



Flynn Larsen

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On the cover: Professor Kent Weeks in Luxor, photographed by Ahmad El-Nemr

## Editor's Notes

### Sabah and the Prince

This letter was going to be about Amir. Reflecting the meaning of his name, Amir is a prince of sorts, tucked inside his dark Howard Theatre kingdom on the Main Campus. For decades, he has been responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of AUC's theaters. I met him earlier this year, when we used Howard as a studio to take pictures for the magazine. He sat in the corner, with watchful eyes and a signature *galabeya*. Soon, I realized I had stumbled upon a rare gem of AUC history who spoke of salsa dancing for movie star Hussein Fahmy and spewed story after story from 25 years of life inside AUC. Intrigued and admittedly drawn to the rare opportunity to place a picture of the *galabeya* prince in my column, I thought I had found the topic of my letter. But something else caught my attention.



*Theater prince, Amir tells me stories from his Howard Theatre empire*

On my way back to my office, I made the uncharacteristic decision to approach a complete stranger. Someone who, like Amir, is a part of the odd mix of memories that create an AUC experience for many alumni. I first saw Sabah a little less than 10 years ago, when I came to AUC as a study-abroad student. Back then, she was just a little girl, using her charm to convince students to help her. Unable to spot her, I squatted next to her mother, who has been sitting in the same spot on Mohamed Mahmoud Street just outside the gate for 17 years. Once we sorted out why I was there — still highly suspicious of my motives — Sabah's mother recounted a story of treachery and heartache that ended on the sidewalk where we sat.

Midway through our conversation, I spotted Sabah close to the shuttle bus on the other side of the street, right outside the Greek Campus. Time had changed her appearance from the little girl who came up to my waist, to a young woman at my eye level. But time is paralyzed when it comes to changing how she spends her day. As I explained my interest in chatting with her about her life, for the first time, I became the predator and not the prey. She looked away and attempted to shuffle off, in much the same way I do when I am approached on the street.

Year after year, generation after generation of AUC students have given to people like Sabah and her mom, and yet they remain in the same spot on the same sidewalk, sharing the same history as Amir and countless generations of alumni. For the thousands of similar families who share their life on the street, the charity we give may provide a short-term solution, but in the end, they remain where they are, captive to the same cycle of poverty. Walking past them day in and day out, I see that they are the case in point for why we need "A New Take on Giving" (page 22).

Dina Abulfotuh

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### Calling for Captions

Congratulations on your very professional editing of *AUCToday*. I enjoyed reading the Fall 2005 edition and was very proud of the progress my alma mater has been making over the years in the field of mass communication. Since my own reputation, whether I like it or not, is tied to the reputations of the universities from which I earned degrees, I am always pleased when they do things that bring them credit.

If I may make a suggestion as a former editor, foreign correspondent, professor and journalism dean, it would be useful to identify the pictures of individuals you write about — as you did in “Tackling Terrorism,” but did not in “To the Beat of Cairo.” I would also have liked to know how large this fall’s freshman class was (page 4). The percentages are interesting, but as you know, a 100 percent increase over a class of one student is two. If there had been 22 freshmen last year (which is the number of seniors who were in my graduating class in 1947), just a little over 8.6 percent would have increased that freshman class to 24.

Keep up the good work.

*L. John Martin '47, professor emeritus, College of Journalism, University of Maryland  
United States*

*The incoming class was at 882, up from 812 the year before. Incidentally, there was an even greater increase in Fall 2004, when the number rose from 548 to 812. — Ed*

### Writing Contests

I think you are doing a great job. However I had a query. Do you have writing contests? If yes, please keep me updated about all the contests that you have.

*Marwa Riad '02  
Cairo, Egypt*



*While we have not yet had an AUCToday writing contest, submissions are always welcome to the Akher Kalam column on the last page. — Ed*

### More News

I would first like to wish the entire team of *AUCToday* a happy, prosperous and fruitful new year and a happy Eid. The feature articles covered by the magazine are truly interesting and insightful. I especially like the Alumni News and Class Notes sections as they keep me informed of the whereabouts of my classmates.

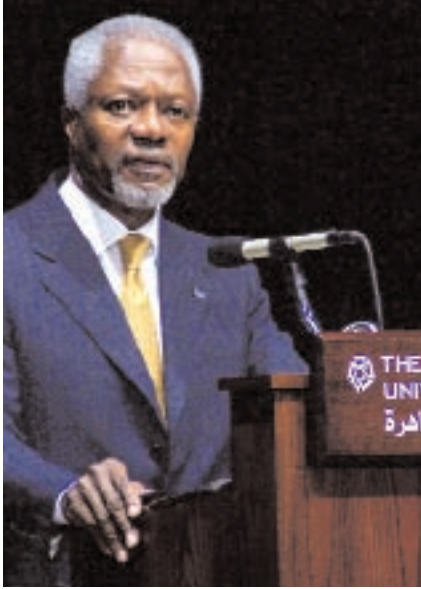
I would also like to take this opportunity to send my best wishes and warm regards to all my fellow “mengers” of the class of 2000, especially Tariq Al Qanni, and to all the AUC community.

*Ahmed AbdulRahman '00, '05  
Cairo, Egypt*

### We Would Like to Hear From You

*AUCToday welcomes letters from readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please send to [auctoday@aucegypt.edu](mailto:auctoday@aucegypt.edu) or Editor, AUCToday, Office of Communications and Marketing, 113 Kasr El Aini Street, P.O. Box 2511, Cairo 11511.*

## *Annan Delivers First Nadia Younes Memorial Lecture*



Inaugurating the Nadia Younes Memorial Lecture series at AUC, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan encouraged honoring the memory of Younes, who was killed in the 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

“The lesson we must learn from her tragic death is that we need to work even harder to spread enlightenment and tolerance,” said Annan. “We must resolve to build a world in which no nation and no community will be punished collectively for the crimes of some of its members; a world in which no religion will be demonized for the aberrations of some of its adherents; a world in which there will be no clash of civilizations, because people will strive to discover the best in each other’s traditions and cultures, and to learn from it. That is the kind of world that Nadia Younes stood for.”

AUC established the Nadia Younes Memorial Fund last year in recognition of Younes’s lifelong dedication to international humanitarian affairs. The fund will support a conference and meeting room on the new campus, an award for public and humanitarian service for graduating seniors and an annual lecture, all in her name.

## *Religions Scholar Karen Armstrong Shatters Stereotypes*

Karen Armstrong, world-renowned author who has written more than a dozen books on various religions, came to AUC as a distinguished visiting professor. During her weeklong visit in December, she delivered a series of lectures on topics relating to religion.

“We’re in trouble religiously at the moment,” she said during her first lecture, calling for a return to the teachings of sages and prophets in order to forge a better world.

In her second lecture, “The Future of Islam in the West,” Armstrong encouraged dialogue between East and West to form what she termed as an alliance of civilizations. “Islam, properly understood, can only bring about peace. ... We need new concepts, new narratives of civilization,” she said.

Moving from Islam to Christian fundamentalism in the United States, Armstrong declared in her third lecture that fundamentalist movements contradict religion. “Fundamentalism

has been successful in many ways in bringing religion to the forefront again, but because this form of religiosity is so conflicted and so pain-ridden and so fearful ... it tends to lose sight of the essential principle of compassion that lies at the heart of every single religious tradition,” she asserted.

While the former Catholic nun promoted compassion and a deeper understanding of religious differences in her speeches, she admitted that she wasn’t always so accepting. After spending seven years in a British convent, she decided it wasn’t her place and emerged an atheist. “I wanted nothing to do with religion for 13 years,” she said.

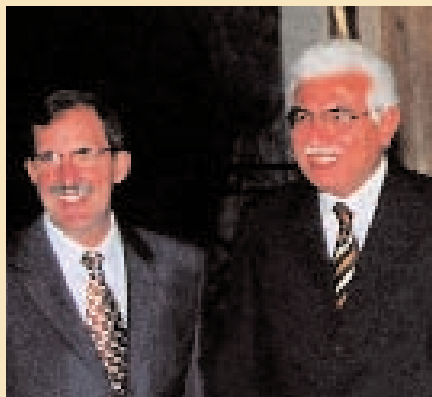
Her spiritual re-awakening came during a 1983 visit to Jerusalem. Ever since, her interest in religion has been fueled by various faiths. “I draw nourishment from them all,” she said.

Capitalizing on that idea in her final lecture, Armstrong emphasized that the essence of all faiths is the same.



“All religions teach the ethic of compassion,” she said. “We need to enter our own [religious] traditions. ... and experience spiritual transformation [but also] turn to other faiths for inspiration.”

## Nazif Underscores Role of Education in Reform



Arnold and Nazif

Speaking at the chairman's dinner, Egypt's Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif emphasized AUC's role as a link between East and West. "With what we witness today as an escalation of the waves of cultural

misunderstanding and the clash of civilizations, the role of institutions like AUC as a cultural bridge is more important than ever," he said.

Highlighting education as an integral part of modernization and reform, Nazif praised AUC's role as a liberal arts institution, a center for cultural exchange and a place for the preparation of future leaders. "We appreciate the high standard of education that AUC has kept throughout its history, a standard that has provided our society with many leaders — many of them here today — in various disciplines."

At the event, AUC President David Arnold recognized donors who have

made substantial contributions to the establishment of scholarships and academic professorships at AUC, as well as supported the new campus project, which Boyd Hight, Board of Trustees chairman, described as a dream come true. "Our new campus is, as we meet this evening, rising from the desert sands in New Cairo," said Hight. "It is a physical expression of the dream that so many of you have supported. And it is also a symbolic expression of the determination to build here in Cairo a truly world-class institution which can provide our children with the information and the perspective that all of us who together share this planet desperately need.

## AUC Commemorates the life of Cynthia Nelson

Cynthia Nelson, professor of anthropology, founding director of the Institute for Gender and Women's Studies (IGWS) and former dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, passed away February 14 at her brother's home in California after a battle with leukemia.

Nelson was born on September 29, 1933 in Maine, and grew up between there and Massachusetts. In 1963, after finishing her doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley, Nelson received a telegram offering her a position at AUC. Accepting the offer, she read Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*, watched *Lawrence of Arabia* and boarded a boat that took her across the Atlantic.

In an oral history interview in July 2005, she told Stephen Urgola, senior librarian and university archivist: "So with that background, off I went. And when people asked me, well why did you go, I said I didn't know, it was chosen, *maktub*."

From the first time she set eyes on the land, Nelson held a positive view of Egypt. "For me it was a kind of coming into being of a kind of romantic image. Because coming into the harbor of Alexandria and the smell of spices, you can almost see some of the characters of Durrell," she told Urgola.

Nelson fought against an inevitable evacuation during the 1967 War and found a positive side of Egypt during the bread riots. "People were helping each other, ... which is what Egypt is about. I mean, even in its most stressful times,

there's a certain decency that emerges," she said.

Randa Kaldas, her assistant at IGWS, was impressed by her work ethic and personal qualities. "Every trait in Dr. Nelson made her special: her charisma, her knowledge, her warmth, her support to others, even her temper, made her very special."

The 13 years of work Nelson put into writing the biography *Doria Shafik, Egyptian Feminist: A Woman Apart*, was, as she told Urgola, her most ambitious project. In recognition of her work, she received the Woman of the Year award in 1998 from the American Biographical Institute. "It turned out to be ... that young students at AUC, upon reading it, said we never realized we had such women. ... In a sense it's a kind of interesting process of being able to, I guess be an intellectual midwife," she told Urgola.



Nelson at the Magda Al-Nowaihi gender studies award ceremony in December 2003

## AUC's Noble Prize Connections

### Professor Awarded Eisenhower Fellowship

Recipient of the prestigious Eisenhower Fellowship for the 2005 Single Region Program, Sherif Kamel '88, '90 associate professor of management information systems, recently returned from the United States, having toured 24 cities in only six weeks.

Kamel's schedule was packed with high-profile visits to leading U.S. universities, corporations, research centers and government institutions that are core users of information technology and model organizations for leadership. From Microsoft, Boeing Accenture, Intel and IBM's Institute of Electronic Government to Harvard and Stanford universities, the experience was invigorating for Kamel.

"I felt privileged to have this unique opportunity to interact with the CEOs and the leadership of some of the world's leading organizations in IT development and deployment as well as share the recent progress in the information and communication technology sector internationally. It was a two-way exposure and cultural exchange, ... an experience that was demanding but definitely worth every minute," he said.

Kamel is one of 23 Egyptians who have been awarded the Eisenhower Fellowship since the start of the program in 1953. He is also the only recipient from AUC. "It's a real honor," said the AUC alumnus who joined the university 10 years ago as a faculty member and currently heads its Institute of Management Development.



From the Naguib Mahfouz award to a visit from Ahmed Zewail and a commencement address by Mohamed ElBaradei (page 26), the fall semester brought AUC closer to each of Egypt's living Nobel laureates.

### Zewail on Revolutionizing Science

Captivating an audience that overflowed from Ewart and Oriental halls, Nobel laureate Ahmed Zewail identified research, ethics and technological development as the basic tenets for a scientific revolution.

"A scientific revolution will not come about without this triad," he said. "We need teamwork, a strong scientific base, an understanding of the role of science in society and the development of technology. As long as we buy technology, we'll stay underdeveloped, if not retarded."

Zewail's speech highlighted scientific achievements in the last two centuries on the atomic and cosmic levels, as well as in the field of modern biology, which includes the study of genes and medicine. He stressed the importance of interdisciplinary work, arguing that good scientists do not confine themselves to knowledge just in their own fields.

Zewail, an AUC trustee, currently serves as the Linus Pauling Chair Professor of Chemical Physics at the California Institute of Technology. He is the recipient of more than 100 prizes and awards. Most recently, Elsevier, the publisher of *Chemical Physics Letters*, announced the creation of the Ahmed Zewail Prize in Molecular Sciences in his honor.

### Egyptian Wins Mahfouz Medal

Marking a decade since its start, the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature was given to Yusuf Abu Rayya for his novel *Laylat 'Urs (Wedding Night)*.

The award, which consists of a silver medal, a cash prize and the translation and publication of the winning book by the AUC Press, is designed to identify and promote outstanding Arabic literature.

In Abu Rayya's acceptance speech, he expressed hope for the future of Arabic literature. "The creative threads of the younger generations will forever be braided with Mahfouz's long history in order to weave a common dream," he said. "A dream that will overtake the future despite the tyranny of the forces that want to transform it into a horrific nightmare."

## *Business Leader Funds Palestinian Scholarships*

Recognizing the importance of education, Khaled Shaheen, chairman and co-founder of the Shaheen Business and Investment Group (SBIG), has established a fund to support five outstanding Palestinian students at AUC.

In addition to covering the full cost of their undergraduate tuition, the Khaled Shaheen Palestinian Scholarship Fund will also include expenses for student housing, books and medical supplies. Shaheen pledged \$1,250,000 in support of the fund.

“In our modern age, a solid education is the strongest predictor of success and development,” said Shaheen. “In light of the current circumstances, Palestinians need a core of well-educated young men and women who can rebuild their country and work for its advancement. Through this scholarship, I hope to provide an opportunity for some of the brightest

minds to take full advantage of an AUC education.”

Among the first students studying at AUC under the Palestinian Scholarship Fund is Nader Ali, who is now an electronics engineering senior. “I am appreciative of this magnificent opportunity,” he said. “Attending one of the best universities in the Arab world has given me the initiative to pursue my goal and earn a university degree that will open new doors for me.”

In addition to the scholarship, Shaheen has pledged \$1 million in support of AUC’s new campus project.

SBIG is headquartered in Jordan and spans several Middle Eastern countries. Working in a multitude of industrial and trading investments, the organization is also heavily involved in a number of charity and philanthropic activities in the region.

In Jordan alone, the Shaheen Foundation for Science and Culture has



awarded 75 undergraduate scholarships to Jordanian students who have demonstrated academic excellence coupled with financial need. With 75 new students being awarded the scholarship annually, the number of recipients is expected to reach 300 in a span of four years.

“We believe that it is good business to be a good citizen of the community in which you live,” said Shaheen.



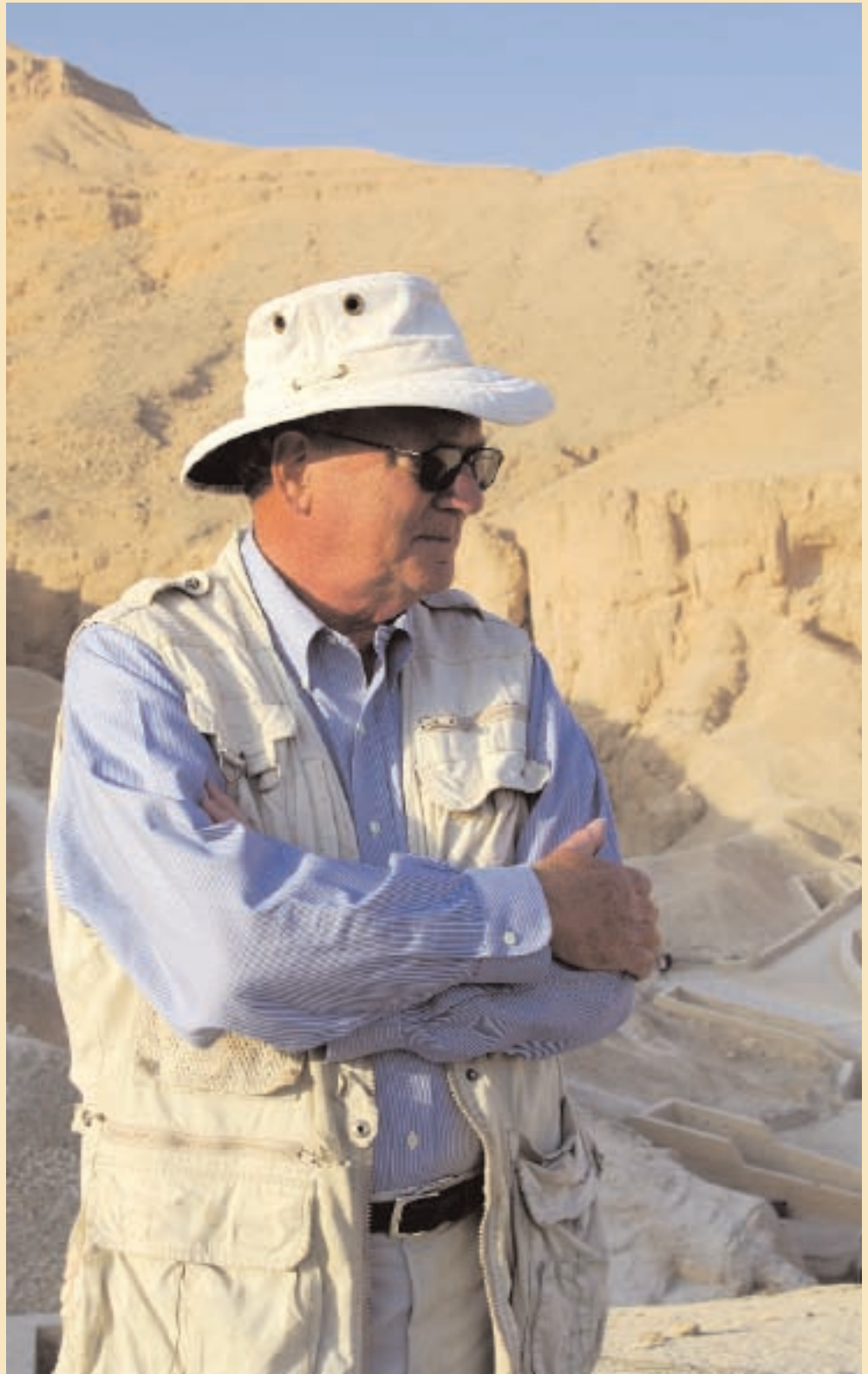
## *Professor Delves into Coptic Community*

Bringing years of study and experience in inter-religious dialogue to the AUC community, Nelly Van Doorn-Harder of Valparaiso University was the fourth distinguished visiting professor to hold the Coptic studies professorship. In addition to teaching and organizing lectures at AUC last fall, she researched contemporary issues in the Coptic community, including the role of women, the concept of saintliness, the patriarchs of this century and the current revivalist movement.

At a lecture titled “Coptic Women Reshaping Tradition,” Van Doorn-Harder shared some of her recent research, discussing the growing female influence within the church. “Women in churches all over the world lack access to the hierarchy,” she argued. “In the Coptic community here in Egypt, they are entering more visible positions in the church.”

Van Doorn-Harder is a scholar of Islamic studies, history of religions, non-Western Christianity, women in religion and inter-religious dialogue. Fluent in four languages and proficient in two others, she has articles and books published in Dutch, English, French and Indonesian. She has also taught at universities in Indonesia, the Netherlands and the United States, where she pioneered programs for interfaith studies and organized international conferences on interfaith peace, violence and reconciliation.

# Digging Deep



**A look inside the life of one of the world's leading Egyptologists, AUC Professor Kent Weeks**

By Randi Danforth  
Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr



**K**ent Weeks stands for a moment in the early morning sun, surveying the scene at Luxor's Valley of the Kings: a mixture of tourists, guides, taxi drivers, souvenir sellers and archaeologists who are converging in the narrow *wadi*. On the surface, the site doesn't look like much — the treasures are all underground here.

Since 1979, Weeks, AUC Egyptology professor, and his team have been coming to work in this valley at what is now one of the world's most famous holes in the ground: KV5, the multi-chambered tomb complex of Ramses II's many sons, all of whom the pharaoh outlived.

Except for the Discovery Channel-addicts among them, the crowds of Japanese, German, Australian and Italian tourists who have come to tour the valley's tombs are probably unaware of the identity of this man in their midst, whose work has been groundbreaking, in the most literal sense of the word. Digging beyond a vast pile of rubble formerly obscured by souvenir kiosks and bus parking, Weeks and his team uncovered an important tomb that had been previously discounted and neglected, making him an instant celebrity and one of the most famous archaeologists in the world.

This affable, polite, articulate man who has the air of an easygoing academic, doesn't seem like a bulldog (his Yale degree notwithstanding). But you'd have to have a certain amount of dogged determination to want to spend summers in 48-degree Celsius heat, digging through cement-hard earth for an uncertain outcome. Weeks has the hunger for detective work, and it has paid off. "It's no accident that I and some of my colleagues all like to read murder

mysteries," he says. "I particularly like police procedurals by Ian Rankin, Michael Connolly and Michael Dibden. [Archaeology] is like detective work. You search for clues, solve a mystery, put all the pieces together."

Weeks, the director of the Theban Mapping Project who is about to retire from AUC, has been professor of Egyptology at the university since 1988, when he and his wife Susan and their two children moved to Cairo from the University of California, Berkeley, where he had been on the faculty. It wasn't their first visit —

they had been in Egypt on and off during the previous two decades.

"It's hard to say how I really got interested in Egyptology — it was always such a natural thing from when I was 8 years old. ... I had a succession of teachers who didn't laugh at me and lent me books, my parents were supportive, my friends all thought it was cool that I'd find lots of gold and mummies," he pauses to think a minute. "I remember I saw *Abbott and Costello Meet The Mummy...*" he laughs, and says "You know, I put that in my book (*The Lost Tomb*), and I got a letter from Bud

*Across: Weeks overlooks the Valley of the Kings; below: on the stairs of the dahabiyya with wife Susan*





Weeks (second from left) speaks with Otto Schaden, director of the University of Memphis's Amenmesse Tomb Project, and Edwin Brock (left) co-director of the project, whose team recently discovered an 18th dynasty tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 63). This is the first discovery of its kind since the uncovering of King Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922

Abbott's daughter — she wrote to tell me her dad would've been so proud!"

Steve Hindy first met Weeks in the 1980s when Hindy was an Associated Press correspondent based in Cairo, and they became friends. "I get goose bumps when I visit a tomb with Kent because he brings it to life. Kent is driven to tell the story of the pharaohs — how they lived and what they believed," Hindy said. "He is a great detective, explorer, teacher and storyteller rolled into one. ... In addition to being a great Egyptologist, he is also a regular guy."

Maybe the tourists are leaving this regular guy alone, but Weeks is recognized in Luxor by all the Egyptian locals who have been seeing him for decades. Many of them have worked for him on the excavation, or

their cousins have been his driver, or they know him and Susan from the village. "I knew I'd been here a pretty

**"He is a great detective, explorer, teacher and storyteller rolled into one. ... In addition to being a great Egyptologist, he was also a regular guy."**

long time when I realized I was hiring the grandchildren of men I first hired 30 years ago," he said.

When in Luxor, Weeks stays aboard a 26-meter *dahabiyya* named Kingfisher — a type of Nile-cruising excursion boat developed and used around a century and a half ago by

travel agencies to take tourists up the Nile from Alexandria to Abu Simbel. Kent and Susan Weeks are following in the wake of the 19th century traveler and writer Amelia Edwards, who sailed the Nile in a *dahabiyya*.

The couple grew to appreciate this type of vessel when they lived on one — rat-infested but charming — in Nubia during work on the Nubian Salvage Project that first brought them together in the 1960s. She was working in the museum at the University of Washington, and he was a graduate student with a project that needed drawings of the objects.

"I guess someone told him to find this girl who could do it, so he asked me. It paid about 75 cents an hour and after a while, when he couldn't pay me, he married me," she said,

being modest. Susan is an expert, meticulous draughtsman, and she has been a principle team member of the Theban Mapping Project. She and her husband have a great partnership in exploration, and he is warm and enthusiastic about working with her. “Oh, it’s been great,” he says, when asked what it’s like to work with his spouse. “She’s a very talented artist.”

Their boat is among the 400 *dahabiyyas* that were plying the Nile 125 years ago, but today that huge number has dwindled to five. Most of them perished because they had wooden hulls that finally rotted out. The Kingfisher survived, probably because its hull is steel. They take the boat on a couple of cruises a year, going back and forth from Luxor to Aswan. When and if security regulations ease up, they hope to sail to Cairo.

Besides the fun of living on a rat-infested *dahabiyya* back in the 1960s, Weeks remembers the food on the first season of the project in Nubia. They were 250 kilometers from a major settlement and had to bring everything

“I guess someone told him to find this girl who could do it, so he asked me. It paid about 75 cents an hour and after a while, when he couldn’t pay me, he married me.”

with them. “We had supplies for 12 people for four months: 75 cases of porridge, 4,000 eggs, 150 cases of tinned mangos, beef. We ran out of everything,” he said.

Kent and Susan Weeks often entertain friends and colleagues on the boat, and they are looking forward to spending more time in Luxor. “Susan and I thoroughly enjoy living here,” said Weeks. For their two children, Christopher and Emily, who grew up in Egypt with archaeologist parents, it isn’t as glamorous and exciting as it sounds. “Well, archaeology holds no romance for my son, but the kids did grow up in the shadow of the pyramids,” said Weeks. Chris went to kindergarten in Luxor when he was very small, but after that the two children went to Cairo American College in Maadi. Chris now lives and works in London, while Emily is an art historian specializing in Orientalist painters and lives in the States. Their parents will now split their time between Connecticut and Egypt.

Looking ahead, Susan is thinking



*The Weeks' 26-meter dahabiyya, one of five such boats that remain worldwide*



*Weeks studies drawings of the Valley of the Kings aboard the dahabiyya*

about combining her interests to someday produce a book about picnics and food on archaeological excavations. She has written several articles on *shamsi*, the sun bread of Luxor, the *hajj* paintings on the walls of village houses and a trip to the *suq* (market) at the West Bank ferry landing. In each case, she relates an aspect of modern culture to a corresponding one in the ancient Egyptian culture. In the introduction to her article about shopping in the Theban *suq*, Susan explains the link between her passion for archaeology and food: “Archaeologists love to eat, and food is a major interest of everyone who works in KV5.”

Now, on the eve of his retirement from AUC, Weeks, 64, is surveying not only his past, but also his future. Although retiring from AUC, Weeks will continue to work with the

Theban Mapping Project — a team of archaeologists, conservation experts, surveyors, photographers, researchers and technicians based at AUC that is dedicated to recording and disseminating data on the tombs of the necropolis area. He has also

**“We had supplies for 12 people for four months: 75 cases of porridge, 4,000 eggs, 150 cases of tinned mangos, beef. We ran out of everything.”**

been asked by Zahi Hawass, Egypt’s secretary general of the Supreme Council for Antiquities, to design the site-management plan for the Valley of the Kings in order to deal with the

effects of tourism on the area.

But retirement is really not an accurate term to describe the Kent Weeks agenda. “I am retiring to spend more time in Luxor and on library research,” he said. “So I can spend 16 hours a day working instead of 12.” Weeks will continue to be actively engaged with the Theban Mapping Project, updating its Web site, publishing detailed notes and descriptions of wall paintings, and working on a mapping project for the Valley of the Queens. In addition, he will maintain his ties with AUC as professor emeritus.

Regardless of how his title or roles may change, Weeks is determined to continue pursuing the dream of an 8-year-old, capturing the thrill of a detective and preserving a piece of ancient Egyptian heritage for generations to come. □

## Egyptology Alums:

# *Sifting Through the Sands of Time*



El Shazly

**E**gyptology alumni all share a desire to unlock the secrets of the ancient Egyptians. They are translators who immerse themselves in a civilization as real to them as their own. And while the pharaohs and

gods garner the lion's share of the public spotlight, these scholars have looked beyond the bright treasures of big kings in pursuit of the lives, less ordinary, of ancient Egyptians.

After receiving their bachelor's degrees from AUC, "each went on to receive scholarships. ... Their liberal arts education has given them the confidence to be analytical, to synthesize and critique," said Salima Ikram, Egyptology associate professor and a proud mentor to her students.

The God's Wives of Amun was the topic of doctoral research for Mariam Ayad '94. As she addressed the questions the research raised, she discovered even more questions about the lives of women in ancient Egypt. "What did these women do on a daily basis? What exactly was their role in the temple ritual? How did the ancient Egyptians react to the shocking egalitarian iconography of these women? It is these and similar questions that I am currently working on," she said.

At the University of Memphis, Ayad is assistant director at the Institute of Egyptian Architecture and Archaeology and assistant professor of art history in the Department of Art. Soon after starting a master's at the University of Toronto in 1996, she was granted the International Student Tuition Fee Waiver Scholarship.

The ability to look beyond Tutankhamen's facemask is something Yasmin El Shazly '98 shares with Ayad. El Shazly's work has taken her closer to understanding life in ancient Egyptian society. "I believe that people don't really change that much, but that your environment does affect the way you live," she said. "This is certainly something I want to explore. A study of some of the practices of modern Egyptians may help us understand some things about the past."

After AUC, El Shazly earned her master's and doctorate in Egyptology at Johns Hopkins University, both on tuition waivers. "One of the nice things [about Egyptology at AUC] is that the department is small and you develop very close relationships with your professors, not just academically, but

also personally," she said. "They know your strengths and weaknesses well, and help you with both."

Intrigued by the lives of ancient Egyptians, El Shazly is keen to relate to their daily activities. "I like to think of the ancient Egyptians as people, very much like us," she explained. "I'm interested in the average person, the literature she or he wrote and the art they produced."

Using religion as an example, El Shazly added that while "many books have been written about ancient Egyptian religion, most of them focus on what is known as state religion, [but] little is known about how the average, usually illiterate person, worshiped the gods. Of course this is much more difficult to understand, since they never left us texts explaining this. All we can do is study the objects they left behind."

The burial rites of ancient Egyptians have also given Ayad a look into their religion. The Opening of the Mouth ritual is deliberately and meticulously presented on the walls of the Chapel of Amenirdis at the foot of the Theban Hills. "My current research will attempt to relate the physical layout of the scenes to their textual content. Not only will this endeavor shed light on the transmission of funerary texts, but it will give us insight into how the ancient Egyptians interpreted their own religious tradition," said Ayad.

It is the love of people's ordinary lives that has driven these scholars. "To think of the ancient Egyptians as regular people who ate, got married, bore children, had fights, gossiped and interacted with each other in much the same way we do today keeps my interest in the culture alive and fresh," said Ayad. "Learning about our past informs our present and enables us to look to the future with a sense of pride. The Egyptians were moral people who valued work, honesty and integrity. I cannot adequately express the sense of pride I get from knowing that I am a descendant of those great people." □

By Wael Elazab



Ayad

# Coast *to* Coast

By Cole Gibas

**Studying in the United States for a year, AUC undergrads uncover American culture from the inside**



From California's sunny beaches to Minnesota's below-zero temperatures and the snow-capped mountains of Colorado, AUC students will long remember the lessons learned from American culture while studying in the United States during their junior year.

"I got to push myself to the limit and find out what I really have in me. When you're completely on your own there are some skills that kick in

automatically. ... You're more alert, careful, and like a sponge, you absorb everything around you," said mass communication graduate Nada Mohammed '04, who spent a year at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

The first surprise about American culture came from the distinct separation between work and fun. "The university campus here is for studying only; it is not a club or a place to just hang out like the Greek Campus," said Ghassan Zaynun, a computer science major now attending the University of Colorado. "I think it is because we as Egyptians like to mix work with fun, and apparently Americans don't. I'm not

saying that Americans don't like to have fun, they just take it outside campus."

Sara Sallam, an electronics engineering senior who studied at the University of Virginia, agreed. "During the weekdays they're 100 percent focused on studying, at least in electronics engineering, and on the weekends they're completely partying."

Nada's experience epitomized this work-hard, play-hard dichotomy. "I was the only international student in the class, and I had to catch up. ... I misspelled the mayor's name in an assignment and got an F," she said. Determined to prove herself, during the height of the Abu Ghraib controversy, Nada chose to present the topic in class,

giving a persuasive speech calling for the resignation of U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. "I spent hours on it; I didn't want to offend anybody," Nada said, adding that she wanted to make sure she showed a balanced look at both sides. "I tried to explain how the Arab world feels. Two students were really offended, and they interrupted me. I started sweating, thinking I shouldn't have picked the topic." But, she composed herself and refused to give up, and it paid off. "I got an A plus on my presentation."

To break from the rigors of studying, Nada found a shopping paradise at the Mall of America, one of the largest shopping centers in the world. "At first I was shocked. Everything all of a sudden looks good on you and is cheap," she said of her almost weekly trips to the mall.

Nada also found that her experience working in the cafeteria flipping hamburgers and serving food to students and faculty was beneficial. "It's not about the money, it's about the experience," she said. "I got to learn a

lot about American culture, like the slang and the snacks. ... I enjoyed it so much, despite all the burns."

For many of the students, the most transforming aspect of their time in the United States came from dispelling myths about American culture and at times finding truth in some stereotypes. Like many of the AUC students, American individualism made an impression on Nader Ali, an electronics engineering senior. "Sometimes it seems that they care about only themselves," he said. "You either help yourself or you never make it."

Making a similar observation, Ghassan recounted an experience he had in Colorado. "Once, another Egyptian student and I were waiting for the university bus at the dorm's bus stop, and there were at least 10 other students standing there," he said. "It was moving-in day, so there was a student and her mom carrying heavy stuff. ... One of them dropped the TV, and to my surprise no one moved a muscle to try and help, so my friend and I, just being Egyptians, helped

"The university campus here is for studying only, it is not a club or a place to just hang out like the Greek Campus. I think it is because we as Egyptians like to mix work with fun, and apparently Americans don't."



Far left: Sara visiting the Washington Monument; Nader in the cockpit of a Blackhawk helicopter; Passant outside of MTV's studio in Times Square in Manhattan; Nada outside in the snow

“The government does not represent what the people think. Bush says one thing on TV, and it’s totally different when you talk to people about it.”



“People usually stared at me at first, but then you get used to it and it doesn’t bother you any more. I felt safe, but people were usually intimidated by my veil, as one of my friends said to me.”



them carry their stuff.”

Shifting to the positives of American culture, Nader found that a more individualistic approach allowed him to focus on his own abilities. “It teaches you a lot about yourself, what you can and can’t do, whether you can race with time,” said Nader. “I now know that Americans are truly hard workers, ... work for 16 hours a day, no problem.”

Sara also liked the personal freedom she experienced as a result of the individualism. “You can do whatever you want and people won’t judge you.”

The culture depicted in movies was also much less prevalent than people think, Nader asserted. “This does not represent more than 10 percent of life there,” said Nader in reference to the stereotypical portrayal of Americans in movies or on television.

These observations also apply to news and politics. “An important thing that I accomplished was to make a distinction between the government and the people. The government does not represent what the people think. Bush says one thing on TV, and it’s totally different when you talk to people about it.”

While most felt apprehensive about being an Arab in America in the post-9/11 era, AUC students were pleasantly surprised at how they were treated. “Like a lot of people back home, I thought that I would be treated as a second-level human being when I came here,” Ghassan said. “But after living here ... I found out that this is wrong.” Instead of hostility, he found curiosity. “When my colleagues first knew that I was from Egypt, and therefore an Arab, ... most of them were



so excited to know if I rode a camel to school and lived by the pyramids. Students here don't care where you're from as long as you are a nice person." He was also encouraged that his university added courses on Islam and Arab issues within the last few years.

AUC finance and marketing junior Passant Shawky, who is currently studying at Pennsylvania State University, agrees that there is a general lack of knowledge about the region. Overall, she found that this ignorance does not cause problems, just strange looks sometimes. "I'm veiled, and Penn State is located in central Pennsylvania, which is an area not really used to different cultures. People usually stared at me at first, but then you get used to it and it doesn't bother you any more," she said. "I felt safe, but people were usually intimidated by my veil, as one of my friends said to me."

Serving as representatives of Arab

culture, many of the students found themselves informal ambassadors. To Nada, one of her most emotional experiences was when she was asked by school officials to read from the Quran in both Arabic and English in front of the entire university as part of a September 11 memorial ceremony that also involved Jewish and Christian representatives reading from the Torah and Bible. "They chose me to present my religion and origins," Nada said with pride. "I was nervous, but I was still happy and excited. Lots of people thanked me afterward."

For Ghassan, the chance to represent his culture was one of the hidden treasures of the experience, beyond the personal and academic growth. "Students here will start to explore our world and know who we are, so the image of Arabs being terrorists will start to diminish as more and more people learn and see our true image," he said. □

*Far left: Sara with a friend at Arlington Cemetery in Washington D.C.; Ghassan with his roommate on the ski slopes; Passant with her friends at Penn State University; Passant in front of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree in Manhattan*



"They chose me to present my religion and origins. I was nervous, but I was still happy and excited. Lots of people thanked me afterward."

# A Professor's Passion

**Bringing theatrical flair to his classroom, Mahmoud El Lozy '76, '79 is a teacher and an artist**



While interviewing Mahmoud El Lozy last September for a story on his AUC production of Saad El-Din Wahba's *Al Mahrusa*, we got to talking about the trilogy of plays he had just completed. He had an interesting story to tell about each, and, intrigued, I asked if I could read them.

"Okay, but I must warn you," he responded with a mischievous smile. "People who read my plays either love them so much that they want to be my best friends and act in them, or ... they never speak to me again."

He studied my face for a moment, waiting for a reaction, and then broke into a loud, contagious belly laugh, head back and eyes watering. Joining him after a second of hesitation, I soon realized that my interview would be full of these provocative comments. The man is both an intellectual and a performer after all.

El Lozy is associate professor of theater in the performing and visual arts (PVA) department at AUC, his alma mater, where he earned both his bachelor's in 1976 and master's in 1979 in English and comparative literature.

Bibliophile, scholar of modern Egyptian culture, actor, playwright and director, El Lozy has earned widespread respect and recognition for his accomplishments both inside and outside of the classroom. He has acted in numerous films, among them Youssef Shahine's *Alexandria-New York* and Philip Haas's *The Situation*, a drama set in present-day Iraq due for release this spring.

His recently completed trilogy of plays, *Up Against the Wall*, is a modern history of the Arab world. The backdrop of the first piece, *Bay the Moon*, is the October 1973 Egypt-Israeli war. The second, *And Then Went Down to the Ship...*, is set in West Beirut during the 1982 Israeli invasion of



El Lozy directing *Jawaz Aala Waraqit Talaq* in 1993; El Lozy playing a corrupt friar in Machiavelli's *La Mandragola* in 1992; during a break in a production of *En Attendant Godot*, which El Lozy (center) directed as a graduate student in 1977

Lebanon. *Us and Them*, the final play, unfolds in the post-9/11 world, ending with the invasion of Iraq. The characters capture stereotypes and highlight political differences, causing readers to reflect upon their own perspectives.

Although his plays have not yet been staged publicly in Egypt, *And Then Went Down to the Ship...* was produced in 2002 at the Director's Lab of the Lincoln Center in New York under the direction of Brad Sheldon.

"I thought it would be interesting to bring this unique voice to the United States," said Sheldon, who directed El Lozy in a production of *Art* at AUC the same year. "I contacted the dramaturge at Lincoln Center, and she quickly agreed to a workshop of the play in New York. When it was over, people of all religious and political leanings were drawn to his play and the production."

Elizabeth Bishop, El Lozy's former colleague at AUC, cited parts of the trilogy in her entry on Egypt in Berkshire Publishing's *Encyclopedia of Global Perspectives on the United States*. Currently a professor at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, she uses his analysis of Egyptian playwright Mikhail Rumane's *Al-Zujaj* in her course on gender and militarization in the Arab world.

"The students really get El Lozy's article," said Bishop. "They read it and

they think it's witty and profound, and they love this wink-wink, nudge-nudge language that he has, using sex to describe politics, and they really get into the class. His article is insightful and penetrating. It helps me to accomplish what I want to with this course."

El Lozy's influence on his own students at AUC is best seen in Ahmed El-Attar '92, executive director of Studio Emadeddin Foundation in Cairo, independent theater producer, director and playwright. "He is a brilliant professor," El-Attar said. "He's funny, inventive, wild and crazy. He's eccentric, but that just adds to his charm. He's really passionate about theater and very solid academically. He put every play that we read into historical context, making us really understand."

As a student at AUC in the 1970s, El Lozy came into theater "by mistake." In the second semester of his freshman year, a friend offered to take him out to dinner if he would act in her play. He accepted, and then became a frequent participant, enjoying it more with each show. Trying to please his parents, he started a master's program in political economy, but kept acting and soon returned to a specialization in literature.

He had a brief stint in military technology after earning his master's degree, and then another in

advertising. He detested both.

Deciding that he wanted serious training and study in theater, he applied for a doctorate in dramatic art and left Egypt for the University of California in Santa Barbara in 1980.

"The thing is that I never planned any of it," he said. "When I look back, I must have been crazy, investing so much in getting into such a competitive field, with a pregnant wife and no money. Even now, in terms of what I do in theater, I don't have a plan. I do whatever feels right at the moment, whatever helps me to express myself in some way."

Throughout his life, this has included translating Arabic plays, writing, acting, directing and teaching. He described getting so consumed by his work that he would frequently wake up at night to scribble an idea on a notepad or write an entire act of a play. He called his wife Sawsan Mardini, who is also the director of graduate student services at AUC, "a saint" for her support.

Both of their children, Yousra, 20, and Ahmed, 18, are currently students at AUC, and both are involved in theater. He recalled one day when he was rehearsing in their Cairo apartment, and his son appeared in the doorway between two new friends and said, "That's my dad. Don't worry, he's not mad. He's just an actor." □

By Lily Hindy

# Homecoming 2006

Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr





**AUCToday** asked alumni at homecoming a few questions about their time at AUC. Here's what they revealed:

**Where did you spend most of your free time on campus?**

- 57% Main Campus
- 27% Greek Campus
- 16% somewhere else

**Are you married?**

- 78% Yes

**Of those that said yes, are you married to an AUCian?**

- 29% Yes

**Was he or she your college sweetheart?**

- 19% Yes

**Do you have kids?**

- 78% Yes

**Who do you like better, Um Kalthoum or Nancy Agram?**

- 72% Um Kalthoum
- 28% Nancy Agram

**What do you think of AUC's pending move?**

- 67% It's a great idea
- 33% It's a bad idea

**Were your years at AUC too fast, too slow or just right?**

- 49% Too fast
- 1% Too slow
- 50% Just right

**How often did you eat *koshari*?**

- 31% Never
- 68% Once a week or less
- 1% Two to five times a week

**How often did you skip classes?**

- 65% Never
- 28% Once a week or less
- 4% Two to five times a week
- 3% More than five times a week



# A New Take on Giving

By Dalia Al Nimr

Calligraphy by Moody Youssef

## How do you donate to charity, and can your money do more?

Practically a hallmark of the walk between the Main and Greek campuses, the beggars are regulars for generations of alumni. In a country where the majority of the population is poor, these beggars and many like them do not go unnoticed. Most people feel compelled to donate money, food, clothes and medicine to help the underprivileged find subsistence. And while the contributions are critical for survival, they often fall short of removing the same faces from the same streets.

“It all comes down to charity versus development,” said Marwa El Daly ’96, ’01, manager of the Philanthropy for Development program at the Center for Development Services (CDS) and lead researcher of the first national study on philanthropy conducted in Egypt. “People view development as the government’s responsibility, not the individual’s. They feel inclined to donate their money to the sick, hungry and homeless rather than to more long-term causes such as saving the environment, funding medical research or educating a poor student.”

According to the CDS study, 90

percent of Egyptians perceive philanthropy as financial or material assistance to the poor, and less than 1 percent relate it to large-scale development projects that would help solve social problems. The study, presented by El Daly at a pre-launch symposium of AUC’s John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, demonstrated that philanthropy in Egypt is largely channeled toward charity, which undermines the development cause.

“At its infancy stage, people view philanthropy as a way to help those who can’t help themselves. Progressively, they see it as a way to feel good about themselves, whether it be donating to a museum, the opera or the college football team. ... Charity is looked at from the receiver’s side and philanthropy from the giver’s side,” said Andrew Ciccarello, AUC associate professor of management who has more than 20 years experience with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in eight countries.

Ciccarello noted that the meaning of philanthropy differs according to every country’s stage of development. In the

West, people can look beyond charity. In Egypt, where poverty is pervasive, they don't have such a luxury. "Saving the environment can't come before helping people to eat or have a roof over their heads. It's like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It's tough to look at the top of the pyramid if you can't pass through the bottom," he said, adding that the big divide between the haves and have-nots compounds the situation.

"There is no large middle class. Therefore, the same, small amount of people are asked to give to a variety of causes, and naturally, they give priority to helping the needy," he said.

While shifting people's sense of giving from charity to development is important, the issue has other facets. Mohammed El Ebrashi '00, co-founder of Alashanek Ya Balady student project and an active member of several NGOs in Egypt, attributes the problem to a poor educational system.

"With schools emphasizing memorization and the stuffing of loads of information, people's thinking becomes very linear. ... They don't know they can be part of the development cycle because they were

not taught to think that way," he said, adding that because development is a long-term process and people don't see the outcome immediately, they are not inclined to give.

"It may take 10 to 15 years; it's not like feeding a poor person. But people have to understand that it is an investment and have to be made aware of the advantages," he said.

Affirming El Ebrashi's claim, El Daly noted that education is key to changing people's mindsets. "It's all about creating awareness," she said. "In a country with a long history of nationalization and government control, people think that the government should do everything. They feel that concepts such as social justice and social change do not pertain to them individually. ... This has to change; people have to realize that development is the future, and the future is really in their hands."

### Reforming Religious Discourse

According to the CDS study, philanthropy in Egypt is largely faith based. Twenty percent of Egyptians donate to religious or charity causes, compared to 1 percent who give money to development.

The biggest example is during

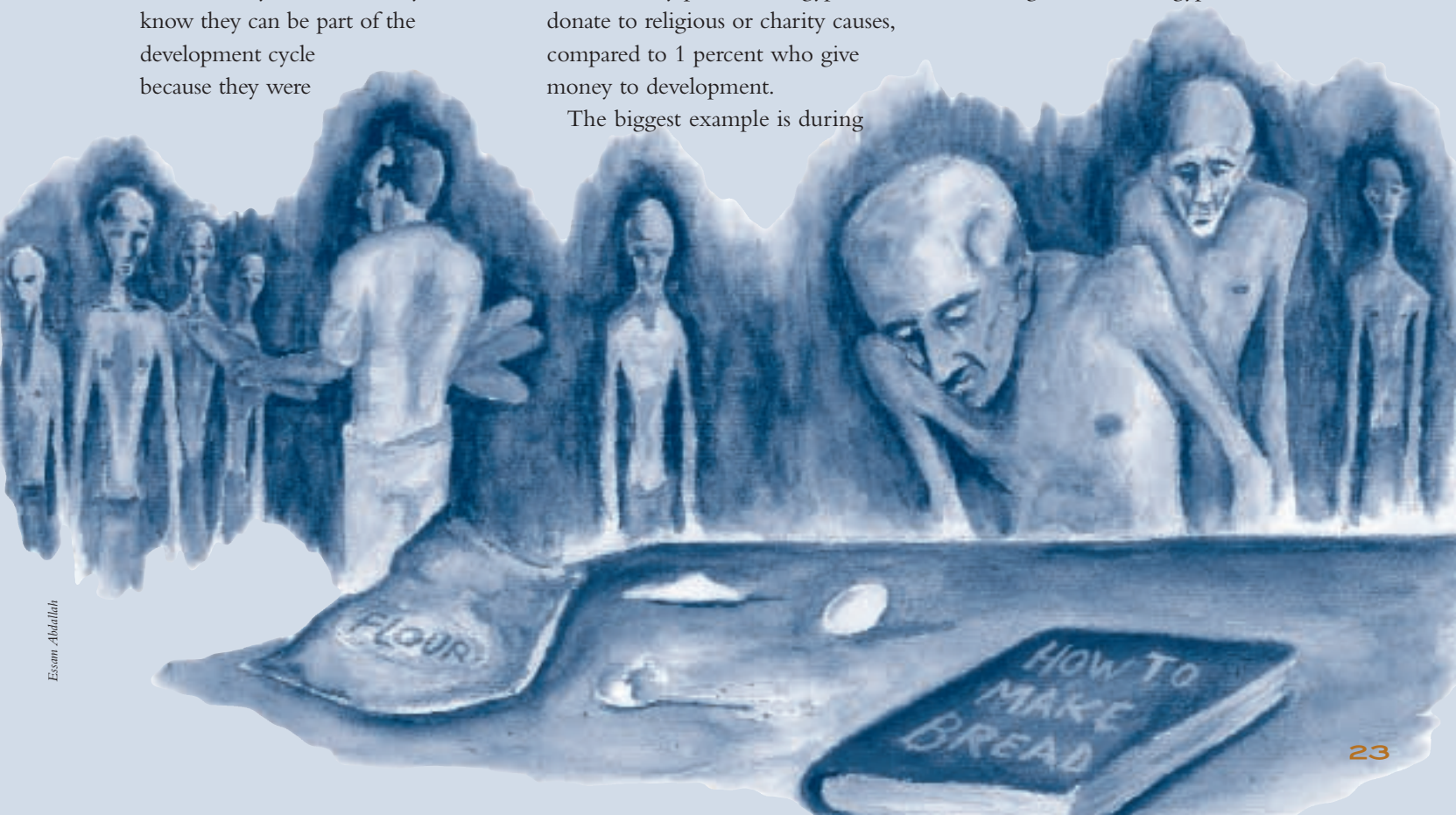
Ramadan, when donations to the sick and poor are at their peak. Last Ramadan, Ehaab Abdou '97, co-founder of Fat'het Kheir and Nahdet El Mahrousa NGOs, received donations for 200,000 bulk meals to help poverty-stricken families, but people were reluctant to pay for other causes.

"With such an amount of money, we could have established a large training center to teach youth a host of vocational, technical and computer skills, but those who donated were not willing," Abdou said. "They were afraid it would not count toward alms giving (*zakat*) because it is not directly related to charity."

Abdou believes that religious leaders and scholars have an important role to play in that respect.

"The religious discourse needs to change; it needs to elevate people's priorities from mere charity to development causes," he said.

Sharing Abdou's viewpoint, Nada Mobarak '95, head of the Arab Learning Initiative in Egypt, which





*Islamic hadith: The best people are those who are most useful to other people*

supports regional organizations promoting social change, said that although religious leaders' sermons about helping the poor encourage people to volunteer, they channel their efforts toward charity. "People believe more strongly that charity is what scores points," she said.

Mobarak noted that media campaigns during Ramadan reinforce this concept in people's minds. With television advertisements aired on an almost hourly basis asking people to contribute to charity, development remains absent from the agenda. "All the ads encourage donating to orphans or cancer patients. Not a single ad talks about donating to fund research on environmental pollution, which may be causing cancer in the first place. ... To make change happen, we have to deal with the causes of our problems, not the symptoms," Mobarak said.

On a corporate level, the situation is the same. Regional and multinational corporations, as well as local businessmen, are generally geared toward the provision of services and material assistance to those in need. "It helps build their name," Mobarak said.

She added that businessmen — with their creativity, long-term vision and willingness to take risks — are the biggest group that can help fund and

support development NGOs.

"Corporate social responsibility does not stop at orphanages, hospitals and institutes for the deaf and blind. It is the investment in civil society that really counts," Mobarak asserted, noting that the government could encourage businessmen by providing tax exemptions for those who donate.

### **Institutionalizing Philanthropy**

As the CDS study showed, the concept of giving in Egypt is closely tied to charity through personal contacts. More than 70 percent give their donations hand to hand compared to around 2 percent who donate through established institutions. Instead of donating to NGOs or development associations, most people give their money to relatives, neighbors and colleagues at work, who pass it on to the needy. Others pay alms to mosques and churches.

"The relationship between people and civil society in Egypt is not well developed," Abdou said. "NGOs need to be transparent to donors about their operations, and people need to have faith in NGOs. It's not about building institutions; it's about building social relationships."

Abdou added that part of the responsibility also rests with the government. The legal framework needs to be reformed to give NGOs more independence. Currently, the law severely restricts the activities of NGOs, giving the Ministry of Social Affairs far-reaching powers over their operations and sources of funding.

By virtue of the law, an NGO must be registered by the ministry, which has to approve the organization's board of directors. The ministry can shut down any organization if it joins an association outside Egypt without prior government permission, allocates



resources for a purpose outside the organization's goals, accepts foreign funding without permission, violates the law or if its general assembly is not held for two consecutive years. "This is restrictive for NGOs and undermines their independence," said Abdou. "For NGOs to have an effective presence in local communities, they have to have enough breathing space."

Such restrictions, he noted, do not allow NGOs to make their voices heard to the public. Due to the lack of funding, NGOs are not able to make people fully aware of their existence. "People don't know about the institutions of giving, and when they do, they remain skeptical as to where the money goes," explained Abdou.

But this lack of trust in an established system of giving was not always the case. According to El Daly, the institution of *waqf* (religious endowments) was strong in Egypt in the 19th century. During that time, it was common for property owners to declare some of their possessions, usually farmland, as *waqf*. This meant

that the property could not be sold, inherited or given as a gift, and revenues were used to fund a specific cause the owner chose.

Some of these causes included financing schools and hospitals; supporting research and development; building the country's infrastructure; promoting culture and arts; and even taking care of animals. Cairo University is a prime example, having been established in 1913 on a land endowed as *waqf* by Princess Fatima Ismail, King Fouad's sister.

"*Waqf* was a system of life," El Daly said. "It was a solid means of institutionalizing philanthropy, and it was widespread all over the Arab and Muslim world, not just Egypt."

The system deteriorated with time, as the government took hold of *waqf* and decided how the money would be used. "*Waqf* lost its autonomy and was associated with the government. People refrained from taking part, and *waqf* disappeared gradually, not only as an institution but as a concept in people's mind," El Daly noted.

The CDS study found that 30 percent of Egyptians today do not know what *waqf* is, and the majority confuse it with government property. Those who do know about *waqf* said they are doubtful about how the money is used.

"Restoring people's trust in institutions is the only way for us to move forward. Institutionalizing philanthropy to replace haphazard, one-on-one charity acts is the basis of change in our community," she said. □



Arabic proverb: Not only with bread does a human being live

## AUC Launches Gerhart Center to Promote Regional Philanthropy



President David Arnold and Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned

In honor of John Gerhart, AUC's former president who expanded community-based activities for students, the university has established the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement as

a means of institutionalizing public service in the Arab world.

Speaking at the center's launch this March, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned, wife of the emir of Qatar, stressed the importance of shifting the concept of volunteerism from material and financial assistance to an investment in human capital.

"When utilized in the appropriate manner, volunteer work helps build bridges between members of one society and between the people of this universe," she said. "We are at a time when public welfare has become the responsibility of society as a whole, and from here comes the role of civil

society and other institutions." Al-Missned asserted that philanthropy and human development must become a strategic objective.

Combining learning, research, service and advocacy, the center will work to expand the boundaries of philanthropy, moving it beyond charity toward social justice and development. It will include a visiting fellows program, a teaching and research component, as well as a resource center and database on philanthropy. In addition, the center will allow AUC students to visit model philanthropic initiatives and take part in development assistance to poor communities in Egypt.

## Overcoming Obstacles



A year ago, Shyamila Serasinghe '06 was worried about her future. Diagnosed with anemia and the viral flu, she suffered from aching bones and severe weight loss and had to be given blood transfusions. She was hospitalized for a month before doctors forced her to withdraw from AUC and return to her homeland in Sri Lanka. She spent a semester there undergoing treatment.

"It was a difficult time physically and emotionally," she said.

Today, Serasinghe has graduated from AUC magna cum laude with a bachelor's in business administration. Reflecting on the time of her illness, Serasinghe looks back with gratitude at the university for its support.

"President Arnold and Mrs. Sherry were more than helpful. I couldn't have done it without the backing I got from them," she said, explaining that it was the Arnolds who referred her to the AUC Clinic when her symptoms began to worsen. Also, in consideration of her condition, the university sent all the withdrawal papers Serasinghe needed to her in the hospital and assisted with the transition back into the university when she got better.

"You go through life thinking that nothing will happen to you, and then it suddenly hits you. ... It is through situations like these that you realize how much support you have from those around you."

# Nobel Advice

## ElBaradei Delivers Commencement Address



“As I was on my way from the palace of the king of Norway to the Oslo City Hall to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, I found myself reminiscing about my life — the twists and turns it had taken, and the lessons I had learned along the way. ...

I remembered that I was a very curious child. I liked to explore and discover. My mother used to lament that once I got a new toy, I would break it to pieces in no time. To me that made perfect sense; how else would I learn how things worked?

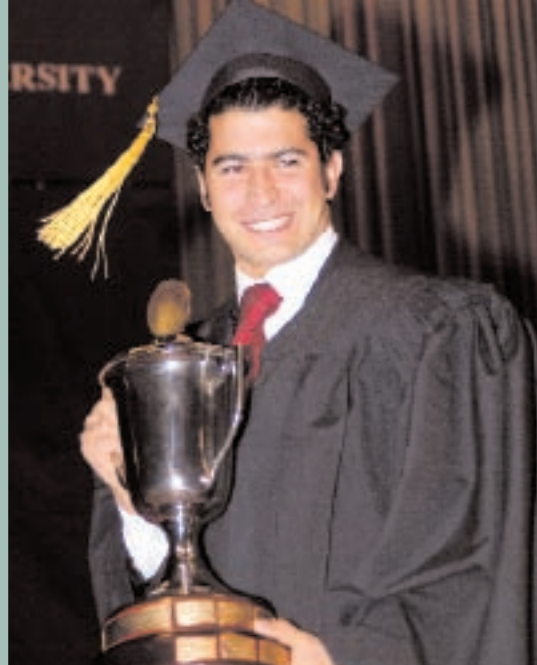
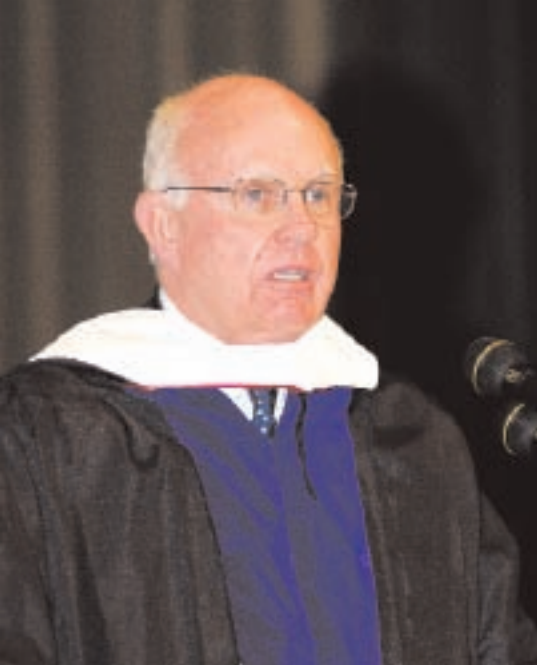
I was known to ask questions that often got me into trouble with my parents. Both at school and university, I hated rote learning and the often boring subjects that were part of the curriculum. I knew I had to go through it, but (like I'm sure you are feeling today) I was quite relieved when it was over.

So when I started my graduate work at New York University, I was baffled one Friday afternoon to be handed a so-called 'take-home' exam! I was told that I had all the books in the world to consult over the weekend before I handed in my answers Monday morning.

It gradually dawned on me then, and I came to realize to my great relief — that education is not really about how much they try to cram into your head. It is about developing the intellectual skills to be able to keep on learning about yourself and the world you live in. ...

Life is like an extended take-home exam. You have many references at your disposal, but ultimately you will need to turn in your answers. ...

I have no doubt that your parents and professors have made it clear that they are the reservoir of wisdom and good advice, and that you should listen to them. And you should. But ultimately, you must listen to your inner voice. Being different, creative, dissident or in the minority is sometimes painful. But



Across: ElBaradei; AUC Trustee Paul Hannon, recipient of an honorary doctorate; Bahaa Ezzelarab, Parents Association Cup winner; Dina Sabry, class representative

that is what distinguishes a thinking human being from a member in a herd of sheep. You should assert yourself, express your views and live your life, and not anybody else's.

You should retain the curiosity, excitement and spontaneity of your childhood. You should continue to be a grownup child. You have one life and it is yours to live. And above all, you should have the courage to express your own convictions and beliefs and follow your conscience. If you do that, you may lose a few battles, but you will win the war.

My late father, the president of the Egyptian Bar Association, was harassed in 1961 when, in the midst of the most repressive era in modern Egyptian history, he dared to call for democracy and a free press. ... I too have gone through difficult times in recent years, when I had to speak truth to power on matters of war and peace.

But at the end of the day, sticking to principles pays off. ... The biggest payoff in sticking to your principles is the deep satisfaction that you have been true to yourself. ...

As you grow older ... you realize that once you have achieved a decent standard of living, material acquisitions add little to your happiness or sense of fulfillment. It is the non-material aspects that bring meaning and value to your life: the joy of bringing a smile to a child's face, helping a sick person, taking a walk on the beach or sharing a moment with a friend. I am not telling you to give up your dream of having a fancy car or a nice home — but I am telling you that this alone is not the road to happiness. ”

— Mohamed ElBaradei, Nobel Peace Prize winner, director general of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency, recipient of an honorary doctorate from AUC and undergraduate commencement speaker

## Celebrating Success



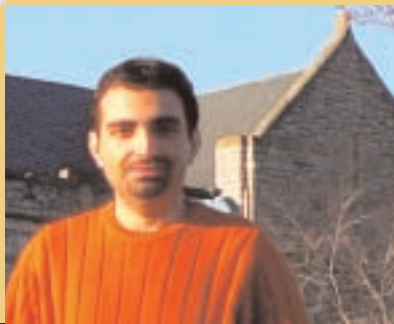
Aliaa Osman (second from left), Citibank Public School Scholarship recipient, and Michel Accad (left), Citibank country manager and North Africa regional head, along with Salma El Maddah (second from right), Egyptian American Bank Public School Scholarship recipient, and Roderick Richards, EAB managing director. El Maddah and Osman now bring the total number of outstanding students who have graduated under AUC's Public School Scholarship Fund to 74.

Established in 1990, the fund expanded in 2000 under the leadership of AUC's former President John Gerhart. Today, thanks to the contributions of alumni, friends and corporations, the fund grants full scholarships to 20 of Egypt's most outstanding public school students. More than 70 percent of its recipients have graduated with high or highest honors.

# The High Returns of Higher Learning

By Dalia Al Nimr

**Overcoming the challenges of attending graduate school abroad, alumni are reaping the rewards**



**T**raveling to war zones in Darfur and Baghdad as a Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press (AP), Rawya Rageh '02 led an exciting life filled with danger. But like many alumni who excel in their careers in competitive fields, Rageh felt a desire to head back to school for a master's degree in the United States or the United Kingdom.

Today, Rageh has returned to life as a student at Columbia University's journalism graduate program. "When I was with AP, I was based in Dubai, where I had my own apartment and was moving ahead in my career. Now, I live in a dorm, spend money rather than earn it and am constantly trying to figure out my way around," she said about her new life in academia.

Juggling the demands of a rigorous academic environment, the high costs of living and the difficulties of adjusting to a foreign country, the pressure can be intense. Spending years in graduate school also means being absent from the job market and putting off long-term plans like starting a family. But for many determined alumni, the journey is well worth the rewards.

"I am very satisfied and happy with the way things have turned out for me. I have reached a point in my career that I



*Raayya Rageh*

“I’ve discovered that graduate school is not an explanatory step-by-step process like when I was an undergraduate. They throw you out there and you have to learn hands-on, ... then they teach you.”

*Jiyon Lee*

wouldn’t have expected,” said Mona Amer ’98, whose doctoral research is the largest study to date of Arab American mental health after September 11. She is currently pursuing post-doctoral training at Yale University under a fellowship from the American Psychological Association (APA), the largest association of psychologists worldwide. Amer is the only person in the United States to receive the fellowship in 2005. In addition, she was granted the 2006 APA Award for Distinguished Graduate Student in Professional Psychology, given to a graduate student who has demonstrated outstanding practice and application of psychology.

“It wasn’t easy,” Amer said, reflecting on the difficulties she faced as a veiled Muslim woman in the United States after 9/11. “On the social front, I had to deal with prejudice and discrimination. I was stopped in airports, given unpleasant comments when shopping and was sometimes refused apartment rentals. On the academic front, I tapped into an area that has not been researched before.”

Thriving on the challenge, Amer also devised new advanced statistical models that won her first place in a regional student research competition. “I pushed myself beyond what I thought my limits were, and it paid off in the end. I was not only receiving

knowledge in my field, but also generating and disseminating it. I felt that I was helping to make a small change in the world.”

For others, it’s the ability to cope independently that had the greatest impact. “You do intense research, and you’re pretty much on your own, which makes you become self-reliant,” said Moataz Attallah ’01, ’03, who is currently pursuing doctoral studies in materials science from the University of Birmingham in England.

Echoing the same sentiment, Rageh reflected on how difficult it was at the beginning. “I hit the ground running from day one and had to find my way around obstacles. ... I’ve discovered that graduate school is not an explanatory step-by-step process like when I was an undergraduate. They throw you out there and you have to learn hands-on, ... then they teach you.”

In addition to the independent

learning, the motivation to excel pushes students to perform at their highest standard. "Graduate school is very demanding and requires a lot of concentration. You always feel on the spot because you are in constant competition with the best of the best," said Sherif Agha (MSc '04), a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech who received Belgium's Development Cooperation Prize for his master's thesis on compressed earth blocks.

Aside from the academic gains, graduate school comes at significant financial cost. Pursuing a professional degree abroad can be an expensive endeavor, even for those who receive scholarships. The cost of living is high, which forces students to economize whenever possible. For Attallah, this has required renting an apartment with schoolmates, commuting by bus

and cooking at home instead of going out to dinner. "I have to manage my life with the amount of money I have," he said, adding that being away from his family has also taken its toll on him. "I was homesick my first year, but I've learned to adapt."

For others who had their family by their side, the experience posed different challenges. Hanadi Salem '83, '87, who received a doctorate in engineering from Texas A&M and was the first female faculty member to be tenured in AUC's engineering department, remembers how it was difficult having her children around, even though she received a lot of support from her husband. She recalls her time at Texas A&M with a mix of good and bad memories, but ultimately she felt the experience benefited her family members,

especially her two daughters.

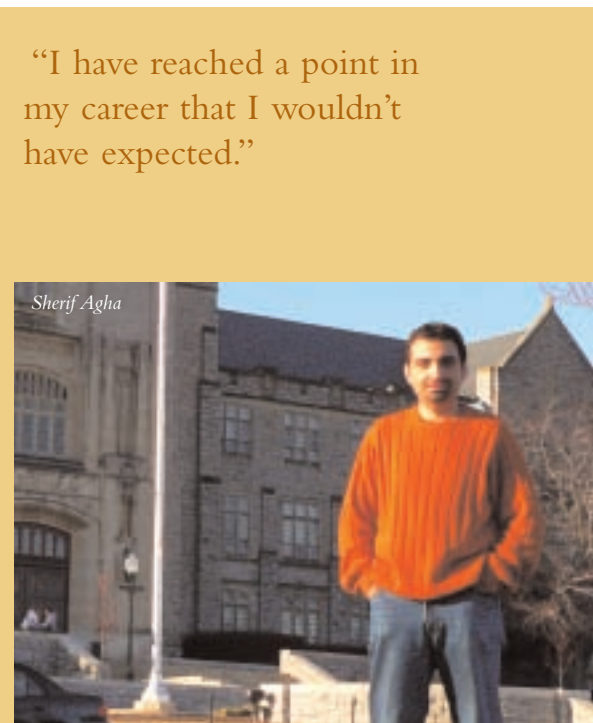
"On the one hand, it was good because it exposed them to a different culture and society that helped shape their personality. On the other hand, they were sometimes bullied by their schoolmates because they were of a different culture and religion, which made me feel guilty." This compelled Salem to finish her doctoral studies in three years.

Beyond their success and achievements on the academic side, the students gained unexpected benefits on the social and cultural fronts. Recounting how odd he felt when his schoolmates spoke about the latest cricket or rugby matches, Attallah said, "We didn't have a common point of reference, which made me feel like an outcast." As time went by, however, he was able to socialize and make more friends.

Similarly, Rageh explained that although being an international student sometimes made her feel like



Motaz Attallah



Sherif Agha

Hanadi ElSawafi

"I have reached a point in my career that I wouldn't have expected."

“You always feel on the spot because you are in constant competition with the best of the best.”

Michael Marsland / Yale University



Mona Amer

an outsider, it is this international exposure that is the capstone of her graduate studies abroad.

“After 9/11, I wanted to experience the other side of things,” she said. “By living in the States, I am in real contact with the American people and can understand what affects their lives and whether or not the U.S. leadership has an impact on American public opinion. It’s very enriching for me as a journalist to see things for myself.”

Sharing the same viewpoint, Agha was surprised at how much he learned about American culture. “We had international students at AUC, but seeing people in their own community is different. It was an eye opener.”

For Agha, the biggest transformation was in the level of self-confidence he attained. “You’re being pushed to higher standards all the time, and this makes you discover new things about your capabilities that you weren’t aware of before,” he said. “It also makes

you hungry to know more and add more to your field.”

Attallah added that the continuous research helps develop one’s critical thinking abilities, even outside the classroom. “You ask questions all the time and don’t accept things at surface level,” he said.

An unexpected byproduct of a graduate degree abroad is sometimes the inability to return to Egypt, especially for those who specialize in high-tech fields that may not be available back home. “If I go back, I may be crushed by the system and can’t apply what I’ve learned. I believe the best way to give back to my country is to stay abroad and engage in collaborative projects that may help it advance,” Agha said.

With a similar sentiment, Attallah

also plans on staying in Europe. “I want to be up-to-date in my field and learn new things all the time. I don’t want to stop at my PhD.”

Hoping to be able to contribute, Amer wishes to go back, but knows it will be a difficult decision to make. “I have more to offer in Egypt than I do in the States, but it’s important for me to have job security and the freedom to continue growing, improving and generating knowledge,” she said.

For Rageh, on the other hand, her true calling is at home. “There is no question in my mind that I will go back,” she asserted. “It’s my responsibility as a journalist. I want to write to make a difference and to make people’s voices heard. ... To me, the story is not in the States, it is in our part of the world.” □

# Rain or Shine

## The familiar faces of AUC staff members

There are faces that AUCians remember long after they leave the university — those people who, while not really in the spotlight, were always there to lend a helping hand, ensuring that things ran smoothly. Those special AUC staff members who were there to set up the lab before an experiment, send a taxi to the airport to pick you up at 3 am or stay late while you rehearsed your first play at the theater. The following are three examples of AUC's unsung heroes who serve the university community every day behind the scenes.

He recalls hearing 19-year-old Hesham Abbas sing along in Howard Theatre to pop music hits and telling him, "One day you'll be big." He was here when Jordan's Queen Rania was a student who danced the *dabka* on stage in Ewart Hall with her Palestinian colleagues. An AUC staple, theater custodian El Amir Mohamed Saber has been here for a full quarter of a century, and he has the stories to prove it.

Sitting in the dimly lit Howard Theatre, clad in his signature *galabeya*, Saber expressed a deep devotion to his work at AUC. His official responsibilities include cleaning, maintaining and preparing the theater for different classes and performances, but his actual role at the university has extended much further.

Throughout the years, students have asked him to come to their performances, he said, because they believed that his presence brought good luck. When they stayed late into the night rehearsing, he too stayed to help out. He remembers assisting at the long, arduous initial meetings of the first Cairo International Model United Nations in 1989.

"Back in the old days, when there were only eight kids in a class, we were like a family. We worked altogether, students, professors and staff, as a team. I was with the students so much at the theater that one day they came to me and said, 'Amir, we have a little part for you.'"

Since that first role, he has made a handful of cameo appearances in shows at Howard. He fondly recalls playing a



*ma'alim* in *El Leila Kebira*, singing "*samak ma'li, kul wi barr'ali*" to a laughing audience. Tamer Mahdy '00 cast Saber in the role of a tree in one of his plays, and he remembered the crowd erupting in cheer as soon as they recognized his face.

"Everyone loved him in my play, and they called out 'Amir, Amir!' when he came on stage," said Mahdy. "He was a real *gadaa*, always so nice and helping out whenever he was needed."

With so many memories, Saber looks at the move to the new campus with a mix of excitement and apprehension. "Of course, the university knows what is best, and I believe that they are making the right decision. But it's like, when you go to visit a friend and stay with them for three months, you miss them when you leave. Imagine what it's like when you stay with them for 25 years!"





**Z**ein El-Abedein Ahmed has been cleaning and preparing biology labs at AUC for the past 15 years, from carrying microscopes and readying animal skulls for examination to keeping faculty offices tidy.

Before coming to AUC, he had no experience with science, but having been here for so long he has developed a deep interest and admiration for the work that students and faculty do in the department.

“I love working with the professors on different assignments,” said Ahmed. “Being here has opened my mind to biology. And of course being with the students is great. I am really here at AUC for them.”

Assistant professor Moshira Hassan raved about Zein’s help in the lab and

especially on field trips. “When Zein is around, instructors can just relax. He is always looking for bits of work that need to be done, making sure that everything is prepared and in order. The biology department would not survive without him. He is amazing.”

Students agree, viewing him as a key person on their field trips to Sharm El Sheikh, the Red Sea and the desert. Accompanying them mainly to assist with their experiments, he also prepares lunches that are famous among biology majors and faculty. Zein’s delicious cooking is well known.

“You have to try his barbecued chicken,” said Ameni Ismail ’05. “On all of our trips, he cooks really nice food that keeps us happy after long days of work. And here in the lab he is always friendly, sweet and very helpful.”

**T**he most remarkable item in Fatma Youssef’s office is a giant bulletin board barely visible through the layers of photos sent to her by alumni she once cared for as student housing director. Like a mother boasting of her children’s accomplishments, she names each one and gives an update on their lives since they’ve left AUC.

“I like to think that I am like their mom when they are here,” says Youssef, looking adoringly at the photos. “I love working with students. It’s a very hectic and demanding job, but I’ve learned a lot from them. I could relate better to my own children after having worked with these students for so long.”

In charge of the Zamalek Dormitory, Youssef’s responsibilities are tremendous. Along with the residence life staff, she coordinates the details of the everyday lives of 435 college students from all over the world. Her job depends on each student’s needs, many of whom are experiencing life

away from home for the first time. Youssef’s mobile phone is never turned off, and she is always available for them.

“I get phone calls at all hours of the day and night, from the small things like the boy calling to get approval for an overnight visitor, to the girl who calls from the airport at 3 am to have me give the cab driver directions in Arabic, to the mother freaking out because her daughter is in the hospital. I must say that I have acquired tolerance beyond belief.”

Alexander Guindy ’03, resident director of the Zamalek Dormitory and coordinator at the student housing office who has lived in the dormitory for seven years now, has seen the difference she has made with many students.

“She always changes the rascals, the troublemakers,” he said. “She really takes time to help students. ... You won’t find anyone as patient as her. To all of the resident advisers and students, she’s considered a mother.” □

*By Lily Hindy*



# Around the World

## United Arab Emirates

Dubai alumni at a dinner at the Shangri-La Hotel in January 2006. A special thanks to Heba Shaaban '92, '05 for her efforts in organizing the dinner and to Lamia Gabr '96, Sally Atif '97 and Dina Samhout '03 for their support and dedication to AUC. The alumni chapter in the Emirates also held a Ramadan iftar on Thursday, October 20 at the Hilton Jumeirah Hotel in Dubai



## Jordan



Left: Alumni sohour at the King Hussein Club during Ramadan. It included a quiz game and live music by singer Zein Awad; bottom: Senator Iman Mufti '56 addressing alumni as Mahmoud Obeid '91 looks on



## Egypt



Around 150 students attended the freshman and senior iftar hosted by the alumni office. At the event, which linked both incoming and outgoing AUC students, Associate Vice President for Alumni Affairs and Special Adviser to the President Mary Iskander '76 introduced future alumni to the array of alumni services and activities in Egypt and around the world. Active alumna Sophie Sarwat '70 introduced the idea of establishing a Student Ambassador Team that can play a positive role in all alumni activities and events



## United States



Alumni with President David (fourth from left) and Sherry Arnold (far right) gather at an AUC reception in Washington D.C. during the annual Middle East Studies Association conference in November

## Switzerland



Sherif El Tantawy '85, Natallie Jaggi, Walid Shash '82, Violette Jaggi '73, AUC President David Arnold, Samira Hussein '51, Ambassador Hassan Dabbagh, Khalil Othman '62 at a luncheon hosted by Ambassador and Mrs. Dabbagh at their residence in Geneva

# Alumni Rally in Support of Scholarships

Ahmad El-Nami



Top: Hassan Abdalla '82, '94 and Ahmed Hassanein Heikal; bottom: First lady Suzanne Mubarak receiving a plaque in honor of the scholarship in her name from AUC President David Arnold and Mary Iskander '76, associate vice president for alumni and trustee affairs

First Lady Suzanne Mubarak '77, '82 mingled with alumni, donors and special guests at the Semiramis Intercontinental Hotel in downtown Cairo during the gala dinner held over homecoming weekend. The event treated 360 guests to a night of food, fun and music. Dalia Issa '90 and students in the AUC Music Group provided the entertainment, performing a variety of musical programs.

In her address, the first lady praised AUC's achievements, the high standards the university has set and its role in the community. After highlighting various programs at AUC, the guest of honor then challenged alumni to build upon this. "To support and sustain these and other initiatives, AUC alumni need to be even more active and engaged than we have been in the past. AUC thrives on the kind of energy, enthusiasm, volunteer efforts and financial support that only dedicated alumni can provide," she said. "AUC has given us much. Only through our continued support can we return part of what it

has provided us."

After discussing political and economic reform in Egypt, the first lady linked them to education. "At the core of this vision, ladies and gentlemen, is education. It is the pivotal foundation upon which we build our hopes and dreams for the future. That future to which we aspire can only be realized by providing our young women and men with an education that fosters creativity, not conformity, originality rather than imitation, inquiry and critical thinking as opposed to rote learning."

Alumni and donors at the event responded to her call, raising a total of LE 5 million for the establishment of the Suzanne Mubarak Public School Scholarship, which will provide the means to allow talented female students to attend AUC. This could not have been achieved without the leadership of AUC Trustee Moataz Al Alfi and the support of Mohammad Abughazaleh '67, Hamza Al-Kholi, Ahmed Hassanein Heikal and Akef El Maghraby.



### Honoring an Activist

An outstanding scientist, parliamentarian and women's rights advocate, **Farkhonda Hassan** (MS '67) was honored with a Distinguished Alumni Award at the alumni gala dinner. Hassan earned a master's degree in solid state science at AUC, taught geology for 40 years at the university and is currently professor emerita. During her long and impressive tenure, she made invaluable contributions to the expansion and development of the science program.

### A Philanthropist and Businessman

In recognition of his contributions as a businessman and philanthropist, **Mohammad Abughazaleh** '67 was presented with the Distinguished Alumni Award from AUC. "It's an honor and a privilege to be recognized by my alma mater," said the economics graduate. "It makes me happy and proud at the same time."

Abughazaleh's success spans numerous years of hard work. His resume speaks volumes of his leadership experience in the Gulf, the United States and Jordan. Today, he is at the helm of Jordan's National Poultry Company, the Royal Jordanian Air Academy and Del Monte Fresh Produce — a leading producer, packer and distributor in more than 100 countries with approximately 37,000 employees worldwide. It is also the world's number one pineapple producer. Previously, Abughazaleh was president and chief executive officer of United Trading Company in Chile and Metico in Kuwait and Dubai.

"To be successful, set your goals straight and work hard to accomplish them. It takes vision and determination," he said.

In addition to his business strides, Abughazaleh is also a dedicated supporter of education. He recently established the

"I am so happy and proud of my award," she said. "Both of my children, their spouses and my grandchildren have been my students in geology and astronomy, so I have a very deep connection to the university. It really means a lot to me."

After graduating from Cairo University with a bachelor's in geology, Hassan went on to take a diploma in psychology and education from Ain Shams University and a master's from AUC. She received her doctorate in geology from the University of Pittsburgh.

Of her many memories at AUC, the one she most fondly recalls is bringing a group of students to assist in hospitals during the 1973 war. "Patients and doctors alike were pleasantly surprised to see how helpful, hardworking and efficient AUC students were. Prior to this, people had the wrong impression that AUCians were delicate and uncaring."

Hassan has been a leader in promoting women's rights in Egypt and internationally. As secretary-general of the National Council for Women in Egypt, she advocates the importance of female participation in all areas of society, especially in technology and the sciences.

She is currently a member of Egypt's Shura Council and chairman of the parliamentary committee on human development and local administration." Her involvement with many organizations all over the world includes membership in subgroups of the United Nations and the World Bank.

Mohammad Abughazaleh Palestinian Scholarship to provide funds for five talented and deserving students from the Palestinian Occupied Territories to study at AUC.

"I firmly believe that education is the only path to success for the individual and progress for any nation and the region as a whole," he said. "I am excited about the opportunity to play a role in shaping the future of five bright Palestinian students."



# Class Notes

## New Alums Head to Qatar for Med School

After four years of undergraduate study in biology at AUC, Marwa Ahmed '04 and Amira El-Sherif '05 are spending another four years in college in pursuit of their lifelong dream of becoming medical doctors.

"Medicine has always been a natural interest of mine since I was in high school," Ahmed said. "Not only do doctors help people feel better, but there's so much out there we don't know about the human body and the way God created us."

Staying close to home, both Ahmed and El-Sherif joined Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q), an affiliate of Cornell University in New York. "My parents live in the Emirates, so this was a good option for me. I am getting an American system of education, while not being too far from my family," El-Sherif said.

For Ahmed, the decision to go to Qatar had to do with familiarity. "Having lived in Saudi for a long time, I was familiar with life in Gulf countries in general. I also heard about WCMC-Q from my parents, and when I visited it, I liked the atmosphere," she said.



Marwa Ahmed and Amira El-Sherif

With a field as demanding as medicine, Ahmed and El-Sherif hardly have time to enjoy the atmosphere.

Courses start at 8 am and continue for six hours, after which the two classmates study for the rest of the evening. From general science and human anatomy to biochemistry and genetics, the coursework is intense.

Although still in their first year, Ahmed sees herself in the field of genetics or neuroscience, while El-Sherif — a long-time diver — would like to pursue either pediatrics or hyperbolic medicine for scuba divers.

ranging from daycare to after-school enrichment programs and supplemental education.

### '81

**Mayar Farrag** (MA '84) is the director of Mont-Blanc Asset Management S.A., an independent firm specializing in private banking solutions for women in Geneva.

### '85

**Samar Jarrah** worked for Jordan TV after graduation and interviewed the late King of Jordan, Queen Noor,

Rajeev Gandhi, Eduard Shevardnadze and many others. She was also a contributor to CNN World Report and author of *Arab Voices Speak to American Hearts*. Jarrah now lives in California with her husband Mamoon.

**Aya Maher** (MA '03) is working on her doctorate in public administration and is a postgraduate instructor at AUC. She also teaches at the Modern Sciences and Arts University, works independently with management consulting agencies and is a member of Egypt's Women's Association. She has two sons, Mohamed, 14, and Omar, 11, and would love to see her colleagues at the next homecoming or hear from them by e-mail at [ayamaher@aucegypt.edu](mailto:ayamaher@aucegypt.edu)

### '86

**Hala Afify** lives in a small English town called Grimsby. She has four children: Omar, Ahmad, Habiba and Mohammad. Her husband, Ashraf Selim, is a consultant urologist at the local hospital.

### '96

**Randa Kayyali** (MA) recently published her new book *The Arab Americans*, which outlines the immigration patterns, settlement, adaptation and assimilation of Arabs in the United States. Kayyali is enrolled in a doctoral program at George Mason University, focusing on globalization, migration and ethnography. She has just started teaching a class on globalization and culture.

### '98

**Hanan Ragheb** (MA) was blessed with a beautiful baby girl, Sandra, who was born in October 2004 during a trip to Hawaii.

### '72

**Debjani Chatterjee** is a freelance writer and editor who has published 45 books for children and adults. Sheffield Hallam University awarded her an honorary doctorate in 2002. She lives in Sheffield, United Kingdom, where she chairs the National Association of Writers in Education.

### '74

**Nariman Marei** is the owner of the Fast Start Center for Scientific and Artistic Development of Children. It offers diverse activities and services,

**Mazen Hefni** has recently been promoted to third secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is currently working on Egyptian bilateral relations with 10 European countries. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Cairo Young Diplomats. He speaks seven languages and would love to hear from friends at [mazen\\_hefni@hotmail.com](mailto:mazen_hefni@hotmail.com)

## '99

**Marwa Al-Ansary** (MSc '01), received a second master's in 2002 with distinction from Strathclyde University in Scotland and is now pursuing a doctorate in engineering at Cambridge University. She is a teaching assistant and has received the Demonstrator Teaching Award for 2005. Al-Ansary has also been awarded the National Award of the British Federation of Women Graduates 2005-2006 for demonstrating excellence in her doctoral research.

## '00

**Mohamed Ibrahim Hegab** is an area superintendent at Turner International in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He recently got married.

## '03

**Beate Sayed** moved back to Berlin, Germany. In August 2005, she received her master's in philosophy and religious and Jewish studies with highest honors from Free University in Berlin, where she is pursuing her doctoral studies.

## AUC Alum's Family Takes Historical Journey



*Sameh Farag wrote to AUCToday:*

*I was born in Egypt in 1960, but have lived in Toronto, Canada since 1969 when my parents emigrated. My father, Mahmoud Helmy Farag, graduated from AUC in 1952. This past year we celebrated his 81st birthday. This summer, my brother Moataz and I took our families, including five of my father's grandchildren, to Egypt for a visit to their grandfather's homeland. It was an incredibly exciting and unforgettable trip for us, especially the children. Apart from visiting the wonderful historic sites of Egypt, experiencing the unparalleled hospitality and generosity of Egyptians, the children got a special treat when they visited AUC and were able to sit in their grandfather's dedicated chair at Ewart Memorial Hall.*

**Marwa Farid** has worked in various posts at the U.S. Embassy's political mission in Cairo and is currently a scholarship coordinator at the diversity scholarship and LEAD office at AUC.

## '05

**Mai Mansour** is currently working at ACTIVE PR & Marketing Communications. They have recently organized the Universal Children's Day in an attempt for Egypt to break the Guinness World Record for the largest handprint painting done by children. The children have created a 220-square-meter painting, in an attempt to break the previous record of 210.

## Special Programs

**Heather Behn Hedden** (CASA '89) started a freelance indexing business, Hedden Information Management, and was elected president of the New England chapter of the American Society of Indexers. She just indexed volume three of the Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures.

## In Memoriam

**Zareh Soghikian** '51 died in San Francisco.

**Tarek Emad El Din Kamel** '03, marketing assistant at Chipsy for Food Industries Co., died in Cairo on October 22, 2005.

## Weddings



*Ghassan Freiwat '90 and Siham Kassabri were married on Thursday, December 22, 2005 at the Anglican Church in Jebel Ali, Dubai. The ceremony was followed by a wedding reception at the JW Marriott hotel. They spent their honeymoon in the Far East*

*Amir Ibrahim (MA '01) got married to Macarena Canada Del Real, a Spanish lawyer, on November 5, 2005 in Seville, Spain*



## In a *Galabeya* by the Sea

Last October, two of AUC's presidential interns and I traveled to Alexandria to eat copious amounts of fish and swim in the gleaming Mediterranean Sea. However, we noticed that all the Egyptian women were sitting fully veiled in black, underneath an orange billow of an umbrella. The solution to our worries came to us in the form of a *galabeya* vendor. After the requisite 10 minutes of bargaining and halving of the price, the three of us emerged from the negotiation triumphant, armed with three oddly patterned robes to wear over our swimwear.

Suddenly, for LE 10, I was an Egyptian. I was free to look at anyone I wished because people were no longer staring at me, the *khawaggaya*. Unlike the beaches of Southern California, no one was secretly eyeing each other to see how they looked in their swimsuit. For the first time, I was free to walk out along the beach not sucking in.

After a swim, we dragged ourselves back to the beach. Laughter still ringing from our ears and mildly euphoric from the freedom of the sea, our emotions were immediately quelled by the silence and apparent disapproval of our new Egyptian friends from one umbrella over. I looked down to see that my *galabeya* was clinging to me in an indecent manner, and when I tried to lie in the sun and dry out, one of the mothers sharply pulled the fabric back down to my ankles, telling me that men would look at my calves. Slightly annoyed at her perception of me and unconcerned about anyone looking at my lower leg, I glanced away to catch several lecherous looks from Egyptian men. She was right.

Here in Egypt, I live in the middle. Not a tourist, yet not a resident, I work in an office where I am the only non-Egyptian. I buy my food from local vendors on 26th of July Street, but I still pay foreigner prices. I know better than to wear a tube top, but I balk at wearing the *hijab*. I try to read *Al-Ahram* daily but still identify more with the *Herald Tribune*. I find it necessary to buy a clock, scissors and even plants, but I know it is not worth it for me to buy a pet, pick out a nicer table or date someone. I am rooted in Cairo but only temporarily. Should I buy a TV? Can I make judgments about a culture that I've lived in for only



*Frerking (right) under an umbrella by the sea with a woman she befriended*

months, declare certain practices repressive or liberating? Has the West “figured it out,” whatever “it” is? Should I feel guilty, relieved or embarrassed when I see a new Cinnabon?

Life in Egypt is several months old to me, and 5,000 years old to the rest of the country. Every day I butcher the language, walk in a shop where women don't go, get annoyed that a guy is not allowed upstairs, assume people will be patient with me or understand some English. It is exciting, invigorating, different and strikingly similar. Kids like candy, 15-year-old boys try to act macho, mothers chide their children, and people alternate between stressed out, happy, tired and bored.

Living in Egypt is a self-reflexive process — donning the *galabeya* at the beach allowed me to step into that world for a moment, only to re-examine my own perceptions and judgments. These questions have no easy answers, these differences may mean a lot or very little. I wonder what a difference a year will make.

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*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.*