Contents

Ahmad El-Nemr

Four alumni launch an awareness campaign to save the Wadi Degla natural reserve from industrial development *Page 13*

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

On the cover: Omar Samra '00 raising the Egyptian flag on the summit of the Rimpfischorn in the Swiss Alps in September 2005

Editor's Notes

The Everest Inside Us

All of us have aspirations, but some seem so far-fetched that we don't take an active stance to make them real. In this issue, Omar Samra '00, the first Egyptian to climb Mount Everest, talks about his long-harbored dream and what it took for him to achieve it.

When I first heard of 28-year-old Samra, I was truly inspired. Meeting him and reading his profile (page 16) moved me. His perseverance and deep desire to achieve his goal, whether it be touring Asia and Latin America in a year or reaching the highest peak in the world, gives us living proof that when people put their mind to it, they can accomplish anything. The key is to genuinely desire the goal you set for yourself, believe that you can achieve it, concentrate your efforts and have the courage to follow through. I feel that one of the most inspiring things about Samra is how he constantly seeks out things that stimulate him and challenge his limits, even if it means making great sacrifices. That's how he became who he is now.

We can't all climb Mount Everest, but we should keep raising the bar for ourselves. It's easy to remain in our comfort zones and lead an ordinary life like everyone else or we could, like Samra, find the Everest inside us and climb it.

Dalia Al Nimr

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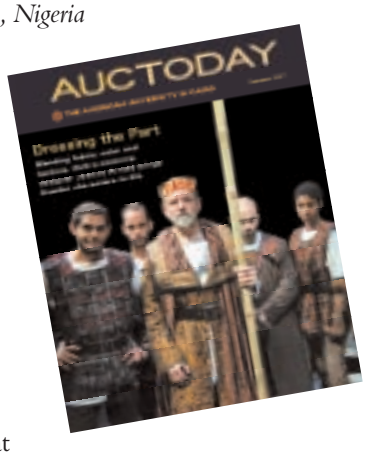
Staying in Touch

I am pleased to inform you that I have just received my exciting copy of *AUCToday* Summer 2007. Please keep it coming regularly. I hope to be able to contribute to it soon. Thank you.

Muhammad Sani Rabiu (MA '92)
Keffi, Nigeria

Congratulations



I loved the summer edition of *AUC Today.* It was neat reading about Michael Dukakis; I remember his run for office in 1988. I also enjoyed the features on the costume design section. Knowing nothing about what goes into a play, it was interesting reading about the staff and students who help put that side of a production together. Please congratulate your staff for another great issue.

Kristi Beres, YAB '95
United States

Correction

I would like to draw your kind attention to a spelling mistake in the article "Ten Things You Didn't Know About the New Campus." In point number one, 'stories' is erroneously used instead of 'storeys.' I would also like to take the opportunity to thank you for the great work you are doing.

M. Islam Badra '98
Cairo, Egypt

Thank you for your note. In AUCToday*, we use the American spelling of a word versus the British spelling. "Storeys" is primarily British. — Ed*

Full Speech

I'm writing to request a full speech made by Michael Dukakis where he says, "If we need one thing, that is good people in public service." Regards from Dar es Salaam.

Chrispin Mwansanga ' 04
Tanzania, East Africa

To listen to the podcasts of speeches made by distinguished speakers on campus, visit www.aucegypt.edu/resources/smc/webcasts/index.cfm — Ed

Why AUC is Special

AUC is a university, yes I agree, but it is — without being prejudiced — unlike other universities. It is an educational institution based in Cairo, a cosmopolitan city. Its students are of different nationalities, religions and cultures. This melting pot produces a very polished person. It is unique because of its ethical values, which are based on equality, tolerance, respect and understanding.

I appreciated this after marrying our ambassador, who was posted in different countries with a wide range of cultures and ways of life. There wasn't any country where I had difficulty adapting to and understanding the people. Several times, I was asked where I received my higher education. I felt so proud when once, the Italian ambassador, whom I met at a reception and had a conversation with about AUC, turned to his wife and said, "Let us send our daughter to this very good university." This is why AUC is special and why I am very proud to be an AUCian.

Samira Dabbagh '51
Geneva, Switzerland

We Would Like to Hear From You

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

Visa Card Launched Exclusively for AUCians

Designed specifically for AUC alumni, faculty and staff, the AUC Visa by Credit Agricole Egypt is a full-fledged credit card that also provides members of the AUC community with the opportunity to support the university. Each time the card is used, Credit Agricole Egypt donates a percentage of the transaction to support AUC's overall development in areas including scholarships, professorships, library resources, labs and student activities.

The first-of-its-kind card has several features that are only available to members of the AUC community. Designed with AUC in mind, the cards are being offered in a blue or full-color option, both of which feature a view of the Main Campus. Participants are able to choose their preferred card design when they sign up.

Aside from its design and the contribution to AUC with each transaction, the AUC Visa card functions like any other credit card offered by Credit Agricole Egypt. The bank is responsible for all applications, acceptance, regulations and questions pertaining to the credit card. To apply for the card, call 19191 or visit any branch of Credit Agricole Egypt.

Professors Honored for their Research Achievements

Ali Hadi, vice provost, director of graduate studies and research at AUC and professor emeritus at Cornell University, and Sherif Sedky, associate professor of physics, received the 2006-07 Excellence in Research and Creative Endeavors Award at the June 2007 graduate commencement.

"I am happy that my research efforts have been recognized by my peers," said Hadi, who has taught at Cornell for 16 years before coming to AUC in 2000. Hadi received the award for his research in the identification of outliers and visualization of massive multi-dimensional data. Although Hadi is a statistician, his research interests incorporate other areas, including the development of new statistical and mathematical methods for the analysis of environmental science and engineering data. "You can do years of research without producing any results. My efforts have produced results, and I am very lucky in that respect," he said.

Sedky, who has taught at AUC since 2002, received the award for his research in micro-electromechanical systems (MEMS). This award is the most recent recognition of his work. "It was a huge honor for me," he said. "I was very happy and proud, especially because the competition was tough."

Sedky is also the recipient of the prestigious 2002 Egyptian National Award for Advancement in Technological Sciences and holds six patents for his inventions. Among his achievements is his research on the development of a sensitive part of an infrared camera that can take images in dark, foggy environments or in heavy smoke. In addition, he helped establish advanced research labs at AUC, capable of fabricating MEMS.

"The field of MEMS is only 15 years old, but nearly every system you can think of has some MEMS component in it, from your laptop to the wing of an airplane to the fabric of your stain-resistant shirt," Sedky said.

Hadi (top) and Sedky, recipients of the 2006-07 Excellence in Research and Creative Endeavors Award

New Members Join AUC's Board of Trustees

AUC's Board of Trustees recently elected four new members: Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency; Dina Habib Powell, director of global corporate engagement for Goldman Sachs Group and former assistant secretary of state for the U.S. Department of State; Mohammad Abughazaleh, chairman and chief executive officer of Fresh Del Monte Produce Company; and Lisa Anderson, professor of international relations at Columbia University and dean emerita of the School of International Public Affairs there.

Nobel Peace Prize winner and recipient of an honorary doctorate from AUC, ElBaradei started his career in the Egyptian diplomatic service in 1964, serving in the permanent missions of Egypt to the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Later, he served as a special assistant to the Egyptian foreign minister, and in 1980, joined the United Nations as a senior fellow of the International Law Program at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. In 1997, he was appointed director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Powell recently resigned from the U.S. Department of State to join Goldman Sachs, a leading global investment banking, securities and investment management firm, where she has been named managing director and global head of corporate engagement. Powell is also a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Previously, Powell served as assistant to the president for presidential personnel, a senior staff member at the White House and director of congressional affairs for the Republican National Committee.

Abughazaleh '67 was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award by AUC in 2006. His company, Fresh Del Monte Produce, has a market capital of $1.2 billion. Its most recent acquisition of Del Monte Foods Europe in 2004 gave it a more diversified and global reach, with sales of $3.3 billion. With 37,000 employees and customers in approximately 100 countries, the company farms more than 100,000 acres in 12 countries, including Chile, Costa Rica, Hawaii, the Philippines, South Africa, Kenya and New Zealand.

A specialist on Middle East and North African politics, Anderson is professor of international relations at Columbia University and dean emerita of the School of International Public Affairs there. Before joining Columbia, she was assistant professor of government and social studies at Harvard University. A prolific author, Anderson also serves as chair of the board of directors of the Social Science Research Council, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and an emeritus member of the board of Human Rights Watch.

Computer Science Re-accredited

The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), one of the leading accreditation organizations worldwide, has recently granted renewed accreditation to AUC's computer science and engineering department for its Bachelor of Science in computer science. "We are accredited and only subject to re-evaluation every number of years. This is an honor," said Mikhail Naguib Mikhail, chair of the department, adding that plans are underway to gain accreditation for the department's new computer engineering program as well.

Graduates of ABET-accredited programs are eligible to register as professional engineers in many countries and move on to work for major manufacturers and universities throughout the world. More than 60 students graduate from AUC's computer science program each year.

Professor Receives 2006 Egypt State Award

Sherif Aly '95, visiting assistant professor of computer science, recently received Egypt's State Achievement Award for Science and Technology for his work on mobile and pervasive computing. The award is given annually to recognize outstanding research of practical application in society. Aly was one of two recipients to win the 2006 award in the science and technology category.

"Renowned universities around the world like MIT and the University of California, Berkeley are conducting extensive research on pervasive systems, so it's really gratifying to see people in the scientific community in Egypt appreciating this kind of research," said Aly, who holds a doctorate in science from George Washington University. "It's not about winning the money, but more of an indication that I'm on the right track."

Pervasive computing is the integration of computers into people's daily lives, often in an invisible way, such as devices in the home that automatically monitor the health of its occupants. According to Aly, pervasive applications will be of essential use in almost every aspect of the way we live. "Mobile and pervasive computing is a view of how things will be when computers are no longer simple input and output machines, but will sense and react to our environment and make intelligent decisions," he said. "These computing systems will be embedded in our everyday lives and will be our way into the future."

New Master's in Biotechnology Prepares Students for Industry

Starting this fall, the university is offering a new master's in biotechnology. Rania Siam, assistant professor of biology and director of the program, explained that AUC's state-of-the-art facilities, particularly the biotechnology laboratory at the Yousef Jameel Science and Technology Research Center, will enable students to conduct research that addresses crucial issues in the region.

Hassan Azzazy, associate professor and chair of the chemistry department, helped establish the program and noted that its interdisciplinary nature is intended to position AUC graduates in the field of biotechnology as industry leaders. "To succeed in this industry, you need scientific training, but you also need background in business, ethics, politics and management," he said. "We are interested in turning out bioentrepreneurs."

The program will accomplish this goal by training students in three areas: basic sciences, biotechnology applications and entrepreneurship. Azzazy said that this ensures students will emerge from AUC ready to navigate an industry that is both booming and controversial. "We aren't trying to train more technicians; we have plenty of those in Egypt," he explained. "We want people who know the hard science, but who also understand ethics and patent laws and can translate ideas into products."

Though the applications of biotechnology are diverse, ranging from the production of lifesaving medications and biofuels to getting the right color on a pair of jeans, Azzazy noted that Egypt is yet to establish a strong industry presence. "AUC is looking to help develop the biotechnology industry in Egypt. The hope is that if we give our students cutting-edge training, they will be able to go out and produce something useful for their country," he said.

Student Service Center Facilitates Enrollment Procedures

To facilitate enrollment and serve as a pilot for a system on the new campus, AUC launched the Student Service Center this summer to consolidate all enrollment procedures in one place. The center, located near the Fountain Area on the Main Campus, is designed to minimize bureaucracy, improve efficiency and raise the overall quality of student services.

Prior to the establishment of the center, students were required to go to six different offices on AUC's campuses. To complete the required enrollment steps, students had to fill in an application, pay tuition fees, apply for financial aid, register for entrance exams, and receive their student ID and advising cards in different offices. "The Student Service Center as a one-stop shop means that all these steps can now be done in one place," explained Randa Kamel, director of enrollment services. "The steps are the same, but with the convenience of having them all in the same location."

The center first opened its doors in July to prospective students applying for the Fall 2007 semester. "We will gradually become fully operational and receive all undergraduate and graduate applicants," said Kamel.

The new center utilizes a queuing machine to ensure first-come, first-serve efficiency. It is equipped with several computer terminals for students who wish to consult their file or apply directly online, and there is also wireless Internet access inside the center. "With the new center, all the walk-in procedures, e-mails and telephone inquiries are centralized because we don't want students to feel that the process is time-consuming," said Kamel. "Student Service Center personnel are also trained to treat students professionally and with a pleasant attitude, answer all their inquiries and, most importantly, give them accurate information."

Explaining the timeliness of establishing such a center before the move, she added, "By the time we move to the new campus, we would have gained experience, become better trained and received feedback from people."

The idea of a one-stop shop was envisioned in the early stages of the new campus design. Booz Allen Hamilton, a leading global consulting firm, conceived the concept of a student service center and devised recommendations for implementation in terms of operation, organization, restructuring and information technology.

Speaking at the center's opening ceremony, President David Arnold emphasized the importance of such an accomplishment. "This is an opportunity to do something rare and unusual; it's an opportunity to see a small slice of the future," he said. "The future is not just about physical appearance. It's about new and better ways to deliver service and work more efficiently. This is one in a series of changes to organize our work in the area of student services, a small beginning to make the administration process smooth and easy."

Desert Development Center Helps Revitalize Iraqi Agriculture

A Texas A&M professor explaining water management techniques to Iraqi farmers

The Desert Development Center (DDC) hosted nearly 100 Iraqi desert specialists this summer to help develop their country's agricultural sector. The month-long event was part of the Iraqi Agricultural Extensions Revitalization (IAER) project, which trains specialists to better serve the needs of Iraqi farmers.

For three weeks, a group of professors from five American universities — Texas A&M, Washington State, Utah State, the University of California at Davis and New Mexico State University — provided training for Iraqi agricultural specialists and university professors from five different Iraqi universities. They received training on subjects ranging from animal production and horticulture to soil analysis and irrigation.

"Developing the agricultural sector in Iraq will not only add to the national stability of the nation, but will also provide employment and improve the country's economy," said Robert Whitney, leader of the IAER project.

Explaining why the program was held at the DDC, Kays Aziz Jawad, Iraqi deputy minister of agriculture, said, "We insisted on holding the training program in Egypt because of the similar environmental conditions to those in Iraq in terms of weather, kinds of plants and livestock. We highly appreciate Egypt's efforts in making this project a success and also recognize the unrivaled experience of the DDC."

Richard Tutwiler, director of the DDC, said the program was beneficial not only for the Iraqi farmers, but for the DDC as well. "The IAER training program provides us with a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate our achievements in Egypt on sustainable development to esteemed colleagues from Iraq and the United States," he said. "We are pleased that they selected the DDC as the ideal venue for their program."

Harvard Supports AUC's Economic and Business History Research Center

Dedicated to documenting the richness of Egypt's contemporary history and alleviating the shortage and inaccessibility of records, AUC and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University signed a consortium agreement to support AUC's Economic and Business History Research Center (EBHRC).

Created in 2004, EBHRC was established to gather and disseminate first-person records and narratives of Egypt's contemporary history, with an emphasis on economic and business issues. Since its inception, the center has received ad-hoc support from Harvard, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Washington. With the consortium agreement, Harvard's partnership with EBHRC becomes official, opening the door for new opportunities. According to the agreement, Harvard will help raise funds for EBHRC and participate in the planning of the center's activities through representatives on the consortium's board.

Abdel Aziz EzzelArab, EBHRC director and associate professor of economics, explained the long-term benefits of the partnership. "The consortium agreement is important because it improves the prospects for the continuity of support, irrespective of changes in individuals," he said. "Besides, the presence of a name like Harvard alongside EBHRC gives the project the academic endorsement it needs to attract the attention of key players in enterprise and academia."

AUC Works to Strengthen Science and Technology Sector in the Region

In an effort to bolster science and technology research in the Middle East, AUC recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), set to open in September 2009 as a world-class graduate-level research university in Saudi Arabia.

AUC's partnership with KAUST will initially focus on collaborative research in three key areas: Red Sea marine ecology and genomics, facilitated by the John D. Gerhart Field Station in El Gouna; desert development technology and advanced agriculture, with participation from the Desert Development Center; and nanotechnology and advanced materials, utilizing the Yousef Jameel Science and Technology Research Center. In addition, there will be a student and faculty exchange program, with top AUC students competing for scholarships offered by KAUST to join master's and doctoral programs.

Medhat Haroun, dean of AUC's School of Sciences and Engineering, noted that the two universities have great potential for cooperation because of their status as independent and nonprofit institutions, geographical proximity, as well as their common research agenda and strong emphasis on excellence in research. AUC, he pointed out, has distinguished faculty, outstanding students, state-of-the-art facilities and a multidisciplinary track record. Through this partnership, AUC will benefit from KAUST's global research funding programs, fellowships and scholarships to students, and the establishment of new research facilities that compliment the university's centers and laboratories.

"This is a great opportunity for AUC … to form a strong alliance that will propel both AUC and KAUST to be at the forefront of research and education in the region," said Haroun. "It will contribute to unprecedented growth and advancement in scientific research, graduate education, and technological development in fundamental and applied sciences."

Nadhmi Al-Nasr, interim president of KAUST, explained their interest in the collaboration. "With AUC, there is a high potential for establishing more than an academic alliance, but a strategic regional alliance," he said. "In the short term, this collaboration will help KAUST build and develop its campus in preparation for its launch. In the long term, it is of benefit to both institutions, since it will present a right model for the region to follow. AUC and KAUST have a moral responsibility to help carry this region forward."

Al-Nasr (left) and President David Arnold at the signing, as Mohammed Samaha, interim vice president for research development at KAUST, looks on

Gerhart Center Holds Regional Philanthropic Conference

Bringing together prominent figures from philanthropic foundations in Egypt and the Arab world, the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement recently held a conference titled Arab Philanthropy: Innovations and Challenges, the first-ever regional event to address new and effective means of enhancing philanthropy in the Arab world.

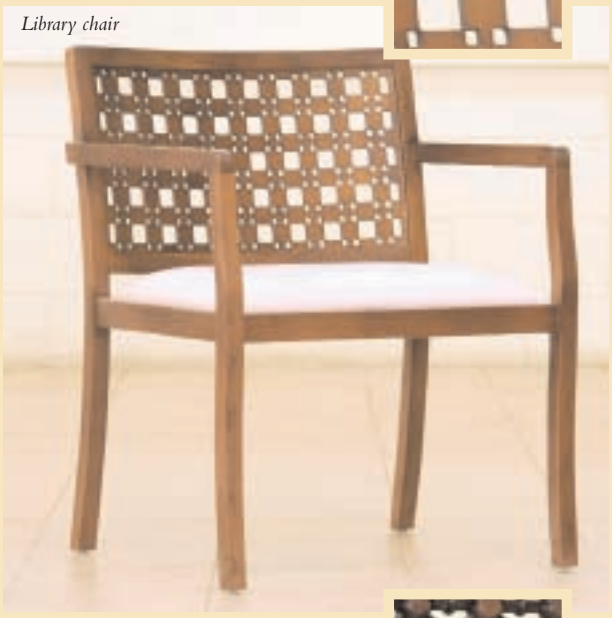
"I can give you 10 reasons why we can be hopeful," said Barbara Ibrahim, director of the Gerhart center, saluting the rich tradition of charitable giving in Arab culture. "Global economic shifts have made national borders a lot less relevant than they used to be and have generated tremendous new wealth," she explained. "But most importantly, the private sector has decided to make available assets and ideas about management, showing the willingness to take risks and practice strategic philanthropy. This means that you start with what you want to change in your society."

The conference drew participants from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and the Gulf. It marked the continued collaboration between the Gerhart center and the Arab Foundations Forum, an organization of independent grant-making foundations in the Arab region that was founded in 2006.

Inside Story

By Ingrid Wassmann
Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr

As construction nears completion on the new campus, an innovative interior design is taking shape

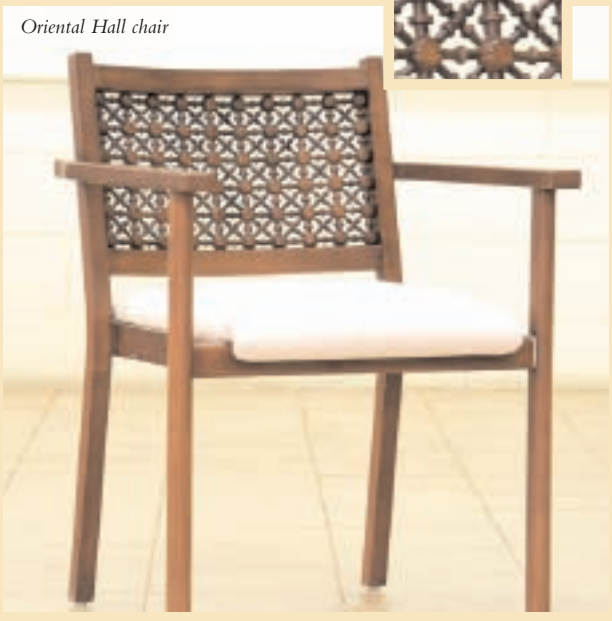


Library chair

AUC's new campus is modern and inventive not only from the outside, but also from the inside. While architecture and the sheer size of the new campus project involved a tremendous amount of planning, the interior design has also been carefully researched from both a technical and aesthetic perspective. From teaching walls and custom-made furniture to lighting, acoustics and rugs, experts have tended to the smallest detail that helps create an optimal learning environment.

Designing the interior required a coherent evaluation of teaching approaches, new technologies, appearance and cost. Juggling these overlapping considerations was Robert Luchetti, architect, industrial designer and president of award-winning Robert Luchetti Associates, a Massachusetts-based team commissioned to design the furniture, equipment, fixtures and signage of AUC's 260-acre project.

"We sought to create an international contemporary learning space that reflects the local environment and culture and at the same time is flexible, safe, comfortable, energy conserving, easily maintainable, affordable and technologically advanced," said Luchetti, whose clients include Harvard University, Kuwait National



Oriental Hall chair

Patio chair

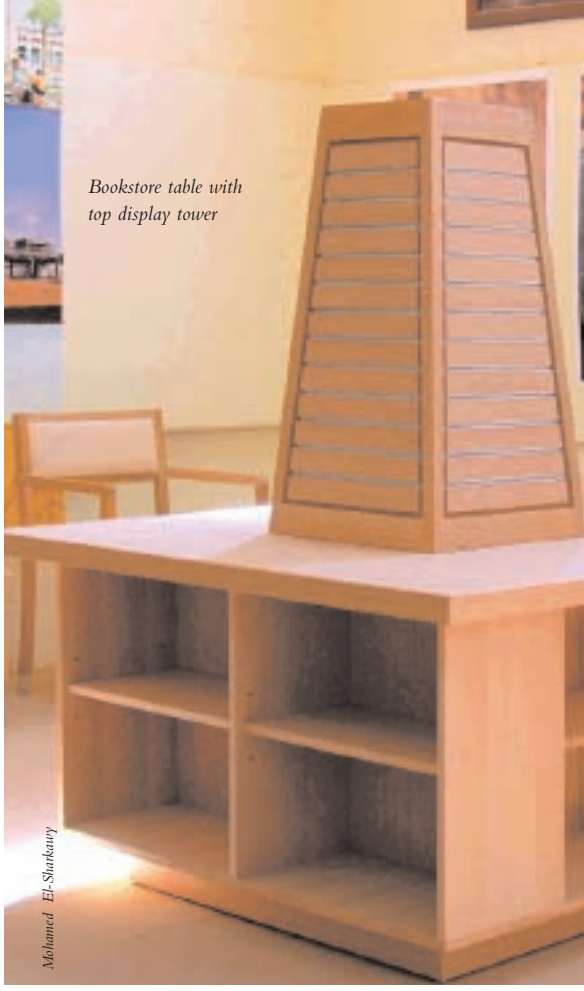
Petroleum Company and Knoll Furniture Corporation.

One of the unique features inside the new campus classrooms, computer labs and meeting rooms are the whiteboard teaching walls, which will be directly mounted on three sides of the room, replacing the traditional blackboard. Two adjacent whiteboard-surface walls, each 1.4 meters high with overlapping sliding panels, will provide more writing space, while a shorter teaching wall will consist of a tack board made of thick woven porous fabric to absorb echoes in the room and noise from the tiled floors.

Another advantage is flexibility. Depending on the mode of communication and variation in class size, the layout of the classrooms can be quickly altered from a long to a wide configuration. Half of the classrooms will be outfitted with tablet arm chairs, and the other half will have tables for two and freestanding chairs. In these rooms, to ensure this swift transposition, all the tables are outfitted with wheels and are built to fold quickly. A variety of layouts, from rows to facing tables for team interaction, are then possible. "The layouts are easily interchangeable so any room can be used in either format," explained Luchetti. "This way, the teaching range is far more flexible."

Each new classroom also has its own projector and screen and is equipped with a floor to ceiling control panel that consolidates an integrated clock, sound speakers, light switches, fire alarm, strobe light and wiring. The speakers, built into the ceiling, will be able to transmit sound from a campus-wide public address system, class microphone, CD or DVD, PowerPoint presentation or online soundtrack.

In addition to the classrooms, the faculty and staff offices are innovative as well. Each office is set up as a freestanding, wall-based modular working station, with large metal cabinets, integral wiring and durable tabletops made of Formica, a heat-resistant plastic laminate. "It is state-of-the-art furniture in terms of its performance," Luchetti said, adding that faculty offices have been conceived in such a way that they can be utilized to conduct small seminars.



Bookstore table with top display tower

Mohamed El-Sharkawy

"We wanted a more student- and experientially-based environment. The formal lecture is not going away but is diminishing in its importance, thanks to modern technology."

In terms of lighting, the new campus

Indoor dining chair

Classroom table

classrooms and offices will feature adjustable integrated uplighting, projecting the lighting upward and bouncing it off the ceiling. This is different from the commonly used downlighting, where lighting is cast from the ceiling toward the floor. "The advantage of putting the light in the furniture and aiming it toward the ceiling is that you make the volume of the room apparent," said Luchetti. "Uplighting also makes it easier to view a computer screen because it minimizes glare."

Locally manufactured, the 20,000 custom-made chairs, many made from wicker and rattan, a durable vine-like stem, represent one of the most abundant furniture items on the new campus. "It made sense to use a lot of wicker and rattan for the seating. It is robust, easy to maintain and ideal for this hot climate," said Luchetti, who stressed the importance of using local material and manufacturing. "We tried to incorporate as much Egyptian craft as possible," he noted, citing examples of indigenous features used like *mashrabeya* (Oriental woodwork), brass lighting and hand-made rugs. In a special effort to capture the essence of the Middle East's rich culture, certain lounge chairs have been designed to resemble *diwans* (Oriental couches), while some tables were inspired by the curved metal stand of the traditional Egyptian coffee tables.

"What we have in mind for the interior design of the new campus does not exist off the shelf in Egypt, so we are having it all custom made," explained Luchetti. In fact, since the new campus project first began in 2002, the American interior design team visited and interviewed more than 40 local furniture, aluminum, textile and carpet manufacturers. "Those we ended up with are the ones we thought we'd end up with; they are the best in Egypt," he said.

From the onset of this $20 million interior design plan for the new campus, the main objective was to use furniture that could be made and serviceable in Egypt, thus not only supporting the local economy but also reducing costs. "Manufacturing most of the furniture here turned out to be 30 to 70 percent less expensive than if it had been imported," noted Luchetti. But just as important was the compatibility of the material with the environment. "We need furniture that is durable, solid, robust and can withstand desert sand, heat and the sun."

Equally as challenging as the choice of manufacturing material and design was color selection. To identify and capture the local tones and colors present in Egyptian daily life, Luchetti and his design team compiled an extensive collection of color prints reflecting samples of indigenous fauna and flora, pharaonic and Islamic art, tenting materials and fabrics, paintings, terracotta, stone and even soil from the new campus. The palette was then filtered through a color system and narrowed down to a handful of predominant master colors. "What we found was amazing; the colors that appeared the most in order of frequency were those of the sun, the earth and the sky, in other words, the cosmos," explained Luchetti. "For the new campus, we used mostly greens and blues to contrast the warm colors of the wooden furniture and interior floor, wall and ceiling finishes."

Luchetti emphasized that getting the colors right is fundamental for an interior designer. "If they just feel right and don't interrupt, then we've done our job," he said. But more than just color, Luchetti hopes that the interior design of the new campus as a whole exudes a certain harmony. "It should be coherent and understandable," he said. "Sometimes the most important part of a room is not actually the walls or ceilings, but what we touch and use and the relationship of these pieces to the whole." ❐

Double-sided library carrel

External dining table with patio chair

Alumni Activists Protect Natural Reserve

"It was shock and horror," said biology major Hala Mohi El Din '03, describing her initial reaction to the warning e-mail sent out by Andrew Main, former chair of AUC's biology department, to alert students to the latest industrial development plans threatening the Wadi Degla natural reserve.

Mohi El Din became part of the core group of alumni activists, primarily biology majors, who quickly organized and launched an awareness campaign to save the natural park by trying to prevent the construction of additional marble factories in the areas surrounding it. Degla, a dry near-pristine waterbed on the outskirts of Maadi, is a 30-kilometer stretch of the Eastern Desert, rich in limestone, granite and marble. In order to safeguard its unique and endangered animal, bird and plant life, the area was designated a natural reserve.

Egyptian newspapers had reported that the Ministry of Environment signed a protocol allowing the construction of marble factories in the buffer zone around Wadi Degla. Once news of the protocol spread, AUC faculty, alumni and students saw it as a call to action. "It's all very nice to preach to others about how they should care about the environment, but if we don't take action ourselves, then our words are not effective," said Sara El Sayed '02.

The alumni's major challenge was to collect reliable data on the natural park's boundaries and accurate facts surrounding the development plan and current domestic environmental laws. They also sent mailings to top government officials and non-governmental organizations to ask for their cooperation and intervention. In addition, they promoted media coverage to raise awareness about the potentially irreversible damage the new factories could have on Wadi Degla.

One good example of their efforts to engage media attention was an SMS text message sent by Philip Mario Andrasevic '02, to Nile FM during a live talk show, alerting listeners to the situation. "We need to look at our internal issues and be passionate about them," explained Andrasevic, who, as former president of AUC's biology club, organized numerous clean-ups in the *wadi*.

To tackle this ongoing environmental crisis, AUC alumni are also working toward long-term sustainable development objectives, such as organizing an awareness day in Degla for lawyers, journalists, schools and universities, and establishing a think-tank to monitor the management of Egypt's protected areas. "I got involved in the Wadi Degla project out of a sense of responsibility that starts with each of us as individuals," said Magda Nassef '02, a biology major who also holds a master's degree in ecology and conservation. "If you want something changed, change it yourself because nobody is going to do it for you." ❐

By Ingrid Wassmann

Mohi El Din, El Sayed, Nassef and Andrasevic in Wadi Degla

The DDC has introduced approximately 30 new citrus varieties in Egypt

Bearing fruit

AUC's Desert Development Center has spearheaded efforts to develop the citrus industry in Egypt

If you have picked up an orange, mandarin, grapefruit, tangelo, lime or lemon in Egypt during the last decade, chances are you have sampled something that would not have been possible without the citrus research conducted at AUC's Desert Development Center (DDC).

Since its inception in 1979 as a center for applied research and training, the DDC has worked on improving crop yields and applying new technologies to desert life. With citrus, it has been particularly successful, introducing approximately 30 new varieties in Egypt and promoting a thriving export industry. "One of the things we try to do is improve economic returns for farmers. For us, the most appropriate way to do that is to increase production of things that do well in the desert," said Richard Tutwiler, director of the DDC, referring to the center's recent shift to dedicating more land for citrus. "Our citrus project is a living demonstration of sustainable development."

Over the last five years, the DDC's citrus production has seen a sharp increase. The area the center devotes to citrus trees has grown from 30 to 120 feddans, or acres, while revenue from citrus products jumped from LE 65,000 to LE 450,000. "We have gone from 50 percent cost efficiency to more than 100 percent in five years," Tutwiler said, adding that more than 93 percent of DDC fruits meet international export quality standards, whereas the average in Egypt is less than 70 percent.

It all started in 1980, when Dutch citrus expert Joep Carlier arrived to initiate a citrus program at the DDC. Under Carlier's 14 years of management, the DDC made long strides in the citrus initiative, identifying optimal

DDC staff tend citrus seedlings in the nursery (left) and monitor fruit quality in the orchard (right)

irrigation techniques and introducing root stocks and fruit varieties that are more compatible with the harsh desert soil.

When Carlier first came to Egypt, he noticed that people experimenting with citrus production in the desert were using ineffective measures. "The soil and climate of the desert are very different from that of other parts of the country, such as the delta," he explained on a recent trip back to Egypt. "Only trees that can survive in the sandy soil can be planted, and irrigation techniques must be modified to accommodate the environment."

This is where the DDC stepped in. Concerning water use, they replaced the traditional method of flood irrigation, where water is poured onto the fields and allowed to flow along the ground among the trees, with the more efficient method of drip irrigation. With the latter, perforated hoses are laid along the rows of trees and sometimes buried along their root lines. This not only minimizes water waste, but allows more water to reach the crops.

The DDC also worked on improving citrus varieties. During his stay at the DDC in the 1980s, Carlier brought back rootstock from California citrus plants to be planted in the sandy desert soil. The initiative proved successful, and throughout the years, the DDC has introduced new citrus varieties in Egypt, including tangerines, mandarins and red grapefruits. In addition, using a technique called grafting, in which the top of a young tree is cut and a budding branch of another is inserted into its trunk, the DDC has been able to use the roots of trees that are suitable for the desert soil while enjoying the fruits of a more flavorful or profitable tree. The nursery technicians usually perform this arboreal surgery when the original tree is about one-half meter tall, and the new hybrid is ready to be sold in just 18 months from the time it is a seedling.

"We plant various things and see what works best in the environment," Tutwiler said. "By 1986, it was becoming obvious which crops were the most productive and profitable for desert farmers, and citrus was definitely one of them."

Initially grafting citrus trees in 1996 for distribution to farmers, the DDC's outreach program proved successful. The first batch was 4,500 trees, but by 2006, production had increased to more than 300,000. The aim is to distribute nearly 500,000 trees by the end of 2007. "Citrus is good for the desert. Sandy soil is good for citrus, and there's a lot of sandy soil out in the desert," Tutwiler said, explaining the reasons for the center's success with citrus.

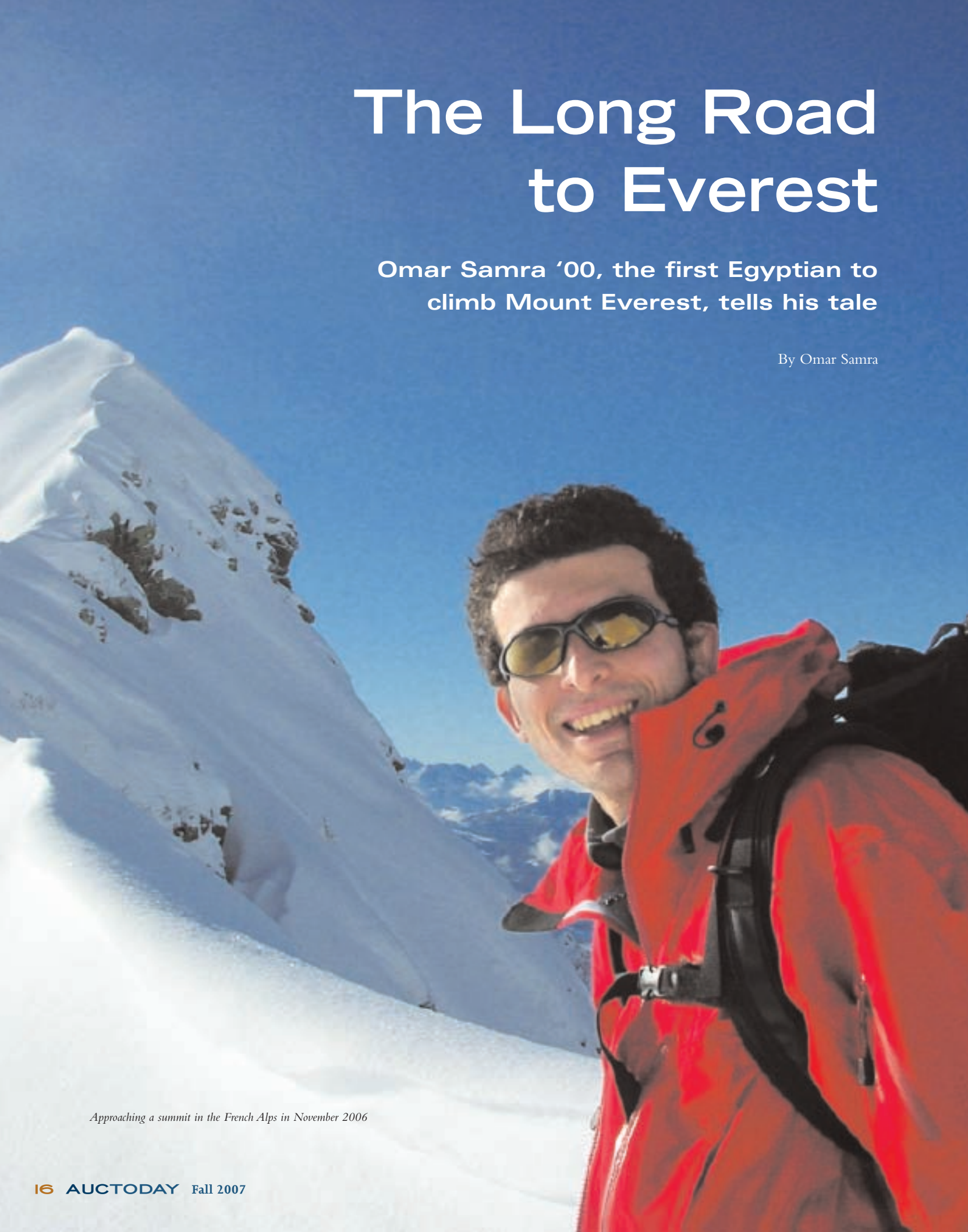
Looking ahead, the DDC's citrus project shows no signs of slowing down. "Our next steps include evaluating the next generation of citrus varieties in the world like we did 25 years ago, as well as maintaining quality," Tutwiler said. "We will continue to invest in our nurseries to improve sanitary levels and be certified as virus-free. Our objective is to keep to a world-class standard in desert citrus." ❐

By Cole Gibas

The Long Road to Everest

Omar Samra '00, the first Egyptian to climb Mount Everest, tells his tale

By Omar Samra



Approaching a summit in the French Alps in November 2006

I would like to say that I always dreamed of climbing Everest, that even as a toddler I had photos of Everest and legendary climbers plastered on the sides of my cot. The truth is a little different. I grew up in Cairo, Egypt. Although a beautiful place full of charming people and countless natural and historic treasures, it is not a very mountainous land. Luckily, it is also not a very cold land. In fact, outside of your kitchen freezer, the chances of encountering ice are rather remote. Some folks say it snowed here at sea level some 200 years ago. Perhaps this is true and recorded in some dusty journal somewhere, but to me and to several generations before me, this seems like a most unusual occurrence. So how and why does an Egyptian decide to climb Everest? Is he merely mad or perhaps there is a string of unlikely events that have led to this. Let me tell you a little story.

How It All Began

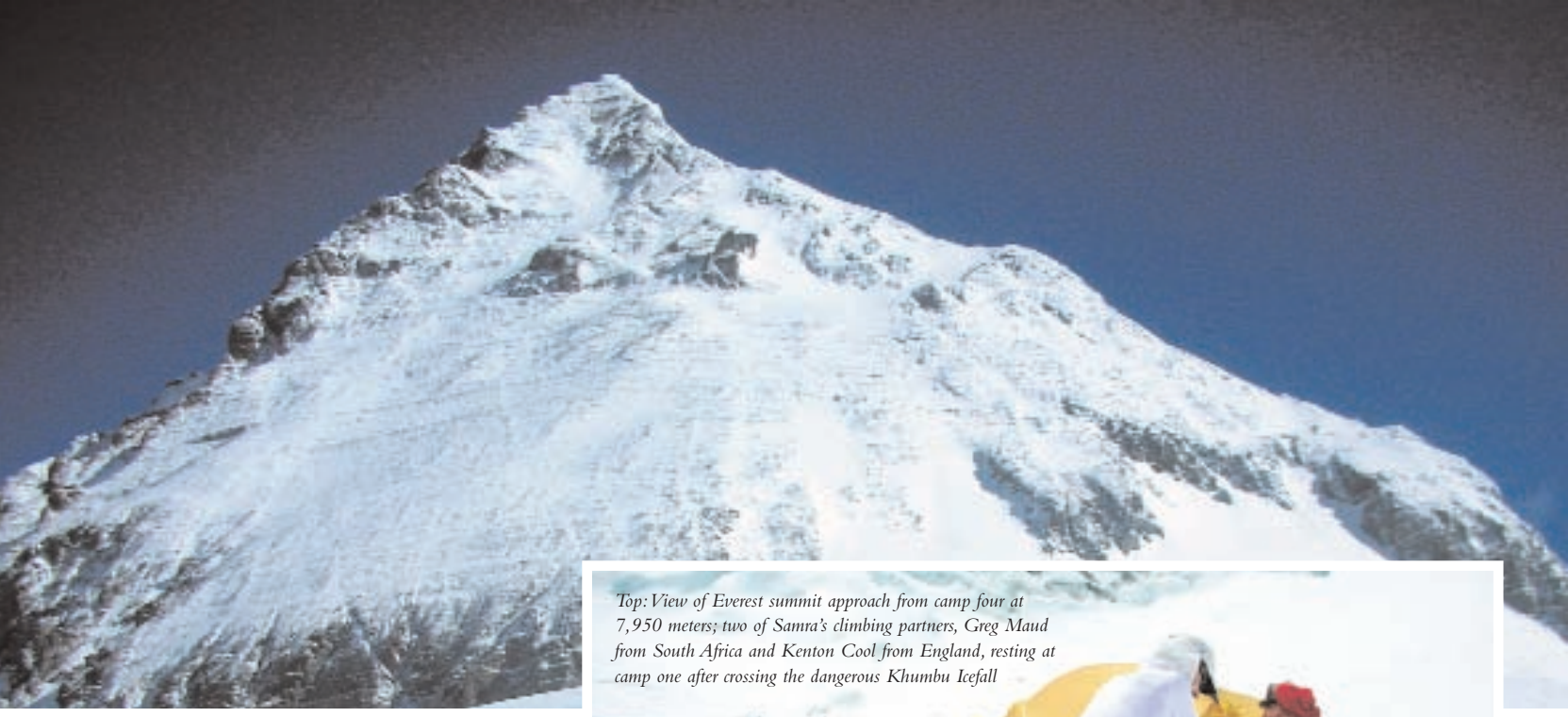
As a child I wasn't particularly sportive. I remember my parents, not very sporty themselves, taking me to the occasional tennis practice. Having me born in Wimbledon, England at around the time the tournament was being played, they were convinced that the cosmos had aligned itself to tell them that I was going to blossom into the Egyptian version of Ivan Lendl. Sadly, I had a terrible backhand and was never much of a tennis player. The truth is, despite how much I liked watching the sport, I did not enjoy playing. By the time I turned 11, I had developed asthma. I would wake up in the middle of the night breathless. Eventually, my alarmed parents took me to a doctor, and he said that it was harmless and would gradually go away as I got to my mid-20s. I had not learned to be patient at the time, and so when the doctor hinted that if I started running the asthma would go away faster, I quickly made running a big part of my life. When I think back to this period, it always reminds me of the movie *Forrest Gump*; I started running, continued running and in many ways I have never stopped until today. The asthma disappeared within one or two months. I took up squash for several years, and then during one summer I grew several inches taller so I began playing basketball, which I did competitively for many years. I remember Everest always amazed me, but I had never given climbing a second thought.

"When I got back home, I researched Everest and remember being blown away by the magnitude of the preparation and commitment needed to attempt to climb such a mountain."

At age 16, I was given the opportunity to climb a mountain in Switzerland during my holiday at a summer camp there. Up until that point, I had only climbed a hill or two in Egypt. That trip to the Alps wasn't only the first time I saw snow, but also the first time I walked in it. It was a short two-day trip climbing a 2,000-something meter mountain, but it kindled something inside me. I realized how much I loved mountains, and my fitness allowed me to climb well. I still remember getting to the top of the mountain first and finding a logbook under some rocks with many entries of people who had reached the summit. I flipped through it quickly to find that I was the only Egyptian. I felt proud making that entry. I wrote my name and drew our flag, along with pictures of some pyramids. When I got back home, I researched Everest and remember being blown away by the magnitude of the preparation and commitment needed to attempt to climb such a mountain. It was a dream that would take years to fulfill. It was a daunting prospect, but I held the vision all the same.

Years later, in 2000, at the age of 21, having recently graduated from AUC with a bachelor's in economics, I left Cairo to pursue my dream of working and building a successful career for myself abroad. Initially, everything went as planned. I landed a comfortable job in a prominent investment bank, did very well there and had an ever-blossoming social life. One sunny London afternoon, I met a friend for lunch. We met occasionally to talk

Descending from Everest on the Lhotse Face on May 18, 2007



Top: View of Everest summit approach from camp four at 7,950 meters; two of Samra's climbing partners, Greg Maud from South Africa and Kenton Cool from England, resting at camp one after crossing the dangerous Khumbu Icefall

about our current lives and future ambitions. We would often fantasize about how we would travel the world one day and explore its many cultures and landscapes.

However, on this particular day, we spoke about something a little more specific. He proceeded to tell me about a cycling trip he had done alone from Nice, France to Naples, Italy. The idea, albeit so alien to me at the time, excited me in many ways. Surely enough, four months later, I was alone on a plane to Sevilla, Spain with a bicycle and a map of Andalusia. The two weeks I spent touring the region were physically grueling, but evoked many feelings and thoughts that had been waiting to surface. I realized how passionate I was about traveling, exploration and pushing my own personal limits and comfort zones, and I began thinking deeply about many things I had previously taken for granted.

My Yearlong Tour

I enjoyed that trip to Spain so much that for two years I spent all my holidays backpacking in China, Morocco and Thailand. Quickly, it dawned on me that I was merely scratching the surface and I began planning for a longer, more involved trip. I'd love to say that the curiosity of embarking on such an adventure more than outweighed the confines of my daily life and social pressures, but the truth is that taking the decision to leave everything behind and embracing uncertainty never came easily.

At that time, I had been living and working in Hong Kong as part of a six-month secondment from London and was getting paid well. I was in a city full of character, surrounded by friends and beautiful women. An exotic weekend getaway to Thailand's white sandy beaches or a captivating Chinese town was a couple of hours' flight away or less. Life had a certain comfort to it that was akin to my days back home in Cairo. I began to feel that life was too predictable. I could tell with reasonable certainty what I would be doing in the next three or four years and that scared me. There was so much more to see and do. The choice became clear. I would remove myself from those all too familiar comfort zones and re-educate myself by way of immersing myself in an endeavor that would engage and challenge my every sense. I was not alien to the experience. More than once I had, at my own choice, uprooted myself from my familiar surroundings to cities where I knew no one and had to start almost from scratch. Yet, this would be a different experience altogether. A trip that lasted a whole year with the ambition of experiencing a considerable part of the world's villages, towns, cities, diverse landscape and people meant that I wouldn't be able to stay in one place for too long. A lone traveler, I would follow my heart, wandering through the far reaches of this world in search of happiness and myself. It wouldn't be

easy, but then again, I would have it no other way.

My one-year journey began in December 2002 when I left my work at the bank. In my view, the trip can be divided into three distinct chapters. The first, in Asia, took me from mystic temples of a forgotten Burma to the towering Himalayan Mountains of Nepal, from the Shaolin monasteries of central China, traversing north, through the Mongolian Gobi desert and Siberian wastelands to a more sensible European Russia. Second, in Central America, I switched from wanderer to worker, immersing myself in a voluntary marine conservation project in Costa Rica and a community project in Nicaragua. I then resumed traveling in those two countries, traversing jungles, scaling volcanoes and exploring the awe-inspiring Mayan temples in Honduras and Guatemala.

Last, in South America, my trail took me from the upper echelons of the Peruvian Andean range to the lost cities of the Inca. Four-kilometer-high lakes of the Altiplano gave way to the tremendous salt flats and the blistering geysers of Uyuni. The driest place on our planet earth, the Atacama desert of Northern Chile, marked the beginning of a trail down the longest coastline in the world toward the astonishing glaciated lands of Patagonia. I remember nearing Antarctica and standing as the most southern point on the face of the continent on Chile's Isla Navarino before finally making my way to charming Buenos Aires and happy Brazil.

> "A lone traveler, I would follow my heart, wandering through the far reaches of this world in search of happiness and myself."

This trip was not only a fantastic learning experience, but it also allowed me to climb more mountains in a year than I could have ever climbed in five had I been working. I went from climbing fairly straightforward snowy peaks to intense long-pitch, near-vertical ice routes. Over the next two years, I continued to nurture my climbing habit. Everest seemed to get closer, yet it still remained a surreal goal.

Planning for Everest

In late 2005, I began my MBA at the London Business School. Before beginning my studies, I went on a one-month trip to Peru for the sole purpose of getting climbing out of

With Ted Alexander, Samra's climbing mentor, after a climbing expedition in Peru in August 2005

Near Iguazu Falls in Argentina in December 2003; bottom: in the main temple in Yangon, the Union of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) in December 2002

my system and focusing on studying. I came back from the trip having successfully scaled the hardest mountains I had ever attempted but looking forward to keeping my promise. Little did I know that one and a half months later, I would receive an e-mail from a colleague saying that he wanted to put a team together to climb Mount Everest and was gauging appetite around school. The truth is that as soon as I finished reading his e-mail, my heart jumped, and my decision was made. There was no way I could spend the next two years watching a team prepare for Everest and be a spectator. Everest came to me sooner than I thought and at a time when I least expected, but I also believe that we need to seize opportunities when they present themselves, so I did just that.

At first, there were 40 interested members, but after one month of planning and a climbing trip in the Scottish winter, that number quickly fell to four. These four became the Everest core team, and we remained together until the very end. We spent close to two years preparing, training six times a week, two to three hours a day. Together, we attempted the sixth highest mountain in the world and climbed various technical peaks in the United Kingdom and the French and Swiss Alps. These practice climbs could not simulate all the hardships and challenges of Everest, but they allowed us to experience working together as a team under severe conditions and to understand where our strengths and weaknesses lay.

The Climb

Finally, the expedition began on March 25, 2007. It took us two weeks to get to base camp at an altitude of 5,340 meters with our support team of yaks

and Sherpas who helped us carry the supplies we needed for the entire expedition. Tents, food, climbing gear and equipment were just a few of the many things required for our long journey. Reaching base camp marked the end of the trekking phase of the trip and the beginning of the climb. This is what I had been dreaming of for 12 years. I felt privileged to have been given the opportunity to make an attempt on the world's highest mountain as the first Egyptian and honored to be climbing the very same route as some of the world's climbing legends. History was made here, and with any luck I would be writing my own chapter in the weeks to come. Success would not come easy, I knew that much. I still had a mentally and physically grueling seven to eight weeks ahead of me in one of the most challenging and dangerous places on earth. Over that period of time, we made countless journeys up and down the mountain, setting up camps progressively higher so our bodies could adjust to the altitude by producing extra oxygen-carrying red blood cells. We still needed to keep making the journeys down as well so that our bodies could rest and recover in relatively oxygen-rich altitudes. This process continued until we reached camp three between 7,200 and 7,400 meters, after which we returned again to base camp and waited for the right weather window to make our final summit push. Above 7,500 meters is an area known among mountaineers as the death zone because beyond that altitude, the human body cannot adjust and slowly begins to shut down. It was imperative that we spend as little time as possible in those upper reaches.

"I had been preparing for years for all kinds of dangers, and I knew that there are always deaths on Everest, but it is different when you see it face to face."

By the time we reached camp three, which marked the end of our acclimatization process, we had made multiple trips up and down the mountain. In fact, by the end of the expedition we had crossed the Khumbu Icefall, the section between base camp and camp one, about eight times. The Khumbu Icefall was the first climbing challenge we faced. It is perhaps the most dangerous part of the mountain as more people — around 30 — have died there than anywhere else. It is a maze of near vertical ice cliffs, overhanging seracs and large crevasses. The ice shifts by a couple of millimeters a day, which in geological terms makes it one of the most unstable parts of our planet. The threat of avalanches and large one-ton chunks of ice falling is not uncommon. We always began our journey through the icefall at dawn when the ice is most stable, and we tried to navigate the most dangerous sections as fast as we could. Crossing the icefall allowed us to establish camp one at 6,100 meters.

Between camp one and camp two is an area known as the Western Cwm. This is a gently rising glacial valley, marked by huge lateral crevasses in the center, which prevent direct access to the upper reaches of the Western Cwm. Climbers are forced to cross on the far right near the base of Nuptse to a small passageway known as the Nuptse Corner. Temperatures can drop to as low as -40 degrees Celsius and rise to near +50 degrees Celsius when there is no cloud shield. After all, we were about seven kilometers closer to the sun, and all the surrounding snow and ice-covered mountains acted as gigantic mirrors reflecting the sun's rays from every possible direction. This causes climbers to get extremely dehydrated and considerably weakens them. Thus, we needed to periodically adapt what we wore to survive this huge variation in temperature.

Camp two is situated at the far end of the Western Cwm below the west shoulder of Everest at roughly 6,500 meters. From that point, we progressed toward camp three by ascending the Lhotse Face. Lhotse is the fifth highest mountain in the world, and we climbed

Samra at Everest base camp with Jean, a legendary French climber (left), Bo Parfet from Michigan, USA and Pedawa, a Nepalese Sherpa who has climbed Everest seven times

Raising the Egyptian flag on the summit of Yanapaccha in the Peruvian Andes in August 2005; bottom: sipping tea near temple ruins in Manzushir Khiid, Mongolia in January 2003

a considerable part of its face before traversing back onto Everest. The Lhotse Face is one of the most technical parts of the climb as its steepness varies between 50 and 80 degrees. One of the most difficult and emotional parts of the climb for me was on this section of the mountain at around 6,800 meters. Our team came across the body of a dead man who had begun climbing just one hour ahead of us. There was a lot of ice and snow debris around him, so we gathered he must have been killed in an avalanche. I thought of giving up, and it was a difficult decision for all of us whether to continue up or go back that day. I had been preparing for years for all kinds of dangers, and I knew that there are always deaths on Everest, but it is different when you see it face to face. In the end, we all made the decision to resume climbing that same day, but not before the situation had tested all our resolve and made us think of turning back and ending the expedition altogether.

After spending a night at camp three, we descended back to camp one and then to base camp the day after that. We even descended lower in the valley to Pangboche village at 4,000 meters for rest and waited for a good summit weather window before going back up again. By comparing various weather models, we were inclined to believe that the period between May 16 and 18 would present a good summit opportunity, and so we began making our way from base camp five days prior to that. We progressively climbed all the way back to camp three and started using bottled oxygen from that point onwards.

From camp three to camp four, we continued to negotiate the upper reaches of the Lhotse Face and came against two additional challenges known as the Geneva Spur and the Yellow Band. The Geneva Spur is an anvil-shaped rib of black rock. Fixed ropes assist climbers in scrambling over this snow-covered rock band. The Yellow Band is a section of sedimentary sandstone, which also requires about 100 meters of rope for traversing it. Once we crossed the Yellow Band, we would be back on Everest and only a few hours climb away from camp four, also known as the South Col. It is at the South Col that we spent a few hours trying to melt snow for water and get some rest before trying for the summit. However, the extreme altitude of 7,950 meters and the resulting lack of oxygen at roughly 7 percent does not allow the climber any sleep or appetite to eat. It was a painful few hours to nightfall before we continued our climb and the final push to the summit. We climbed in the dark so that we could get to the top in the light and also descend before nightfall. From here, clear weather and low winds are critical factors in deciding whether to make a final summit attempt. Even here if weather does not cooperate, we could be forced to descend, sometimes all the way down to base camp, which can be very disheartening.

Finally, we began our summit push on May 16 at 10:45 pm, reaching first the steep Balcony at 8,500 meters, which is a precariously small platform overlooking the Tibetan Plateau. From there, we continued up a ridge toward

Volunteering in a four-week community-service project in El Cacao village, Nicaragua in April 2003

the South Summit. This is perhaps the most exposed section of the climb, as a misstep to the left or right would send one 2,400 meters down the southwest face, while to the immediate right is the 3,050-meter Kangshung Face. Just before reaching the South Summit, we had to negotiate a series of imposing rock steps. We would negotiate one and feel like we had achieved our goal only to find that there was still further to go. In a world where one had to fight for every breath, it was mentally crushing.

When I reached the South Summit, I felt for the first time that I could really make it to the top. From there, I followed the final knife-edge summit ridge and climbed the Hillary Step, a nearly vertical 10-meter rock face, before walking the final steps to the top of the world. I remember walking those final steps and thinking to myself, "I did it." It was very surreal. When I got to the top, it was a clear day with the closest cloud a few thousand meters below us. I could see the curvature of the Earth, and I felt that I could see the whole planet before my eyes. I can't really tell you what I felt at the top; it was a mixture of very deep and strong emotions. I sat on the summit to catch my breath and took the Egyptian flag out of my rucksack and held it close to me for a while before taking any photos. It was a very special feeling. I spoke to my mother and brother via satellite phone. As soon as I heard their voices, I began crying and my words came out intermittently and with great difficulty. It was a very emotional moment. I was on the summit for 40 to 50 minutes before we started to think of our return journey, which, albeit shorter, was in many ways more dangerous.

The Art of Dreaming

Everest for me is more than just a mountain. It is my very personal dream that was achieved through years of hard work and perseverance. Everyone in this world has their own Everest to climb, and if we want to achieve these lofty goals and leave our mark in the world, then we need to learn to master the art of dreaming. That involves as much pondering and gazing into the sky as it is understanding that the road will almost always be hard and long.

The best way I found to tackle a goal like Everest is never to focus on the summit itself; if you do that, just like any colossal task, it will mentally crush you. Over the years and especially on the mountain itself, I found it useful to break down the goal into smaller, more achievable parts. Accomplish the smaller goals along the way and rejoice in each and every one. It is really the journey and what we learn along the way that truly matters.

If I had one wish for all of us, it would be that we always listen and follow our hearts in everything we do. That way, we always pick the right dreams; those are our own dreams and never someone else's. So happy dreaming, and I wish us all exciting and rewarding journeys. ❐

Mapping *Migration*

An international expert in demography and sociology, Philippe Fargues brings a wealth of experience to AUC's Forced Migration and Refugee Studies program

Ahmad El-Nemr

Constantly on the go for nearly 30 years, Philippe Fargues, new director of the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies (FMRS) program, has developed an interest in demography and refugee issues that has taken him around the globe. From Lebanon and Cameroon to Egypt and Italy, Fargues has examined many population issues firsthand, immersed in the diverse cultures and languages that form their milieu.

"A society is not something that you look at from a distance," said Fargues. "You need to share problems and observe traditions. You must live among the people."

Born and educated in France, with a doctorate in sociology from the Sorbonne, Fargues can trace his interest in the Middle East back to his adolescence in Paris during the 1960s. "When I was young, North Africa was very much in the lives of French people," said Fargues, referring to the newly affirmed independence of Algeria and the strong divide across French society between those in support and those in opposition. For Fargues, whose trip to Algeria as a 17-year-old marked his first independent travel experience, North Africa served as a portal to the rest of the African continent and the larger Muslim world. "I discovered the Arab world through Algeria," he said. "Despite all of the political resentment on both sides, I found that I was warmly welcomed. That is when I decided to learn Arabic."

After completing his undergraduate degree in Arabic language and Middle East studies from the School of Oriental Languages in France, Fargues taught demography for two years at the University of Paris. He then moved to the Lebanese University, where he created a master's program in demography and took students across the whole country for field research. "It was an incredibly fruitful time for me. I was not only discovering a country; I was discovering the whole Middle East through my work," Fargues said.

"There is a strong need for a migration and refugee studies center in the Arab world. ... There is no better place in the region to work from than Cairo."

With the outbreak of civil war, Fargues left Lebanon and relocated to Cameroon for three years, where he assumed a United Nations position at the Regional Center for Demographic Studies. He then returned to Lebanon despite the continuing civil war. "Once you've lived in the Middle East, you have a kind of nostalgia for the region," he explained.

Fargues spent the next several years between demographic research projects in the Arab region, the Ivory Coast and his native France. In 1992, he came to Egypt, working as director of the Social and Economic Research Centre. There, he completed and published the first Cairo Census from data collected in 1848. In addition, he served as visiting professor at Harvard University and was head of a European Commission project on migration in Italy. His recent decision to join AUC as FMRS director stems from his belief that Cairo is an ideal site for a migration and refugee studies program. "There is a strong need for a migration and refugee studies center in the Arab world," he said. "Migration is a critical issue in the Gulf, not to say anything of Sudan, Libya, Palestine or Lebanon. There is no better place in the region to work from than Cairo."

Fargues has many ideas for strengthening the teaching, research and service components of FMRS, the three pillars upon which he believes the program is built. His plans include introducing a master's degree, incorporating more social work into the curriculum and developing more research projects. The aim, he noted, is to increase local and regional awareness of migration and refugee issues.

"Egypt is unique," Fargues explained. "It not only receives a significant number of refugees; it also sends migrants around the world. There are not only success stories, but also emerging problems that must be studied." ❐

By Larissa Lawrence

Top: View of the indoor main court; right: soccer and field seating for 2,000 people

Ahead *of the* Field

At AUC's new campus, a world-class sports complex will feature one of the most advanced facilities in the region

For those who have found leisure between classes playing basketball, volleyball and tennis on the Main Campus's two courts or exercising in the limited space of one of the gyms, major improvements await them on the new campus. Students will have their pick from numerous sports facilities, housed in a massive, state-of-the-art athletic complex, one of the best of its kind in Egypt. Besides supporting extracurricular and university team events, the complex will be able to host national tournaments.

The sports complex, comprised of various distinct components, is divided into indoor and outdoor

facilities. Among the amenities included in the indoor facilities are a martial arts studio; six squash courts; a main court, which can accommodate handball, volleyball and basketball matches, providing bleacher seating for 2,000 spectators; a volleyball and basketball training court; a 400-meter running track; multiple rooms outfitted with equipment for weight-lifting, aerobics, table tennis and fitness instruction; an abundance of cardio machines; and locker rooms, equipped with saunas and space for physical therapy.

"The main aim of the new sports facilities is to provide the highest quality of sports services to all AUC students, which is in line with the institution's overall objective of building a world-class university on the new campus," said Mohamed Feteha, associate dean of students and director of student services.

Measures have been taken to make the new sports complex an inviting place for students to spend their free time, while improving their overall fitness. A small example of the innovative approach taken in designing the various aspects of the indoor sports facilities are the wide corridors used to house cardio machines, which Ashraf Salloum, director of new campus planning and design, likens to galleries. "This is a trend that's very popular in other schools because people want to meet friends when they go to the gym; they don't want to be isolated," he said, referring to the machines lining the corridors. "The placement of the machines allows people to both oversee and be seen by others. This encourages social interaction at the gym."

The outdoor facilities, situated between the student housing village and recreational area, are equally impressive. They are made up of two basketball courts; a main soccer field with a running track; a training court for soccer practices; six tennis courts, one of which is flanked by spectator bleachers; one handball court; four volleyball courts; and an Olympic-size pool. "It's exciting to think about the potential of these new facilities in changing the role of sports at the university," said Mohamed Taher, associate director of the sports department.

The sports complex is set one level lower than the rest of the buildings on campus to preserve the consistent silhouette of a level skyline. Topping the martial arts studio, a roof terrace will not only offer a sweeping vista of the grounds, but is also designed to accommodate sports-related social events, such as award receptions and luncheons during tournaments. With a glass facade, the southern wall of the indoor courts overlooks the outdoor facilities and provides natural light. ❐

By Larissa Lawrence

Left: Sports complex landmark; bottom: View of the Olympic-size swimming pool

Is Egypt Prepared *for* Bird Flu?

By Ingrid Wassmann

AUC Professor Tarek Hatem is helping develop a national plan to contain the outbreak of bird flu in Egypt

Dana Smillie

Utilizing management tools and skills, Tarek Hatem, professor of strategic management and international business at AUC, has spearheaded a national project to develop a stakeholder plan to combat bird flu in Egypt. Since the first reported case in Egypt in February 2006, the virus has infected 37 people. Thanks to Hatem, the team of experts he leads and the efforts of various governmental organizations, Egypt now has a national plan that places it in a better position to combat bird flu.

How did the idea for such a project come about?

Donor countries wanted to help Egypt fight avian flu because the disease is a global concern, not just a domestic problem. To do that, the Egyptian government had to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. The actual initiative came from the Dutch agricultural consular, which previously commissioned a similar study in our fishery sector. I was appointed as a strategic manager to lead a team of consultants and oversee the different phases of a stakeholder plan that was later integrated into a national plan for Egypt to combat avian flu.

Why bring in a strategic management expert to handle the avian flu crisis?

Avian flu has been tackled so far from a human perspective; there has been a lot of talk about

vaccines. However, bird flu is really an agricultural problem. We need to completely restructure Egypt's poultry sector, but the country lacks the strategic management expertise. You don't just need technical experts on avian flu to develop a vision for the poultry sector; you also need someone involved in strategic management to ensure that all stakeholders are participating in the development of a plan. This participatory approach should facilitate the implementation of the national plan.

How did you go about the plan?

The first step was to hold a conference that brought together the various ministries, large poultry investors, families raising poultry in their homes and non-governmental organizations representing poultry producers. The aim was to gather the different perspectives of these stakeholders in order to come up with a balanced plan that would meet their needs, as well as identify the responsibilities of each stakeholder because the issue is not just the government's responsibility. We then held a workshop and seminar to pinpoint the main priorities of the plan. All the recommendations were integrated into a comprehensive report. This report, along with other reports developed by the ministries of health, agriculture, land reclamation and others, were integrated into a national plan that has been submitted by the Egyptian government to our partners in development.

What are the main priorities identified in the report?

Raising public awareness about the virus, temporarily lifting tariff barriers on imported poultry, compensating

Maryam Farag

local poultry growers, preventing the spread of the disease and restructuring the poultry industry. As for now, the three main objectives of the government's national strategy are to control the outbreak of the H5N1 virus, prevent any further transmission from birds to humans and minimize the risk of a pandemic.

Is there reason for people to panic?

No. There was a period last year when people stopped eating chicken altogether. Now, the public is less alarmed and more aware that the disease comes about through infection from live poultry, not from eating cooked chicken. Besides, there are a lot of lessons that Egypt has learned from other countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam, and that is exactly what we have set out to do with the government. It is a continuous learning process; we have not found all the answers. But at least now, as a result of this plan, the responsibilities of concerned sectors and parties have been identified, and necessary action is being taken.

What are the main challenges Egypt is facing today in its fight against bird flu?

First, we need to change the popular practices of at least 4.5 million families who are raising poultry in their backyards and rooftops, especially in densely populated urban areas. It is important to point out that the outbreaks are occurring in backyards and on rooftops, not in the commercial poultry farms. In addition, compensation needs to be offered to these families as an incentive for them to report any outbreaks.

Second, the number of slaughterhouses in Egypt needs to be increased dramatically. At the current rate, we

What is Bird Flu?

Bird flu, otherwise known as avian influenza, is a viral disease that can cause illness in birds. It has existed for more than 100 years.

H5N1 is the contagious and potentially deadly subtype, propagated and carried by migratory birds. It is transmittable to humans primarily through direct contact with infected poultry or surfaces contaminated with poultry excretions. Cases of human infection from the virus have been reported as early as 1997. However, since 2003, outbreaks of the disease, which began in Southeast Asia, have hit many countries simultaneously.

According to the World Health Organization, the H5N1 virus has infected 329 people worldwide since 2003, killing 201. In addition, around 250 million poultry have been culled as a precautionary measure. Although most human deaths have occurred as a direct result of bird-to-human contact, health officials fear the virus could eventually mutate to a form transmittable from human to human.

Bird flu symptoms are similar to the common flu: fever, coughing and aches, primarily affecting the respiratory system. Currently, antiviral vaccines such as Tamiflu are administered both for treatment and prevention.

will only be able to reach the number of slaughterhouses and adequate freezing capacity needed by 2010. More importantly, those slaughterhouses must meet international standards; otherwise, it becomes difficult for the government to implement the laws that were established in 2006 to close live poultry shops.

Third, we need to encourage citizens to eat frozen rather than live poultry and educate them about the virus by mobilizing informed individuals to go out and raise awareness.

Fourth, the government needs to increase its stock of poultry vaccines, even though a quarter billion doses have been imported.

Finally, bird flu is affecting the income of a huge number of Egyptians and is also impacting their nutritional intake. Because poultry represents approximately 30 to 40 percent of the protein intake of the average Egyptian household, a major reduction of poultry consumption can eventually become a food security issue.

What measures are being taken to address these issues?

Plans are underway to expand existing slaughterhouses and build new ones in line with international standards, as well as keep poultry farms under rigorous surveillance. Egyptian veterinarians are being trained to carry out outbreak investigations and sample collections. Egypt's General Organization for Veterinary Services, which will be completely upgraded and restructured, is providing free vaccination to all birds raised in rural backyards. Quarantine measures are being put in place to contain any outbreak. The government is also working to enhance and accredit local labs and improve the testing standards in all governorates across Egypt. In addition, media campaigns are being developed, and mosques and churches are encouraged to disseminate information about the virus. Hygiene-education campaigns are also being conducted in the countryside to educate children and adults about the virus and to teach women and girls, the prime target audience, how to dispose of dead birds and cook poultry for safe human consumption.

Is the virus being successfully contained as a result of these measures?

We are not seeing any new infections in the commercial farms where there is growing awareness and hygienic practices. However, bird flu is largely affected by the seasonal migration of birds, and the virus is modifying and accommodating itself to the existing vaccine.

Is Egypt better prepared to combat the spread of avian flu as a result of this plan?

Definitely, the government and the various ministries are in a better position now to react because a lot of knowledge has been gained through the plan and there is better coordination between the different government bodies. There is also more awareness about the virus. Nonetheless, we have to realize that all we can hope for is to limit and contain the disease and not to completely eradicate it. Bird flu is like influenza; we have to learn to live with it and limit its effect. ❐

Around the World

United States

A reception for alumni and friends was held at the Bankers Club in San Francisco in May 2007

President David Arnold presents an AUC Press book to Nabil Fahmy '74, '77, Egypt's ambassador to the United States

Tawhida El Askary '96, AUC Trustees Dina Powell and James Bond, President David Arnold and Sherry Arnold at a reception in Washington, D.C. for AUC friends and alumni hosted by Nabil Fahmy '74, '77, Egypt's ambassador to the United States, and his wife Nermine Abdel Naby '75

Reception for alumni and friends at the Westin Seattle Hotel in May 2007

Gathering held in May 2007 in Seattle for alumni working at Microsoft

Egypt

Classes of '56, '57, '58, '66, '67 and '68 gather for a reunion at AUC's new campus in May 2007

United Arab Emirates

Alumni gathering held at MORE café and restaurant in Dubai in June 2007

Class Notes

'72

Maria Adamantidis is a journalist who has held top editorial positions in magazines for 20 years. She has crossed over to the book writing and publishing field in 2002, working as book editor for Greek and English works. She has published two books, *A Greek Promenade in Cairo* and *Greek Sports in 20th Century Cairo*. Adamantidis has been living in Greece since 1972. She and her Egyptian-Greek husband hold Egypt close to their hearts and never miss an opportunity to return and visit old haunts. In 1988, AUC held an exhibition of Adamantidis's photographs of Greek locations in Cairo titled "Places of the Heart." She can be contacted at marouli1@teledomenet.gr.

'74

Elma Anne-Marie Drosso is currently living in London. After graduation, she received her doctorate in economics and taught the subject in British Colombia, Canada. She went on to receive a degree in law and worked as a member of an administrative tribunal in Vancouver. She published her first collection of short stories, endorsed by Alaa Al Aswany, author of *Yacoubian Building*.

'75

Mohamed Saad is a professional chemical engineer with a BSc and MSc from Georgia Tech in the United States. He owns a company based in Arizona that specializes in engineering consultation, innovative software solutions and training for water desalination, in addition to an Arabic-English translation and interpretation business. He is fond of photography, Arabic poetry and calligraphy.

'84

Ehtesham Ali is country head of operations at the Dubai Islamic Bank Pakistan and chair of the International Chamber of Commerce's banking commission, Pakistan chapter. She has more than 20 years of banking experience covering Pakistan and other international locations.

'85

Suzan Minas is married to Libarid Karkour, and they have three sons, Arpen, 19; Haro, 18; and Alen, 14.

Walid El-Zare is currently a regional manager at Pirelli, a vehicle tire supplier in Saudi Arabia. He has two children, Marwa and Abdulla.

'87

Osama Hanna (MBA '94) is working with ADCO, the national oil company in Abu Dhabi as senior contracts engineer. He started his career with Schlumberger for five years, after which he joined El Ezz Group as factory technical manager. After receiving his MBA, he worked with Halliburton, eventually relocating to the United Arab Emirates. Hanna is married to Nana and has two children, Merna and Karim. He would love to hear from his colleagues at sbg2@eim.ae.

Alumna Works to Foster Cultural Identity

Salma Al Bakry '79, '96, wants to give Egyptian children the best of both worlds. She wants them to receive a high standard of international education while preserving their cultural identity. "After teaching at private universities in Cairo, I felt that many Egyptian students are missing something important: a strong academic foundation and a sense of identity. It is harmful to have students who are neither American nor Egyptian," Al Bakry said. "I kept asking myself, How do we give students an exclusive level of international education and at the same time make them proud of who they are?"

Al Bakry pondered this question so much that it became the topic of her doctoral dissertation, and later the driving force behind the New Generation International Schools, which she opened in 2005 to help instill in students a love of their language, religion and culture. "Most students in international schools act American and are taught to be American," she said. "I decided that there is a gap to fill, so I put my PhD dissertation into action. I want students to love their language and religion. I want to serve my country in a way that would bring forth a new generation that can meet the challenges of today's world and at the same time be proud of our cultural identity."

'90

Amr El Husseini is married to Dina Sarhan '89. They are co-founders and managing partners of a food consultancy and training company that offers a wide array of culinary services; consultancy for hotels, restaurants and cafes; as well as cooking courses for amateurs and professionals. The couple has two children, Nour Addin and Tamara.

Azza Aly, a senior policy officer at the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in Australia, is currently pursuing a doctorate in media studies. She also gives lectures to third-year sociology students. Aly recently presented a paper on the historical roots of Al Qaeda ideology at a conference in Canberra, Australia.

'93

Youssef Hafez earned an MBA from Maastricht School of Management in Cairo in 1998. He worked for Shell Egypt for four years before moving to Exxon Mobil. In September 2005, he relocated with his family to Brussels, where he is currently leading Exxon Mobil Europe downstream integrated business teams. Hafez is married to Maya and has one boy, Hani, 4. He can be reached at youssef.h.hafez@exxonmobil.com.

'94

Mariam Ayad worked for four years as assistant director of the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology at the University of Memphis, Tennessee. She will be a visiting scholar at New Hall College in Cambridge, England for the 2007-08 academic year and would love to hear from alumni in the area at mariam.ayad@gmail.com.

Ossama Al Mohtaseb is an operations manager for oil and gas Aramco sectors at Rawabi Trading and Contracting Company in Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia. He is married to Rania Tawabini and has three children, Ziad, 7; Yasmeen, 5; and Tameem, 2.

'95

Karim Nasr is sales and operations manager for the Middle East at TecWel, a Norwegian company based in Abu Dhabi. After graduation, he worked for Halliburton Egypt as a logging field engineer until 2003, then relocated to Sondex, UAE as a tractor specialist for two years. Nasr married Mariam Yacoub '03 in July 2001, and they were blessed with Marian in April 2002. He would like to hear from his colleagues at knasr@eim.ae.

Shima Barakat (MA '98) set up a company in England, Value in Enterprise, which helps management overcome the problems they face as they try to become more environmentally and socially responsible. After receiving her doctorate, Barakat lectured at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland for two years.

'96

Hala Mattar is very proud to have engraved her name on a brick on AUC's new campus. She would be delighted to hear from her classmates at halamattar@hotmail.com.

Waleed Nassar is a photographer and owner of Madeena360 Studio, which provides photography services for tourism, real estate and education. He is married to Rania Zaki '97 and has a son, Seif.

'97

Nariman Nasef is working with Cognos Inc. in Ottawa, Canada. She is pursuing her master's in engineering management. She is married to Maged Elaasar '96, who works at IBM while pursuing his doctorate. They have two children, Mirna, 9, and Kareem, 5. The couple would like to hear from their colleagues at nnasef@rocketmail.com.

'98

Ehab Shoukry (MSc) received his doctorate in mechanical engineering from West Virginia State University. He is a project manager at a leading company in South California. He is grateful to his alma mater and to his professor Salah El Haggar. He has two children, Merna and Michael David. He can be reached at ehab_shoukry@hotmail.com.

Khalil El Bawab worked at Arab Bank for nine years after graduation, after which he joined EFG-Hermes as vice president of fund management. He completed his MBA in banking and finance and got engaged to Marwa Emam, assistant manager at the Egyptian Gulf Bank's credit department.

'99

Basel Hegazi is operations manager of logistics at the supply chain consumer department of Johnson & Johnson Middle East, based in Dubai. Hegazi has been working with the company for the past seven years. He is married and has three children.

Hoda Mojadidi was one of the few Afghans at AUC. She is married to Riaz Rayek and has three children, Zohal, 3; Elyas, 2; and Haris, 2 months. She would be delighted to hear from

her classmates at hodamojadidi@hotmail.com.

'00

Tamara Yousry is an events coordinator at the Community Services Association in Maadi. Previously, she was an executive editor at *Enigma* magazine.

'01

Moataz Attallah (MSc '03) married Dr. Rania Salama, general practitioner and graduate of Ain Shams University's medical school, in January 2007. He finished his PhD research and is currently a research scientist at the Materials Science Centre at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

'03

Marwa Farid is a project training manager at Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities and the University of Illinois. Previously, she was outgoing military shipment assistant, protocol assistant and general consular information assistant at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo.

'04

Reham Gad was married in August 2004. She worked at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for five months before relocating with her husband to Seattle, Washington. She has twins, Yusuf and Noor, who were born in December 2005.

'06

Mahmoud El Gallad (MBA) worked in the civil sector for four years, then moved to other business sectors. He is currently a senior quality analyst at Mobinil.

Mahmoud El-Sarrag is technical packaging manager of the fabric and home care group at Procter and Gamble. He married Yasmin Fouad, a student at the Faculty of Arts English section, in August 2007.

'07

William Hummel graduated in June 2007 with a degree in Middle Eastern studies and economics. He recently began working at Penn, Schoen & Berland doing international political and corporate consulting. He currently resides in Washington, D.C. and can be reached at whummel@ps-b.com.

Special Programs

Amy Margaret Wilson (YAB '04) graduated from the University of Bristol, England after being awarded the Richard Bradford McConnell Master of Arts Studentship in Mediterranean Archaeology. She was also named student representative of the same program. Wilson presented her dissertation last spring at the 58th annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt in Toledo, Ohio. Wilson's thesis is titled "From Tradition to Trend:
The Development of a Tanite Repertoire of Morturary Texts (21st - 22nd Dynasties)." It deals with the royal tombs of Tanis that date to the third intermediate period of Egyptian history.

In Memoriam

Reem Abaza '99 died in August 2007.

Bassem Gouda Aboul Enien '04 died in September 2007.

Weddings

Mohamed El Araby '03, '06, retail roaming team leader at Vodafone Egypt, married Sarah El Hawary, graduate of applied arts, on July 7, 2007 at the Movenpick Hotel in Cairo. The couple traveled to Spain for their honeymoon

Dina Samir '03, marketing coordinator at AA-Technologies, married Bahaa Gamil, telecommunications and network system development specialist at AUC, on August 4, 2007 at Kasr El Dobara Evangelical Church. The couple spent their honeymoon in Antalya, Turkey. They are pursuing their graduate studies at AUC in journalism and mass communication

Akher Kalam

Fitting In

Rarely are we allowed an opportunity to break the routine in our lives to ask meaningful questions about who we are and how we've gotten to where we are. Having graduated from AUC last June, this seems like an appropriate opportunity to revisit a question which I have entertained many times in the past: How did I, as an Ecuadorian girl at 18 years of age, with no family or friends in Egypt and certainly no knowledge of Arabic, end up living in this country entirely on my own for four years? Or most importantly, how has this experience converted that wide-eyed 18-year-old into the person I am today?

The journey has been long, and picking a moment in time and turning it into a beginning is always a challenge. I'd start by saying that I got to AUC by public bus, and the moment I crossed the university gates, I knew that the first phase of my life in Egypt had ended and another one was beginning. Yet little did I know that my first year in Cairo before coming to AUC was the lens through which I would come to experience my undergraduate life.

I had come to Egypt right after my high school graduation for the purpose of discovering what life in a Muslim country is like, as well as to learn Arabic and Islam, a religion I practiced openly and freely, but which few could understand back in Ecuador, a Catholic country. In Egypt, I studied Arabic and religion at a private center affiliated with Al-Azhar University. At the time, I was not fully aware of AUC's existence, and in any case, my original plan was to stay in Egypt for only a year.

During that first year, I had the unique opportunity to experience an Egyptian lifestyle radically different from the air-conditioned lifestyle I would later be exposed to at AUC. Landing at Al-Azhar and with nobody to show me the posh side of Cairo was not entirely my choice. I really thought that was what all of Egypt looked like. "Fine," I thought. "If this is the way it is going to be, so be it." And off I went to take 25 piaster bus rides and go grocery shopping in the *aswaq-al-shaabiyyah* (local market). Most of my classmates at Al-Azhar depended on the university stipend to make ends meet every month. Therefore, I soon adjusted my ways to dress and act in a manner sensitive to their realities.

Armed with a willingness to be flexible to the expectations of my host country and blessed with an innate propensity for close observation, I set off to explore and discover. I found out that wearing a *khimar* (long veil) and long skirt enabled me to move around in different places safely and undisturbed, so I soon opted for that style of dress. For a year I went unnoticed, observing and learning as never before.

As a woman coming from another side of the developing world, the realities I witnessed in Cairo should not have taken me by surprise, but the fact is they did. My life in Quito had been almost as sheltered as the lives of the AUCians I'd come to meet a few months later. Thus, I was deeply affected by experiences such as having the social problems of the Global South mirrored in an old woman sitting next to me in the bus. More painful was the sudden awareness of my own helplessness and the realization that the cost of the ticket for an old man in the bus, which I yearned to pay very much, was worth nothing compared to his dignity.

Having made the decision to stay in Egypt, I enrolled at AUC in Spring 2003. Needless to say, my first impulse when I got off the public bus and into the Main Campus was to run away. Again I was being challenged to face the unknown, be flexible and adapt. I stayed. I pursued an undergraduate degree in political science, and I discovered several places I could call home: academia, Model Arab League and Model United Nations.

I have come to think about my year at Al-Azhar as the cause for my critical view of realities I consider alien to the life of the standard Egyptian and of my own privileged position in this new social setting. I also see it as that which allowed me to match dry academic concepts to human faces that continue to reside in my memory. I am now ready to part with a broad smile on my face. I know that wherever it is that my journey takes me next, I will remain forever thankful to a country and its people who welcomed an 18-year old traveler as one of its own.

Janan Delgado '07 majored in political science at AUC and was a member of the Model United Nations and Model Arab League.

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 and may be edited for length and clarity.