

In the Same Room: Reliving the AES Experience

By Noor Brara

The evening of January 16th marked the first AES alumni event since its 50th anniversary back in 1995. Reunions had been held previously in other parts of the world such as New York and Washington DC; AES felt it was time to bring back its teachers and students to the place where their bonds began.

Over seventy guests arrived at the gates and were shown around campus by current high school students, reliving their memories and sharing stories as they moved among the buildings.

Most were stunned by the changes made, commenting on parts of the school that had been completely remade over the years; the basketball courts near Gate 2 had once been a student parking lot, while Naval's kiosk had once opened onto the high school field. "Everything has changed here. The only things that I remember are the statues, and stonework," one guest recalls, as she was one of many who was impressed by the new campus layout.

Everyone had something to share that evening, as memories and experiences came together from former students of different stages in the history of the school; in a sense, it was like bringing back a medley of puzzle pieces that encompassed the AES experience.

The tours came to a close as the students led the guests to the Hall of Peace for a gathering of snacks, drinks and reunion; yearbooks spanning the decades were piled upon tables lining the walls for all to flip through and see. Around six o'clock, the room was filled with people from different generations, discovering old friends and teachers from across the room.

"I was thrilled when I found out AES was hosting this event. Absolutely thrilled; I think 'euphoric' is the word I used when I told my daughter about it," recalled Ms. Singh, who attended AES in 1976. Among many of the guests, her best memories of AES center around the vast diversity of culture that the school had to offer, and how these cultures came together to create a unified sense of community.

"I'm really grateful for my years spent here at AES," says Mr. Kohli who attended AES in 1986. "The school was one of the reasons I decided to return to New Delhi with my family; my son is a student in first grade and loves it." Like Mr. Kohli, many of the guests brought with them their families and close friends who seemed in awe of the school and the lasting bonds between former students and faculty. "My husband was touched when he found out about the reception," remarks Mrs. Kohli, "Being an international school, AES reunions must bring together so many people from around the world. It's almost like a global network of friends who have shared so much together."

The evening continued with lively conversation and laughing, as the guests reminisced over past experiences and embarrassing memories. The few former teachers that attended were most popular, often surrounded by a group of their students eager to share feelings of nostalgia as a group. Director Dr. Robert Hetzel and Director of Development Preeti Garg made speeches thanking the guests for coming, and both received enthusiastic applause. All seemed grateful for the opportunity to be back in the school that had impacted their lives and views on the world so significantly. A slideshow presentation of snapshots collected over the years followed the speeches, instilling a heartfelt and meaningful sense of unity that followed everyone home. The reunion touched the hearts and minds of all who attended, as they left the reception reliving moments that had made growing up in India such a unique experience. In short, it was a great success.

“We really hope to continue these events in the future,” says Dr. Hetzel. “The night really helped to bring back and re-instill the sense of community building we are trying to promote here at AES. With the addition of our new Director of Development, we hope to create more opportunities for alumni reunions; the next idea we have is quite exciting!”

The AES experience and binding of students from all over the world was presented with great care, as old friendships and connections were rekindled over a few hours of being in the same room.

Being students ourselves, I can say with certainty that we all look forward to one day coming back together as a group to relive our journey here at AES.