing, crying, holding conversations in three different languages and generally realizing what an amazing experience the last two weeks had been,” she said.

Ensminger believes that the experience humanized the region. “The program made things personal. Now when I hear someone say something negative or derogatory about Arabs or Palestinians, it is not a nameless, faceless group I think of,



but my friends; I think of Haya, Asmaa, Alaa, Ghassan, Adib, Omar or anyone from the program and how they don't fit whatever was just uttered."

Adib Samara, a senior political science student from AUB, felt that the trip only strengthened his belief in the importance of cultural exchange. "We were all in a small village in the middle of nowhere, without televisions and radios. We became villagers, all equal, all on the same wavelength. It is when I woke up one morning to cut watermelon and peel figs that I realized that if all mankind was subject to the same environment and had nothing to do but resort to dialogue with one another, everyone would realize how similar we all are," elaborated Samara.

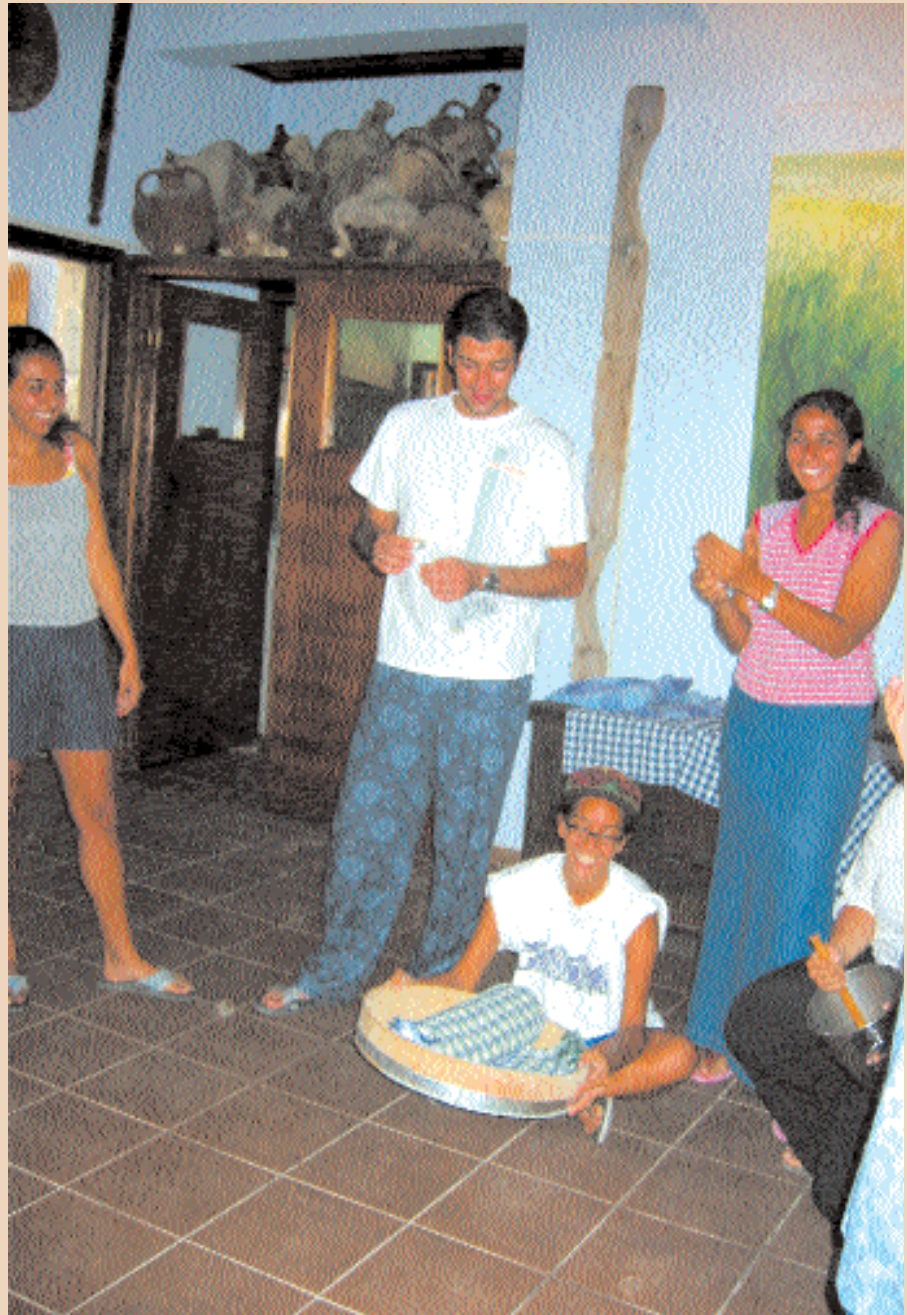
Alaa Eldin Al Dajani '03, who also co-authored and composed a song about Tochni village where the group was staying, considered Tochni a symbolic home, which he defined as "any place where human beings can come together to seek knowledge for its own sake and thus be able to recognize the primordial resemblance between all of us."

The words of the song, which the students composed and played at the final farewell gathering, are found below:

### Ode to Tochni

**Tochni, you held me  
In your valley of stone  
Tochni, *habibi* (my love)  
You'll always be my home**

**Release these tensions  
Tear down these walls  
Give us reflection  
Let the seeds grow**



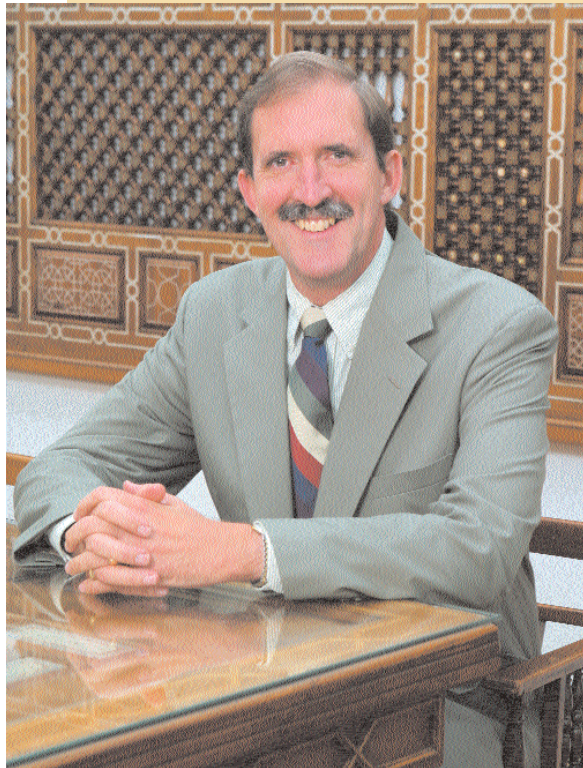
*AUC student Mona Farag demonstrates the Egyptian traditional celebration of a baby's birth (subou') as Yasmine Gayed, Fahd Al Tarzi and Dina Hussein look on*

"I realized that if all mankind was subject to the same environment and had nothing to do but resort to dialogue with one another, everyone would realize how similar we all are."

# An Agenda for Excellence

David Arnold takes the lead as AUC's 10th president

By Dina Abulfotuh  
Photos by Thomas Hartwell



“I think we are in a position to go from good to great, and my style is to work energetically and openly with all segments of the AUC community.”

Over the course of its 80-year history, The American University in Cairo has experienced the leadership of nine presidents, each playing a unique role in bringing the institution one step closer to the position it holds today.

This September, David Arnold began his tenure as the 10th president at a time when AUC is on the doorstep of its new state-of-the-art campus in New Cairo, with five years until the relocation.

Keenly aware of both the unique strengths of AUC and the particular challenges ahead, Arnold kicked off his presidency with an energetic start as the workings of his ambitious plan began to take shape.

“I think we are in a position to go from good to great, and my style is to work

energetically and openly with all segments of the AUC community,” said Arnold, who wasted no time getting to know the various constituencies at AUC through attending an assortment of events ranging from alumni gatherings to student activities to faculty meetings.

A native of Michigan, Arnold was raised in Detroit, but spent weekends and summers on his grandparents' farm and considers himself a part of the Midwestern farming community. Arnold's decision to pursue an international career, which has included more than a decade at the Ford Foundation with a portion of his service in India, came early in his childhood. “I got the bug to be international when I was 11 and had the chance to live and study on a Caribbean island called Montserrat,” he recalled. “Right then and there, I decided that I wasn't going to stay in Michigan my whole life and that planted the seeds of international travel.”

Describing what he sees as a three-pronged role of a university president that encompasses internal leadership and external representation, Arnold believes that “a real passion for the work of the university is in some ways the most important element” of this role.

Recognizing that the job of a university president requires several characteristics, Arnold feels “there is no one thing that a university president must do well; this is a job that requires several skills ... providing educational and organizational leadership and articulating a compelling vision of where the institution is going in a way that galvanizes the community in that direction.”

With the move to the new campus on the horizon, Arnold considers the next few



“My aim, in ways both big and small, is to make AUC a better and stronger university than what it is today.”

years a critical window of opportunity to strengthen AUC from within. “We are talking about not just a new campus, but a new AUC that is even better and stronger,” Arnold said.

Arnold’s main objectives can be summarized into three central elements. First, he aims to “get us to the new campus on time and within budget.” The second objective is the successful completion of the comprehensive capital campaign, formally launched last year to raise funds that will directly contribute to improving the quality of education for students and faculty, as well as for the construction of the new campus. The campaign will raise money for scholarships, fellowships, professorships and all areas of the university’s operation including library support, student activities and faculty development.

Finally, Arnold has adopted what he calls “an agenda for academic excellence.” This agenda includes the academic integrity initiative and a stronger public service component as a part of every student’s experience at AUC. Additional areas on the agenda for excellence are strengthening the quality of the faculty, improving the core curriculum and working toward accreditation of the university’s professional programs. Through this broad spectrum of initiatives, Arnold strives to ensure quality in every aspect of AUC. “AUC is in a wonderful position to grow and achieve even greater distinction,” he said.

Commenting on the presidency of the late John Gerhart, AUC’s former president

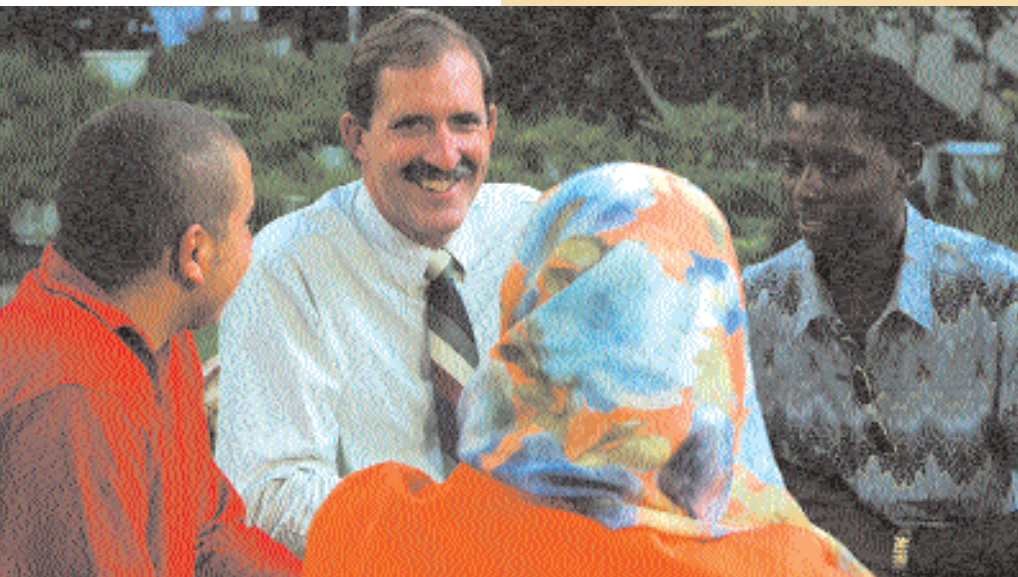
and president emeritus, Arnold said, “John and I were colleagues and friends for nearly 20 years.”

Arnold, who plans to carry forward many of the initiatives Gerhart began, will also bring a new perspective and a unique approach. “Each president puts his own particular stamp,” he said. “While I endorse and wholeheartedly embrace John’s vision of a world-class university, there will certainly be differences in how we implement that vision ... new leaders invariably bring a particular style and vision.”

A product of the 1960s, Arnold has chosen a career path of public service and non-profit organizations. “I was a child in the 1960s; I grew up in a period of dramatic social change and upheaval,” said Arnold. “There was a certain idealism that fueled many of us in that period, which has affected many of my professional and career choices.” Being inspired by people like John F. Kennedy also served as a catalyst in moving him to a career of public service.

Arnold and his wife Sherry, whom he describes as a “talented educator,” have three daughters and recently became grandparents. Sherry, an early childhood educator who worked on the faculty of the United Nations International School in New York before coming to Egypt, has already begun to take an interest in the daycare center at AUC, as well as schools around Cairo. Recalling how they met, he said, “I had the good fortune to find my life partner down the street where I grew up in Detroit.”

When asked what he would want people to say about him at the end of his term as president, Arnold said, “I would want them to say that I helped lead AUC into the new century and into the new campus. My aim, in ways both big and small, is to make AUC a better and stronger university than what it is today.” □



# A Woman's Business

By Dalia Al Nimr and Lamyia Tawfik  
Photos by Omar Mohsen



**How alumnae women entrepreneurs made their ventures soar**

From furniture to e-business, AUC's women alumnae entrepreneurs have the business savvy and the market sense to build and grow successful ventures. Motivated to fill a need or overcome a challenge, they have proven themselves and in the process set an example that with hard work and persistence, anything is possible.



### **A Mother's Determination**

When Dina Abdel Wahab '93 gave birth to her son Ali, who was born with Down Syndrome, she knew that a challenge would lie ahead. Refusing to succumb to the pressure to isolate Ali from mainstream education, Abdel Wahab searched the Internet for similar cases. All the information she gathered ran contrary to the opinions of the doctors she visited in Egypt. "Research worldwide showed that such children need inclusion; they need role models to copy. Therefore, it is essential that they interact with normal people," Abdel Wahab said.

In search of another option, she traveled to the United States. There, Ali underwent an assessment and training program, and Abdel Wahab learned how to deal with Ali and help him realize his full potential. "I wanted him to be confident and to develop socially acceptable behavior," said Abdel Wahab. "I wanted him to have a life and to interact with normal kids."

With the persistence of a mother determined to find a path for her son, Abdel Wahab began looking for a preschool in Egypt that would accept two-and-a-half-year-old Ali. All the preschools she visited did not understand Down Syndrome and the one that did accept him treated him differently.

"Ali was isolated, and they looked at him with an eye of pity," Abdel Wahab said. "He did a lot of things at home, such as holding a paper and pencil and eating on his own, that the preschool would not give him a chance to do. They thought I was pushing him too hard. They couldn't see his capabilities."

Still determined to help Ali lead a normal life, Abdel Wahab took a brave decision to open her own preschool, where Ali would become the first student.



*Dina Abdel Wahab*

Recalling the findings of a study she had conducted early in her career at Save the Children Foundation, Abdel Wahab felt compelled to take action. After extensive research on early childhood education in Egypt and the United States, Abdel Wahab concluded that preschool years in Egypt are virtually ignored in the teaching process and that the science of child development and psychology needs to be given more attention.

"At the time," Abdel Wahab recalled, "I knew I had to do something but wasn't sure what."

With Ali serving as a catalyst and her early research at the foundation, Abdel Wahab teamed with a friend who was to act as her financial supporter and legally registered Baby Academy preschool in November 1999. Her friend, however, soon received a scholarship and left to London, and Abdel Wahab was left alone. Relentless in pursuit of her goal, Abdel Wahab took courses on feasibility studies, human resource management and recruitment. She acquired a preschool curriculum from the United States and finally opened for business in May 2000.



*Alia El Bialy*

“We started with seven children; now we have 210. Three hundred others have graduated, of whom 25 are children with special needs. The preschool has expanded to include English, French and German divisions, and we will be opening a new branch in Mohandiseen soon,” Abdel Wahab said proudly.

Ever since the preschool’s inception, Abdel Wahab has been inviting foreign consultants several times a year to train the staff — who are all Egyptian — on proper teaching techniques and the latest in child development.

“This is not a business for profit,” Abdel Wahab declared. “My real aim is to bring to Egypt the latest in early childhood development. Children have enormous possibilities if you put them in the right environment.”

To Abdel Wahab, her real taste of success came when she saw the first graduating class — Ali among them — perform brilliantly on stage the day of their graduation. “I was amazed,” she said with tears in her eyes, adding that she was also flattered by the feedback she got from schools and parents on how graduates of Baby Academy excel in school entrance exams. “It makes me feel our efforts have paid off,” she said.

### **A Blooming Challenge**

“I feel like I’ve lived a hundred lives; each one completely different from the other.”

With these words, Alia El Bialy, who graduated with a master’s degree in television journalism in 1990, ended a one-hour long interview. Her life seems to be a string of endless challenges, which she manages to successfully master one after the other.

Situated in Harania village in the Al Haram area are the five acres of land where El Baily grows an assortment of tropical plants and palms that create shadowy walkways throughout the plantation.

El Bialy takes pride in being an independent person with a mind of her own. She turned down an opportunity to work full time as a television broadcaster because she felt she would be trapped inside the office. “The palms won!” she chuckled loudly.

The idea of starting the plantation business, explained El Bialy, stemmed from being independent by nature. “What can I say? I must be a little crazy,” she laughed. “Instead of going to the club, sitting and doing nothing and enjoying myself and time, I’m stuck here with my baby palms.”

On a serious note, she confessed that she likes to be her own master. “I like to do everything by myself. Doing that, you assume your own responsibilities and mistakes.”

In 1983, El Bialy bought a piece of land, without having any idea what she wanted to do with it. “First I wanted to have a project with carpet-weaving and an art center. It didn’t work out. Then, I started growing traditional crops, which was boring and not challenging enough.”

Her current business finally took shape when she came across an engineer who told her about growing palms and tropical plants to sell to retailers and engineers for use by hotels in tourist villages. At the time, the decorative plants industry was still starting in Egypt.



“My eyes widened. He said that he would give me the know-how and provide technical assistance,” she said. “I prepared the land, planted the plants, and every morning I looked outside the window to see if they were still alive.”

Initially, El Bialy did not receive much support from those around her. “People used to tell me that it was a waste of time and energy, not very lady-like or elegant, and would mean that I’d often be dressed in rags,” recounted El Bialy. “Your manicure will be spoiled and your hairdo will get dusty,” recited El Bialy, almost delighted at the opportunity to shatter expectations. “Lots of people are disgusted at the idea, but for me it is always a great joy to be in a garden.”

Diligently, El Bialy followed the engineer’s instructions. “I handled all the preparations myself with a piece of string and chalk, I marked the spots where I was going to grow every palm. We made holes of specific widths and everything was engineered.” Eventually, years later, selling her first crop made the project worthwhile.

Today, El Bialy is once again searching for a new challenge. Since the tropical plant business hasn’t been performing too well for the past three years, El Bialy is now thinking of breeding livestock.

“I’m again starting from scratch in a field I know nothing about, so it should still be challenging,” said El Bialy.

El Bialy’s recipe for success includes being “a bit crazy to start with, taking risks — calculated, not foolish risks — and always taking things, even failure, in stride. I fall, then I get up, and then I fall again.”

### **From Teens to Teens**

Driven by the desire to create a forum for Egypt’s teens to express themselves, Manal El Mahdy ’88 began what are now considered among Egypt’s top selling magazines *Teenstuff* and *Kelmetna*.

Schooling in Egypt, she explained, does not encourage youth to express themselves. Searching



Manal El Mahdy

for an alternative outlet for the younger generation, El Mahdy created *Teenstuff*, a magazine for teens and by teens. This means that there are no adult staff reporters, only teen authors.

El Mahdy does not consider journalism her line of business. With a bachelor’s degree in sociology from AUC and a master’s in psychoanalysis from London, El Mahdy strongly believes her work is more about psychology than journalism. “It’s an extension of what I’ve studied,” she emphasized.

After spending several years in an American school in Baghdad, El Mahdy moved back to Cairo where she completed her schooling in a normal Egyptian language school. “The difference in the quality of education between the two schools made me so depressed. Everything suddenly became about memorizing, I used to hate going to school; I hated my teachers, my books and had to drag myself to go to school everyday. I could see that my academic performance was declining and that I was no longer a high achiever,” she said.

El Mahdy began to like learning again when she came to AUC. “I was back and alive, doing something that I like. I realized what a difference a school can make in your life.”



*Neeven Tahoun*

Wanting to instill that same love of learning in youth, El Mahdy launched *Teenstuff*. “I’m attempting to compensate for the poor educational quality in Egypt. I’m working with the teens’ talent.”

“The magazine is just like a good English teacher. One that doesn’t tell you to write about the pyramids or national holidays every year, but that gives you

the chance to write whatever you want, in whatever way.”

But according to El Mahdy, when she started the magazine, she had more opposition than support from those around her. “But I had a vision and the more opposition I got, the more I felt challenged to make it succeed.”

*Teenstuff* did not start in the three-story villa it now calls home. “I started with a small budget by taking up two rooms in my dad’s office and then expanded as the business became more successful.”

In 1999, the magazine became a monthly and *Kelmetna* (the Arabic version) was also launched.

El Mahdy believes that working on the magazine allows teenagers to build self-esteem.

“I’ve seen it happen before my eyes. They come into the office stammering and not sure of themselves. And when they see their work printed, they become so proud and confident that suddenly they have a lot of opinions and excel in their writing.”

For El Mahdy, watching this transformation take place is what makes it all worthwhile.

### **Finding a Niche**

For most people, furniture is just furniture, but for Neveen Tahoun ’94, it is both a long-time passion and now a booming business.

Shortly after graduation, Tahoun, who has always been fond of French antiques and furniture, began to try her hand at helping friends and family furnish their homes. “They liked my ideas, and I began to think seriously of opening a shop that specialized in French furniture,” she explained.

In 1995, less than a year after her graduation, Tahoun capitalized on her natural skills and took the first step toward making her dream a reality. Initially working on a small scale, Tahoun sold house accessories that included vases and lampshades at open days held at her home. Gradually, Tahoun acquired the courage and confidence to open her own shop.

“I was worried at first,” she said. “For weeks, no one would enter the store. I expected that, but it was still very stressful at times.”

Tahoun started advertising in furniture magazines and through personal contact, she slowly began to build a customer base, with satisfied customers becoming repeat customers who told their friends and family.

“Out of the eight years since I’ve started, the first two were the most difficult,” Tahoun noted. “There was a lot of competition and nobody knew me. I had difficulty recruiting the right people for the workshops.”

The most difficult part of the job, Tahoun said, is managing the workers at the workshops. “A female handling male workers is not easy, especially in our culture,” she noted. “But I am very firm about the work standards I expect, and they now know that I insist on a certain level of quality.”

“My shop specializes in the reproduction of French furniture,” she said. “In my line of business, quality is key and it takes time, effort and commitment to produce such quality and maintain it.”



Tahoun must constantly be present at the workshops, personally overseeing everything from cutting the wood to carving to gilding. She also attends furniture exhibitions in France, visits places such as Al Attareen market in Cairo where original French antiques are sold and pours over catalogs to “study the craft of the furniture.”

In a word of advice to youth who want to start their own business, Tahoun emphasized that they have to “develop patience, commitment and a sense of responsibility.” Sharing her insight, Tahoun concluded, “You have to be unique and specialized, for you cannot be everything to everyone.”

### **Revolutionizing Teaching Arabic**

Soft-spoken and of a mild temperament, Sanaa Ghanem '82 is clearly comfortable in her role as a leading innovator in the typically male dominated e-business industry. A women of few, but well thought-out words, Ghanem is by all accounts a pioneer who brought Arabic language instruction to the online world.

After teaching Arabic at the University of Abidjan, Ivory Coast and English at the African Development Bank, Ghanem began to question traditional methods of teaching Arabic. “This is where I realized the severe shortage of technologically-advanced Arabic teaching materials as compared to English,” explained Ghanem. “And I felt committed to contributing to the field of teaching Arabic.”

Inspired to revolutionize Arabic language instruction, Ghanem returned to Cairo as a faculty member at AUC's Arabic Language Institute. She knew that the use of computers would be an integral part and enrolled in a two-year professional computer certificate program at the Center for Adult and Continuing Education at AUC. While completing the certificate, Ghanem began developing the software she would use to teach Arabic to her students.

Simultaneously, Ghanem approached a commercial software company with the idea of creating online courses to teach Arabic. The company rejected the idea. Even academic institutions were not interested in her proposition. But as fate proved, this was a blessing in disguise.

Determined to not take no for an answer, Ghanem took the initiative to turn her vision into a reality. “When our courses went online, I was really moved when I saw many of my students volunteering their time and effort to help out,” said Ghanem.

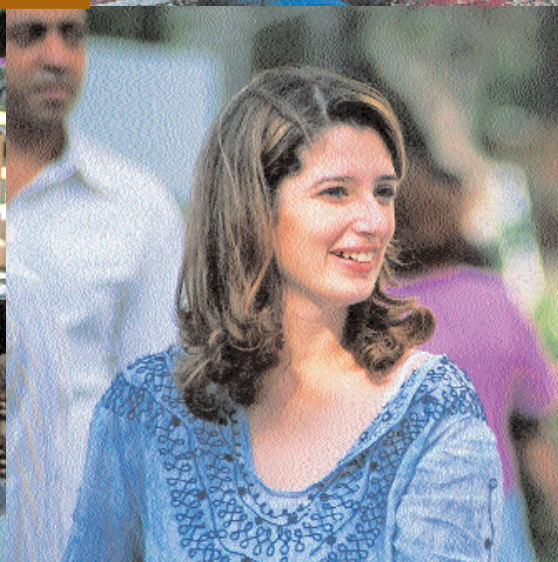
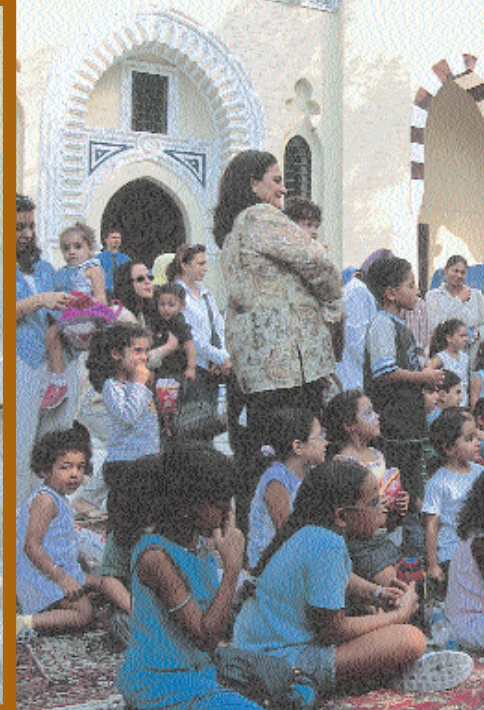
The Arabic courses were first put on CDs and tested under real classroom conditions by teachers and students. Ghanem's next challenge was in finding a viable market for her product. The answer came in the form of a dot com. In 2000, Ghanem officially launched Arab Academy, an online Arabic language program with the registration of 2000 students from 69 countries. Today, the website provides Arabic language training to students of all ages from more than 127 countries and includes an online Arabic language proficiency test (ALPT).

“Arab Academy has succeeded in being the world's leading provider of online Arabic language courses and proficiency tests,” said Ghanem of a vision finally realized. □

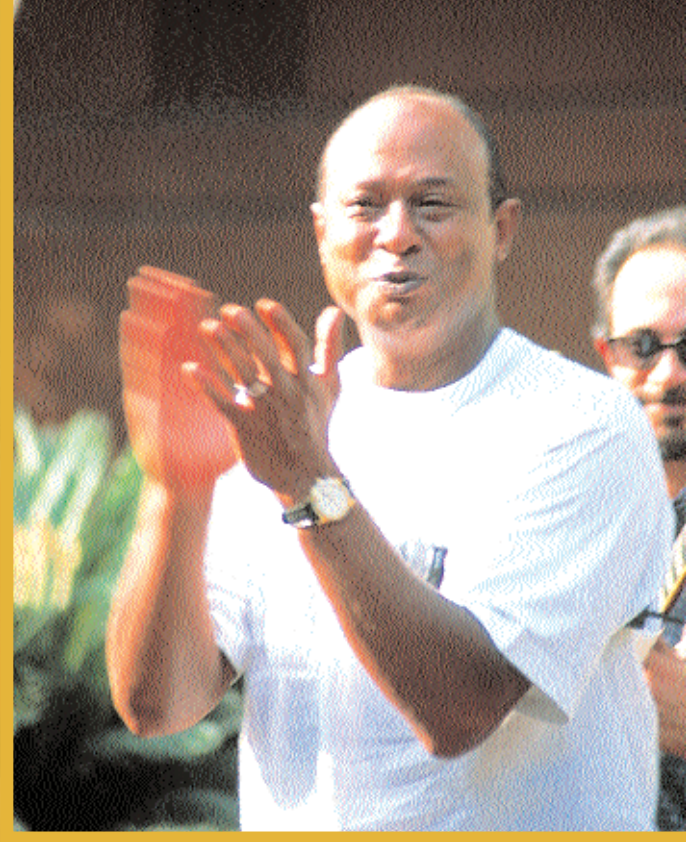


*Sanaa Ghanem*









# Homecoming 2003

Photos by Ahmed El Nemr





# A Teacher's Quest

By Dalia Al Nimr

Photos by Thomas Hartwell

**Saad Eddin Ibrahim,  
sociology professor and  
human rights activist,  
returns to the classroom**





It is often said that we don't know the true value of freedom until we are deprived of it. After a three-year trial and going in and out of prison several times, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, AUC sociology professor and human rights activist, was acquitted on all charges and finally given the freedom to return to his family, to his work and to AUC.

"Freedom is important to think, act and organize — it is important to implement any vision," Ibrahim reflected.

At his Maadi residence, Ibrahim comfortably seated on his living room sofa, recounted tough days spent in prison. "Having grown up in the countryside, I have developed internal peace and serenity and the ability to endure harsh circumstances. But in prison, you see people disintegrating and collapsing. As a result, you become supersensitive, more observant and more insightful."

Ibrahim, 64, was raised in Daqahliya, a rural town on the Nile Delta. Majoring in sociology, he graduated with honors from Cairo University. In 1962, he moved to the United States, where he earned a master's degree in sociological development from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and a doctorate in political sociology from the University of Washington. He then taught political sociology at UCLA.

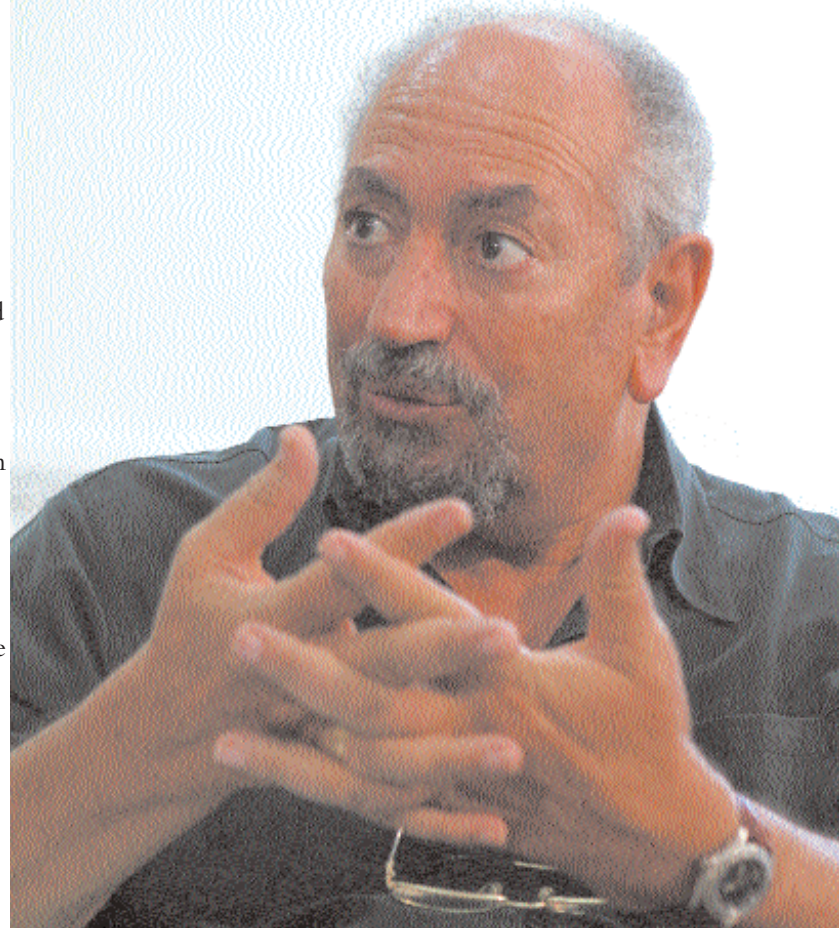
Ibrahim's activism began early in his youth. As a teenager, he was infatuated with history books and counted among his role models Islamic military leaders Salah Aldin Al Ayoubi and Khaled bin Al Waleed; Arab revolutionaries like Ibn Khaldun

and especially Saad Zaghloul, whom he was named after. At Cairo University, Ibrahim was president of the student union. During his stay in the United States, he took part in the civil rights movements of the 1960s and was president of both the Egyptian Students' Association and the Association of the Arab Students of North America. Clashing with the Nasserist regime after the 1968 six-day war, Ibrahim's Egyptian citizenship was withdrawn, and he was banned from entering the country. His citizenship was later restored during the Sadat era.

"These were the seeds of my interest in public activism," Ibrahim said nostalgically. "Freedom of speech and human rights became very important issues to me. As a student, I had a passion for democracy and a dream of Arab unity, and this dream remains important until this day."

Head of the Anti-Marriage League at the time was one of Ibrahim's American students, Barbara Lethem. Going against her ideas about marriage, Ibrahim and Barbara came to admire each other, and the talk about marriage began.

"I resisted the idea at first because my mother had made me promise not to marry a foreigner," Ibrahim said smiling. "I also felt that an American



"Freedom is important to think, act and organize — it is important to implement any vision."





like Barbara would not be able to endure the harsh living conditions of my rural hometown.”

But Barbara proved him wrong by traveling to his home in Daqahliya and introducing herself to his family as one of Ibrahim’s students who came to learn more about the culture of Egypt. She spent two weeks with his family cooking, baking and taking part in their daily activities. “She was fascinated by the village life, and they loved her simplicity,” Ibrahim said.

After her departure, Ibrahim was bombarded by letters from his family strongly recommending Barbara as a wife for him. Sure enough, after Barbara finished her undergraduate studies, they got married. They are now parents to Randa ’95 and Amir and are grandparents to Lara and Seif.

“I value my family now more than before,” Ibrahim declared. “They have mobilized the world in support of my case, and this has helped me withstand the harsh days in prison.”

Reflecting on his prison time, Ibrahim remembered how he tried to keep himself busy teaching illiterate guards and prisoners how to read and write and engaging himself in their personal and social problems. He also gave small financial grants to some

prisoners in order to help them set up carpentry and knitting projects inside prison. The suit Ibrahim was wearing in prison and the coffee table in his study at home were both made by prisoners involved in these projects. “I had to do these things to help pass the time and keep my sanity,” Ibrahim noted.

In the meantime, Ibrahim sent articles to international journals, drafted a prison diary and began writing his autobiography. “I included in the diary all the things I saw in prison,” he said. “Prison is full of heartbreaking stories — stories of courage, survival and tragedy.”

There was also Ibrahim’s pocket radio, which he used to listen to songs and to follow up on BBC news. But perhaps his most inspirational moment in prison came when he received from Nelson Mandela a copy of his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, which Mandela wrote during his more than 25 years of imprisonment. “It made my experience look very small and gave me a lot of support and encouragement,” Ibrahim said, adding that those who believe in something must be ready to pay a price and prepare themselves for the worst.

“My dream of Arab unity remains important and real to me. I have dedicated my life to achieving this dream.”



“An activist is an advocate who is preaching his vision, and teaching is a quest to reach the minds of the young ...”



*Ibrahim with grandson Seif*

In recognition of his efforts in promoting human rights and civil liberties, Ibrahim in the past three years alone has received eight international awards. They are the 2003 American Sociological Association Award for Scholarly Contribution and Political Courage, the Sociological Practice Association Award for Policy and Action Oriented Research, the 2002 International Understanding and Human Rights Prize from the Ulrich-Zweiner Foundation, the Academic Freedom Award from the Middle East Studies Association of North America, the Whistle-Blower Award from the Censorship Index, the Pen Award from the International Writers' Union, the Freedom House Award and the Lawyers' Committee Award for Human Rights.

“I became a hero by default,” he said.

Upon his release from prison, Ibrahim traveled to the United States, where he underwent surgery on his spinal cord at Johns Hopkins Hospital. “The risk of this operation was total paralysis and loss of voice,” said Ibrahim, who has been undergoing physical therapy for the past six months. He returned to teaching at AUC this fall.

“I am happy about going back to teaching,” he said. “AUC has been very kind and supportive to me, and the Board of Trustees has consistently expressed its solidarity.”

An AUC professor for the past 28 years, Ibrahim finds teaching a means of fulfilling the activist inside. “An activist is an advocate who is preaching his vision, and teaching is a quest to reach the minds of the young. In this sense, preaching and teaching are very close; they have the same objective and require the same communication skills.”

Describing how his experiences will enrich classroom discussions, Ibrahim noted, “The nature of my courses lend themselves to lively issues of public debate, and my case was a public issue for three years.”

Regarding the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, the research organization headed by Ibrahim whose work focuses primarily on democratization in the Arab World and the role of civil society, Ibrahim's plan is to gradually “phase out and let younger people take over.” But his path remains the same. “My dream of Arab unity remains important and real to me. I have dedicated my life to achieving this dream,” he said. □





# In Solidarity

By Lamyia Tawfik

**From AUC to Lebanon, Cairo to Camps students spend the summer with Palestinian refugees**



“The kids were just like kids anywhere with hopes and dreams ... They were not only interested in talking about politics; they wanted to talk about sports, football matches and to enjoy trips like any other child.”



*A painting by a Palestinian refugee child*

Continuing a tradition that started a year ago and in a show of solidarity with Palestinian refugees, AUC students spent their second summer with children in refugee camps in Lebanon.

The student group, Cairo to Camps, was the first Arab-speaking delegation from the Middle East to visit the Palestinian refugee camps, where they held art, literature and theater workshops with the children, focusing on the theme of self-expression. This summer, the students split into two groups, one at the Shatilla camp they visited the summer before and the other at the Bourj El Barajna camp.

The group, which is entirely student-operated, is responsible for raising funds for the trip, planning the activities, coordinating with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the camps and handling all logistics.

The 17 students who went this summer underwent training and preparatory sessions that included political and historical education about the Palestinian issue in general and the refugees in Lebanon in particular. They also prepared for the workshops, selecting creative age-appropriate activities geared toward helping the children learn more about themselves.

“We introduced different techniques that enable the refugee children to express and reflect their experiences,” said Omneya Ragab, a graduate sociology student who went for the

second time on the trip. Activities ranged from readings in English and Arabic literature, storytelling sessions, theater performances, a day-trip to the beach and a final project.

The fact that the AUC students were coming from Egypt was a source of amusement for the children, many of them having never met someone who spoke with the Egyptian dialect. “They’d look at us as if they were watching a movie on a screen because of the Egyptian films they regularly watch,” explained Laila Soliman, a theater senior and another Cairo to Camps veteran.

Accustomed to frequent visits from Western NGOs and determined to not be portrayed as victims, the children were at first reluctant participants. However, in a short period of time, the children began to build trust with the AUC students, eager to share their experiences and learn more about their visitors. “The fact that we were there for the second time was a source of trust for all the children,” said Ragab.

Using the activities as a vehicle for self-exploration, the AUC students gradually began to help the children express themselves. While their political situation was reflected in their hopes and dreams, they also shared the same aspirations of children everywhere. “They were not only interested in talking about politics; they wanted to talk about sports, football matches and to enjoy trips like



*Cairo to Camps students engage Palestinian refugee children in activities aimed at self-exploration*

any other child,” said Lamia Mohammad, a political science major.

While politics was usually not a topic of choice for the children, the 1982 Sabra and Shatilla massacre was a source of many of their stories and a part of their identity, although most of them were not yet born when it happened. “Sometimes they’d make up stories to tell us about things they think we wanted to hear ... about people who died in the massacre. There was sort of a collective memory of the massacre,” said Soliman.

The younger children did not know much about it, but were still able to speak about the massacre with fervor. On the other hand, among many of the older youth there was a sense of despair and a cautiously skeptical view of the future.

Observing their parents and other adults around them, they often felt that

no matter how hard they tried, any attempt to leave the camps would be futile. Looking for an escape, they often looked to their return to Palestine as a far off dream that would solve their problems. “Palestine is their dream, not only as an escape from the camp but also as their homeland,” noted Ragab.

“Their psychological escape is to think that once they get to Palestine everything will be alright. It’s like the American dream,” explained Soliman. Just as returning to Palestine is an escape, so too is a passport to any Western country. “To them, a passport is the white horse,” added Soliman. Some would tell stories about how a courageous girl managed to escape from the camps, a hero to be admired in their eyes.

As the AUC students began to understand more about the refugees,





they found that what they learned from them was equally, if not more, valuable than what they had given. Soliman, one of the active organizers of the event since its inception, echoes the sentiments of the other students when she insists that what fuels her desire to travel to the camps is a sense of solidarity and not charity.

“We are not a charity,” she affirmed. “Charity puts you up and them down, but we are on the same level as them,” said Soliman. “We are there to show them that they have friends in far off places who care about them and support them.” Soliman added that the real need in the camps was not for basic economic necessities; in fact, many of the families are in living conditions similar to those in underprivileged parts of Cairo. The most important need is for psychological support and creating among the refugees a sense that their struggle is not unfelt by their fellow Arabs, elaborated Soliman.

Contacts with the kids do not end after the summer. They are maintained through regular mail, e-mail and telephone calls. According to Ragab, this is a main feature of the activity. “It gives it a unique character,” she said. “We establish lasting bonds between us and the kids.”

For many of the AUC students, the most rewarding part of the experience was feeling that they made a difference in the children’s personalities and behaviors. “The kids got the chance to draw, paint, act, read stories and have a great time,” said Mohammad, “but most of all, they were empowered by those activities.”

Sometimes accomplishing little tasks is significant when a person feels incapable of achieving anything. These accomplishments, no matter how trivial, are empowering and help boost

self-confidence. “Many of them did not feel like they were able to accomplish anything; they’d just get restless and give up,” explained Mohammad. “They learned things like patience and persistence and that if they start something they can actually finish it.”

On an intellectual level, the students debated daily over their interpretations of the children’s behavior and its implications, trying to understand the perspective of the refugees. Then at one point during the trip, they actually experienced for a short time a taste of what it was like to be a refugee.

As Ragab recalled, an Israeli plane flew over the home where the group was staying. “Since we were not used to this, we thought a war was starting, especially since things were getting bad in the south of Lebanon. We gathered our essential belongings like our passports and had nowhere to go; we truly felt like refugees.” □

*For more information on how you can help Cairo to Camps, please contact [cairotocamps@yahoo.com](mailto:cairotocamps@yahoo.com) or [omneya79@hotmail.com](mailto:omneya79@hotmail.com)*



*A painting of a butterfly by a Palestinian refugee child*

**“They learned things like patience and persistence and that if they start something they can actually finish it.”**



# Globetrotter

By Lamya Tawfik

## All in a day's work for Amira Khattab

“Kenya, Brazil, England, Switzerland, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Holland, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon...” begins the list of countries that Amira Khattab ('01 MPA) pours out one after the other, mentally checking off all the places she has been.

Barely thirty, Khattab maintains an impressive resume, a fast track career that has allowed her to crisscross the globe and the kind of charm that instantly wins you over.

As the regional human resources (HR) coordinator for the Middle East and Africa at General Motors, Khattab is the first and last stop for employees joining and leaving the company.

“HR is not just about dealing with annual leaves and payroll. Employees have demands, and a happy employee is a productive employee,” proclaimed Khattab, speaking about HR with a remarkable passion and excitedly pointing at a chart in her office about the effects of efficient HR on an organization.

For Khattab, the decision to pursue a master's was a major shift in her life, both personally and professionally. “It's a way to self-realization; it gives you exposure and depth in your personality,” she said. “Going back to school keeps you young mentally.”

Full of an innate curiosity and a desire to learn, coupled with the natural skill to teach, Khattab spends much of her time traveling to offices and production facilities around the world, where she conducts training for employees. The Go Fast Program that Khattab implements is a form of quality management that “aims to facilitate training for people to eliminate the elements in their system that produce bureaucracy across the company,” explained Khattab.



“It's a way to self-realization; it gives you exposure and depth in your personality ... Going back to school keeps you young mentally.”



“I’ve traveled to the most bizarre places, but the best week of my life was in Kenya,” said Khattab. “I spent time in the Masai Mara, where the last native tribe in Kenya is still living like people in the 11th century.”

Through her travel, Khattab has become acutely sensitive to the differences in culture that often impact the work environment. “People often do not realize how culture affects every aspect of the work environment. In the United States, for example, the employees have more empowerment; while in a place like Kenya, there seems to be a notion among local employees that foreigners know more and that

they need guidance,” she explained.

Looking to the future, Khattab would like to one day start a family, while maintaining an active career in HR. “I’m a people person and HR is all about dealing with people,” said Khattab. Even though she has been to many places, her wish list of destinations is still long. “I thrive on meeting new people from diverse cultures.” □

*Snapshots of Khattab from around the world:  
Across: test-driving a Hummer in Miami, Florida;  
top-right: a day at the office in Cairo; bottom-  
right: on a mountain side in Zurich, Switzerland;  
bottom-left: in front of the Sacred-Heart Basilica  
of Montmartre in Paris, France*



Omar Mohsen



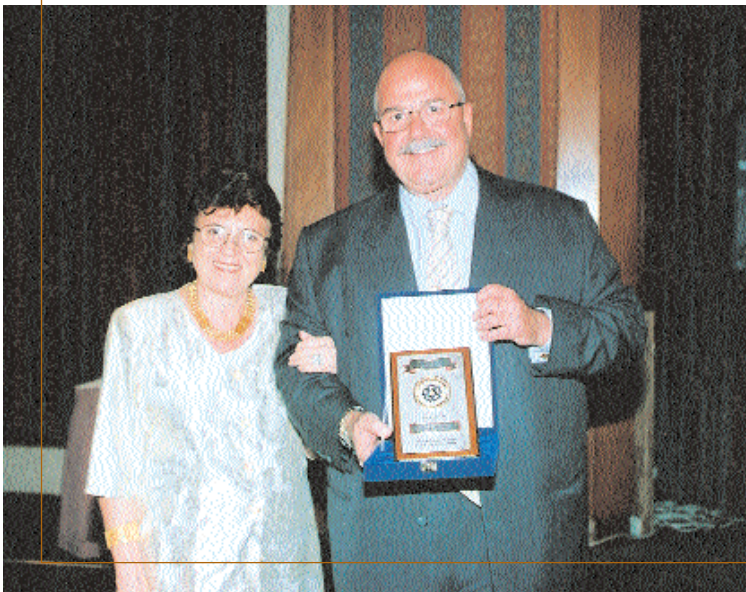
“I’ve traveled to the most bizarre places, but the best week of my life was in Kenya.”





# Distinguished Alumni Honored at Gala Dinner

The annual Gala Dinner held at Semiramis InterContinental Hotel not only provided a setting for AUC alumni to meet, but was a chance to recognize distinguished alumni for their contributions in various domains. Distinguished Alumni Awards were presented to three exceptional alumni and Distinguished Alumni Volunteer Awards were presented to two alumni in recognition of their outstanding volunteer work.



*Wagdi Rabbat (MS '75) and his wife Souraya Pazika Yousry '69*

## **The Business of Banking**

With 27 years in the banking profession, **Wagdi Rabbat** (MS '75), chairman and managing director of Misr Exterior Bank, still finds the field stimulating. "I like dealing with people, and I like to do business," he said, adding that the real challenge of banking is "to keep abreast of the change in market dynamics and to position your bank to cater to the future needs of the market."

Rabbat's career began with Citibank in Cairo, where he spent two years before moving to Citicorp Investment Bank in London. For 12 years, Rabbat's work in London focused on corporate finance and product specialization. He then relocated to Bahrain where he worked on marketing and relationship management at Citibank. Then, motivated by a desire to do something for his county, he returned to Egypt where he spent two and a half years as managing director of Cairo Barclay's Bank before assuming his current position at Misr Exterior Bank. Recognizing his outstanding contributions to the field of banking, Rabbat was given the Distinguished Alumni Award.



## A Thirst for Knowledge

“I look at life as an opportunity to learn and to translate what one learns into something that benefits society and people.” This is the motto by which **Hisham El Sherif** '79, chairman of IT Ventures, lives.

Driven to find a way to use his knowledge for the advancement of society and his country, El Sherif is an eloquent spokesman with great enthusiasm and passion for his work. “I’ve never found an end to what one learns,” he said. El Sherif received several academic degrees including a management diploma from AUC in 1979 and a Ph.D. in information and decision-support systems from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1982.

El Sherif has taught information systems courses at AUC since 1983 and considers it the best thing he does in life. “We work in a young, dynamic, fast field and the younger you are, the faster you are. I find AUC refreshing with the liberal arts education that takes place, the openness and the questioning ability of the students and the desire to know and to learn. Students keep me alive.”

In 1984, he helped build Egypt’s Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center and has served as chair of the cabinet’s advisory board for 15 years. “It was through AUC; I was invited to the management department and asked by our current Prime Minister Atef Ebeid to implement and operationalize my Ph.D. in Egypt. I submitted a proposal, and it was accepted,” explained El Sherif.

He has helped build more than 29 technology-related organizations, among them RITSEC, a regionally recognized leader in software, engineering, multimedia and education.

El Sherif served as chairman of the advisory board of the New Egyptian Museum, member of the council of Motherhood and Childhood and chair of the Children with Special Needs initiative.

El Sherif has received several awards including the world first prize in Information Systems from SIM in 1998, the Franz Edelman Award for Management Achievements and its Application in 1989 and the IFORS Operation Research Third World Prize Award in 1987.

In addition, the president of France awarded him the French Knighthood in 1991, and President Hosni Mubarak awarded him the First Order Medal of Science and Arts in 1999. Adding another award, El Sherif received AUC’s Distinguished Alumni Award at the Gala Dinner.



*Professor Hisham El Sherif '79 and wife  
Shahira Genena '77*

“We work in a young, dynamic, fast field and the younger you are, the faster you are.”

## Banking Globally

“The feature I like most about banking is its diversity. It is one of the earliest truly global businesses which provides exposure to clients and products across a very wide and continuously changing spectrum,” said **Adel El-Labban** '77, '80, managing director and group chief executive officer at Al Ahli United Bank in Bahrain and recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award.

El-Labban started with Chase National Bank in Cairo, and within five years, was promoted to general manager of the corporate banking group. He then acquired leading posts at the Arab Banking Corporation in Bahrain, Morgan Stanley in New York, the Commercial International Bank in Egypt and the United Bank of Kuwait in London.

“I have been fortunate to enjoy a rewarding banking career in Egypt, New York and the Gulf,” El-Labban said, adding that one of the important lessons he learned over the past 25 years is the “need to develop a clear vision of the future and to avoid haphazard and reactive management.”



*Adel El-Labban '77, '80  
receives award from President  
David Arnold*



*Zeinab El Naggat '68, '72 (center) with her two  
daughters Salwa '74 and Magda Zaki '80, '00*

## Taking Initiative

When **Zeinab El Naggat** '68, '72 graduated from AUC, she received the President's Cup for the highest GPA in her graduating class.

El Naggat was a member of the first Alumni Council, suggesting several promising alumni activities including the Alumni Weekend. In addition, she initiated the idea of naming a chair after each prospective donor in order to help renovate Ewart Hall, as well as the idea of the 50-year Graduation

Anniversary Award. She has also participated in the committee for the selection and evaluation of the former AUC president, the late John Gerhart. El Naggat was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Volunteer Award for her dedication to AUC.

El Naggat is a member of the Red Cross and founder of the Inner Wheel Club for the wives of Rotary members.

Above all, she has two daughters and is a role model for other women of her generation in pursuing their education while being married with children.



## A Journalist's Passion

A graduate of Egyptology and founder of the Egyptology club at AUC during his university years, **Ibrahim Saleh '91, '00** had a keen interest in the field. However, upon graduation, he began to develop a new interest in journalism.

"I love Egyptology, but when I got a chance to work in journalism, it was an amazing experience for me," said Saleh. "I could see myself in the field; I knew immediately that this is what I wanted to do."

Saleh began by writing for a variety of local magazines before moving into the area of broadcast journalism, working as a production coordinator for Fox Canadian TV and a video journalist and interviewer for the Egyptian Radio and Television Union, as well as the Arab Radio and Television network. Saleh excelled in his work and was presented with gold medals at the Third Cairo Festival for Radio and Television for preparation, art directing and presentation of his television program, "Akher Moda."

In June 2000, Saleh earned his master's degree in journalism and mass communication from AUC, with a double sequence in journalism and TV journalism. He received a certificate of outstanding effort and achievement from AUC's Adham Center for Television Journalism for his graduation



*Ibrahim Saleh '91, '00 (center) with members of the Alumni Committee*

project. His thesis on media management and economics was also chosen by the Supreme High Press Council as a model in its field.

After graduation, Saleh joined the University for Modern Sciences and Arts for three years as journalism professor and director of the Cairo Media Center. He now teaches broadcast journalism at the International Academy of Media Science and is managing director of *Future Media* monthly magazine.

"In journalism, you are not only discovering new things all the time, but also refining yourself with the skills of newsgathering, reporting, research and writing," said Saleh. "It's a field that stimulates your soul and brain!"

Saleh received the Distinguished Alumni Volunteer Award for his outstanding contributions in organizing and implementing alumni activities.

Saleh is author of the book *Unveiling the Truth About Middle Eastern Media Privatization in Egypt: Hope or Dope?* He is currently finishing his doctorate in international political communication and working on a new book titled *Can We Say No To Israel?*

**"It's a field that stimulates your soul and brain!"**



# Alumni Welcome President Arnold



At a reception held on campus in October, alumni donors of the '80s and '90s were introduced to President David Arnold and his wife Sherry. Gathered in the science garden, alumni had the chance to connect with their classmates, hear from Arnold and receive an update on the new campus.

## Alumni from the '80s and '90s met on campus



## Alumni Gather at Volunteer Reception

A volunteer reception was held to bring together alumni who have been actively engaged in alumni events worldwide. Also attending the event were many

alumni parents who are actively involved in alumni activities. Hussein El Sharkawy, vice president for new campus development, updated alumni volunteers on the progress of the new campus.



*Ibrahim Saleh '91, '00, Saneya Saleh '71, '76 and Leon Ishkhanian '52*

“AUC’s role in bridging the East and West is needed now more than ever,” said Galal Zaki '68. Magda Hayek '72, '76 and '94 stressed the importance of AUC alumni working together to serve the community. “I’m really proud of AUC students for the great services that they are providing to the community,” said Hayek.



*Alumni gather at volunteer reception*



# AUC Alumni Meet Around the World



*Mayar Farrag '81, '84, Mary Iskander '76, Sherif Tantaawy '85, Ghada Abu Wafia '86 and Nesreen Soliman '98*



*Paul Hannon, Arun Pabari '83, Violette Jaggi '73 and Dagmar Hannon*

## France

Violette Jaggi '73, vice president of Banque Credit Agricole Indosuez and chair of the Swiss Alumni Chapter, held a reception at her residence in Divonne, France in July. Some 50 alumni spanning several generations and three countries: Switzerland, France and the United Kingdom attended the event. Paul Hannon, chairman of the Board of Trustees, briefed alumni on the appointment of President David Arnold, recent faculty developments and the progress with construction plans of the new campus.

## United Arab Emirates

Jawad Anani '67, who has been relocated to Dubai from Jordan, hosted a dinner in honor of the AUC delegation. While in Jordan, Anani held several ministerial posts and currently has a weekly program "Al Bo'ad Al Akhar" (The Other Dimension) on Dubai TV.

AUC's long time supporter Yousef Jameel '68, chairman of Hitech FZE, hosted a dinner cruise for alumni in honor of President David Arnold and the accompanying delegation.



*Jawad Anani '67, President David Arnold, Mary Iskander '76 and Ahmed Jawad Anani*

## Yousef Jameel hosts cruise for Dubai alums



*Yousef Jameel '68, Muhammed Farnsworth, AUC Trustee Moataz Al-Alfi and President David Arnold*



## Class Notes

'51

**Ibrahim A. Ibrahim** wrote to *AUCToday*: "The Swiss Alumni Chapter meeting in July reminded me that I graduated some 52 years earlier!" After graduation, Ibrahim worked at AUC before moving to the Egyptian Labor Department. Following graduate studies at the University of Chicago and at Princeton University, he returned to Cairo in 1956. Ibrahim retired about 20 years ago and volunteers his time for activities related to third-age education.

'72



**Nadia El Tatawy** (MA) held an art exhibit in March, at the Faculty of Applied Arts in Giza. Her training in arts has been through the instruction of

Professor Grant, the late leading artist. She has participated in group exhibitions since the late 1960s and her paintings have been shown in a number of galleries in Cairo and Amsterdam. El Tatawy currently serves as first undersecretary and counselor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Egypt.

'79

**Tarek Amer** returned to Cairo after serving at Citibank Bahrain and is currently vice chairman of Banque Misr.

'80

**Gary Kabbash** (MA) has been an English as a Second Language teacher at Paterson N.J. Public Schools for 15 years. He used to be a faculty member at the English Language Institute at AUC. He is an active member of the Paterson Education Association's executive board and is chairman of the Violence and Vandalism Committee. Kabbash is also a

dedicated bicycle commuter and has made numerous bike trips in Europe with his children, Yousef and Laila.



**Heba El Hadidy** spent six years in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and worked as an interpreter at Whittaker Corporation in the United Arab

Emirates. She studied translation at AUC's Center for Adult and Continuing Education, is now an English teacher and has two sons.

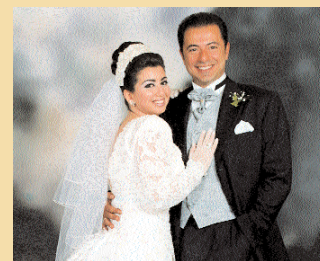
'82

**Soheir Abdel Rahman** (MA) is the human resources manager at Siemens, Cairo. Her son Hisham Abdou graduated from AUC in 2003.

## Weddings



**May El Banna** '03 was married to **Yasser Abou Zeid** '01 on July 4, 2003 at the Cairo Marriott.



**Omneya Yassa** '95 and **Sherif Boghdady** were married on February 16, 2002 at Saint Mark church in Shatby, Alexandria. A reception followed the wedding at Gardemia in Alexandria.



**Radwa El Sweify** '01, '03 and **Ahmed Farag** '95 were married on September 2, 2003 at the Cairo Marriott. They are now living in Washington D.C.



**Shahira Rifaa** '98 and **Hatem El Leithy** '96 were married at the Cairo Marriott on December 20, 2001.



**Inas Tohamy** '98, senior graphic designer of *AUCToday*, and **Tamer Mahmoud** '97, senior brand manager at Unilever Mashreq, were married on September 13, 2003 at Movenpick Hotel.



**Reem El-Sharouni** '94 was married to **Essam Kamel** on April 23, 2003 at Kasr El-Dobbarah Evangelical Church, followed by a reception at Movenpick Heliopolis. She has relocated to England and would like to stay in touch with her colleagues via e-mail: [sharouni@link.net](mailto:sharouni@link.net)



'86

**Yousri Aclimandos** (MA '92) is the vice president of TCA, Cairo. He has two daughters, Farida, 3, and Farah, 1.

'87

**Marie-Rose Philippe** (MA '91) is the financial analysis manager at Otis Elevator Company, Cairo. She was blessed with twins, Salma and Farida, 2, and Cherif, 5.

'93

**Mariam Draz** is the business development and program coordinator at Ecoconserv, Cairo. She has one child, Ismael El Kilany, 2.

**Youssef Hafez** was recently promoted to industrial fuels sales manager in ExxonMobil Egypt. He is married and has a baby boy, Hani, 8 months.

'94

**Tarek Rizk** (MA '97) is currently an assistant professor at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

'95

**Abeer El-Ashkar** is a financial consultant at Future Financial Planning in Doha, Qatar. She is working on becoming a certified international independent financial adviser with the Chartered Insurance Institute in England.

'97

**Mona Fathalla** (MA '02) is pursuing a doctorate at the Faculty of Political Science, Cairo University.

'98

**Mona Amer** received a master's degree in psychology with highest honors from the University of Toledo in the United States. She won a regional graduate student prize for her social science research. She was the chair organizer for two national social service conferences and is an active trainer in culturally sensitive psychological services for Arab and Muslim clients.

**Noha Youssef** (MBA '02) worked for two years as an investment analyst in

Concord International Investment. She obtained her master's in business administration with an emphasis in marketing. She joined Arab Bank PLC in 2000 and was promoted to customer relationship and personal loans officer.

'00

**Hoda Issa** had a baby boy, Ali, 1.

'03

**Mahmoud Younes**, an economics major, recently celebrated his son's first birthday on August 22, 2003.

### Special Programs Participants

**Alexandra Jerome** (YAB '02) graduated from Dickinson College with a double major in Spanish and Middle Eastern studies. She is pursuing a master's in Islamic societies and cultures at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She plans to return to the Arabic Language Institute at AUC for a second master's in women's studies.

## In Memoriam

**Ignace Debano** '44 died on April 28, 2003. He received an electrical engineering degree from Sydney and a degree in arts from the University of New England in Australia. In 1997, he organized the first alumni reunion in Melbourne.

**Mohamed Nour** '46 died on February 8, 2003. He earned a Ph.D. in sociology at Kentucky University. Nour served as director of the Demonstration Centre for Rehabilitation of the Blind in Cairo. He taught sociology at the University of Riyadh.

**Mohamed Naanai** '56 died in Lebanon after a short period of sickness. He worked for Middle East airlines in Beirut.

**Fuad Barahim** '56 died on September 14, 2003. After graduating, he returned to Aden to serve for one year as a teacher in his country. He then studied in London to become a barrister-at-law at Lincoln's Inn. Barahim obtained a diploma in international law from Stockholm University in Sweden and practiced law in Dubai. He was an expert on UAE law in foreign courts and in arbitration proceedings and lectured at various institutes. Barahim received the Distinguished Alumni Award in 1999.

**Hosny Guindi** '63 died in Cairo on August 10, 2003. Guindi joined the foreign desk of *Al-Ahram* in 1964 and became editor in chief of *Al-Ahram Weekly* since its inception in 1991. In the

early 1970s, he was among a team of Arab journalists selected to set up a pan-Arab newspaper in London, *Ashraq Al-Awsat*. Guindi is survived by his wife Moushira Abdel-Malek and their only daughter, Yasmeen '02.

**Richard Hooper** (CASA) died in the bomb attack on the United Nations (UN) headquarters in Iraq on August 19, 2003. He was a UN specialist in the Middle East. He graduated with a degree in politics from the University of California at Santa Cruz and received a master's in Arab studies from Georgetown University. He studied Arabic on a Fulbright Fellowship at the University of Damascus and then at AUC. He is survived by his father, mother, brother and sister.

## Academic Integrity From a Faculty Point of View

Academic integrity is a true reflection of an individual's overall integrity. In fact, to me, there is no clear line that defines the boundaries of academic integrity, since it melts into the larger pot of self-esteem, ethical behavior and sound values.

According to the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University, of which AUC is a part, academic integrity may be defined as "a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action."

Like many credible institutes worldwide, AUC is concerned with academic integrity issues for a multitude of reasons. First, it has been documented that cheating and plagiarism are on the rise in universities worldwide. Some like to think that the massive volumes of information and the technological tools offered by computers, the Internet and databases contribute to that phenomenon.

Secondly, the quality of our educational deliverables depends to a great extent on the ethical conduct and stance of our students. For example, how can future employers trust someone who has made his way through college by non-ethical behaviors and choices?

Thirdly, the image of the institute is also important, and no one would like AUC to be thought of as a place where cheating and plagiarism are widely spread. In fact, the image AUC must strive for is that of a socially and ethically responsible institute

that recognized this issue and took the lead in both Egypt and the region in combating and preventing it.

When it comes to implementing academic integrity, there is a lot to be said. At the outset, it is educational measures and awareness that play the most effective role in helping to ensure greater understanding of and compliance with the code of ethics adopted. Preventive and punitive measures would theoretically be unnecessary in an ideal world. But it is important to note that AUC is dealing with this issue on the three levels: educational measures, preventive measures and punitive measures. For that, the Task Force on Academic Integrity has been working over the past year and will continue in this academic year to oversee the adoption of a code of academic ethics. The AUC administration has clearly considered fostering academic integrity across campus a top priority and has been working closely with the task force toward achieving that goal.

It is also important to remember that the issue of academic integrity is not the concern of students only. The collaborative effort of the entire AUC community including parents, students, staff, faculty and administration is indispensable in ensuring the widespread acceptance and adoption of academic integrity principles.

I am confident that AUC's efforts will ultimately pay off, once again setting a good example for other institutions to follow.

*Mohamed Nagib Abou-Zeid, associate professor of construction engineering, is chair of the Task Force on Academic Integrity*

*Akher Kalam is an open forum for members of the AUC community. We invite you to share your thoughts on any topic of your choice. Submissions should be sent to [auctoday@aucegypt.edu](mailto:auctoday@aucegypt.edu) and may be edited for length and clarity.*