

spring 2019

a magazine for the extended Ojai Valley School family



Elizabeth S. Sorenson



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Special thanks to alumnus Paul McCandless (U71) for providing the last word in this issue.



ON THE COVER

Former teacher Otis Wickenhaeuser sketched the painting on the cover of this issue of Alumni Notes in 1949. In addition to teaching art, history, Latin and Spanish, Mr. Wickenhaeuser felt a profound love for the outdoors, which he captured in his artwork. The Alumni Office recently discovered two additional watercolors painted by him in 1950 and 1958 that depict scenes from Twin Forks in the Sespe Wilderness. He described backpacking at Ojai Valley School in a way that we still appreciate: "Names. Campsites and campers. Endless legends. Places familiar. Places aspired to but never reached. Explain the reason for so much effort just to reach water and an ice-can stove: You shuck your pack; you feel weariness. You 'make do' and so escape the trivial and despoiled. You cope with essentials. You learn much."

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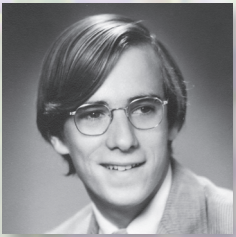
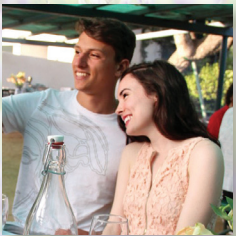
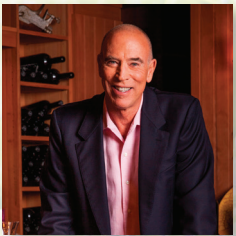
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## RITE OF SPRING



The Maypole dance began centuries ago as a celebration of the coming of spring. It was traditionally held on May 1 in many western European countries. In the 1930s, Ojai Valley School students re-enacted the Maypole dance at the annual May festival on graduation day. The colorful performance was accompanied by English and Scottish folk dances. The picture here shows students performing in the spring of 1937.

Today, the Maypole dance continues to be a tradition at the Lower Campus. This spring, during Family Weekend, fifth-grade students moved in a circle around a tall wooden pole centered on the Hermes Quad, each holding a different brightly-colored ribbon. As they moved around the pole to music, the ribbons were woven and then unwoven, leaving spectators impressed at the artful collaboration.



The Thomas Fire started near our high school campus on the evening of December 4, 2017. We were alerted by fire officials, followed our disaster protocols, and safely evacuated 74 boarding students, all our staff, and approximately 30 horses in our equestrian program to our Lower Campus. The next day we learned the fire had devastated the Upper Campus, destroying the science and technology center, the girls' dorm, and severely damaging the headmaster's house. Touring the campus that afternoon, seeing those buildings reduced to ash, we felt an overwhelming sense of disbelief.

But those feelings were quickly overcome by the urgent need to communicate with the 37 resident girls and dorm parents sheltered at the Lower Campus, who had no idea they had just lost everything except what they took during the evacuation. We knew our communications needed to be fast. We knew we needed to reassure our parents, especially those living overseas, and we knew we needed to be compassionate and manage the trauma being felt by students and faculty alike. We also knew that we must, for the sustainability of the school, make it absolutely clear that we planned to reopen for the start of the second semester in January.

Of course, the Thomas Fire was still burning – and gaining strength. We had no electricity, no Internet, and limited staffing as many faculty members were facing fire threats to their own homes and evacuation orders. But, using a laptop from an off-campus location and cell-phone hotspot, we managed to craft our message to reassure our families that their children were safe.

At one point the Thomas Fire encircled the entire Ojai Valley. It would go on to burn more than 280,000 acres and was, until recently, the largest fire in California history. Through it all, we focused on frequent communications while moving fast to secure temporary dorms and classrooms. We hosted a well-attended community meeting on December 13. We created a fire relief fund, which began immediately accepting donations in support of our recovery. We held workdays attended by more than 200 volunteers who helped the school reopen. It was a Herculean effort – and it continues even now as we push to rebuild.

Wildfires, floods and earthquakes are natural occurrences in California. But in the past 18 months, we have experienced a new level of devastation across the state as fires and subsequent mudslides claimed lives, destroyed structures, prompted evacuations, and cost billions in recovery efforts. This devastation impacted many schools, yet few suffered the direct hit we did.

I had the opportunity to share our story during a recent presentation at the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conference in Los Angeles. Disaster response is becoming a new reality for schools across the nation, and how we reopened after the Thomas Fire – how we cared, coped, and communicated amid crisis – was a key part of the presentation.

I hope other schools can learn from what we did well, and from our mistakes. Looking back, we could have done more to manage the emotional needs of our boarding students and staff who suffered trauma and loss. Student health and wellness has been a central theme for both campuses this year, and it will continue to be in the years ahead.

Overall, we emerged from the ashes of the Thomas Fire stronger and more resilient than before, and I'm grateful to our community for helping us recover and rebuild.

Sincerely,

*Mike Hall-Mounsey*  
Michael J. Hall-Mounsey  
President/CEO





As of March 2019

## School Clears Hurdles to Move Forward with Rebuilding Plans

Architectural designs are being finalized, permit approvals are underway, and Ojai Valley School is on track to rebuild after the devastating Thomas Fire destroyed portions of the Upper Campus in December 2017.

The school cleared a major hurdle in late February when the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) approved the designs to rebuild the girls' dormitory, science and technology center, and former headmaster's residence, while also paving the way for construction of the long-awaited Student Commons.

As part of the planning process, the CHB reviews building applications to ensure that cultural and historic resources are protected, especially those involving properties with buildings older than 50 years — as is the case with the Upper Campus.

Between 1962 and 1966, Ojai architect Chalfant Head designed several of the original campus buildings, including all three boys dormitories, Wallace Burr Hall, the Smith Hobson House girls' dormitory, and the headmaster's residence.

The county requires – and the school is committed to preserving – the historic character of those Chalfant Head buildings. As such, OVS contracted with Los Angeles-based architect Frederick Fisher and Partners and submitted a lengthy report to the CHB detailing the rebuilding plans.

As proposed, the new girls' dormitory will be constructed on its former site to accommodate 51 boarding students.

*Continued on page 8*





The single-story design includes a spacious lounge and a central courtyard, as well as dorm parent apartments.

The former Lucila Arango Science and Technology Center will house seven classrooms and science labs, as well as a faculty workroom. The new Aramont Science and Technology Center will be constructed on the site of the former headmaster's house, while a new residence for the Head of School will be built near the former maintenance yard, which was also destroyed in the fire.

Finally, the building plans include the Student Commons — a 12,590-square foot two-story building on the site of the former science center that will include a modern library, a spacious dining hall and kitchen, a student lounge, the college counseling office, the learning center, meeting rooms, and a breezy reading porch.

Architecturally, the structures are intended to complement the existing buildings with full-length windows and a contemporary design that connects students to the outdoors and embraces views of the Ojai Valley.

The entire project is expected to cost \$15.5 million. Insurance will cover a significant portion of the project, but additional funding is needed. Construction is expected to begin in September 2019.

### JOIN OUR RESTORE RENEW REBUILD CAMPAIGN

Make a difference in the lives of our students by supporting a project that encourages collaboration, supports academic excellence, and builds community. A contribution to the campaign will help rebuild the school after the Thomas Fire and pave the way for the long-awaited Student Commons. Join us in making this extraordinary vision a reality.

Contact our development team at [development@ovs.org](mailto:development@ovs.org) • Call (805) 646-1423 for more information • Visit the website at [campaign.ovs.org](http://campaign.ovs.org) to make a contribution online.



### COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

All 30 seniors have been accepted at more than 150 colleges and universities worldwide. With large universities in every region of the United States, as well as small liberal arts colleges, elite tech institutes, and colleges overseas, the list includes: UC Berkeley, UCLA, UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara, George Washington University, University of Michigan, University of Massachusetts, Boston, Pepperdine University, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly Pomona, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Wisconsin, Saint Mary's College, Madison, Reed College, Vassar College, Emerson College, The American University in Paris, and more.

"It's an exciting time for our seniors and we enjoy celebrating their successes as a community," College Counselor Fred Alvarez said. "We emphasize 'right fit' in every step of the college application process. For us, it matters not the 'name' of that college of choice. We want our students to find the colleges that fit them best, to identify and explore those schools that are going to fuel their ambitions, sharpen their talents, and shape their futures."



### PERFORMING ARTS

The Ojai hills were alive with the sound of music this arts season! It started in February with a buoyant high school performance of the feel-good musical Mamma Mia at the Greenberg Activities Center at Lower Campus. Then, in March, middle school students performed The Sound of Music during a spectacular show at spring Family Weekend.



OVS also teamed up with the Ojai Music Festival to bring the annual Imagine concert to the Greenberg Center. More than 900 students from across the Ojai Valley enjoyed world music in a program that emphasized music and dance by the UC Santa Barbara Middle East Ensemble, which also performed a free concert for the public.

This program was made possible by alumna Barbara Smith (L35), and her generous Ojai Valley School - Barbara Barnard Smith Fund of the Ventura County Community Foundation. Each year, these programs open the doors to an engaging multicultural experience for students, teachers, parents and the community.



## ASTRONOMY

Ojai Valley School students will soon be shooting for the stars! Astronomy will become the newest high school course offered at the Upper Campus. Starting in September, students will have the opportunity to learn about stars, planets, galaxies and more. Astronomy has been a popular subject, especially for those students who participate in the biannual Mt. Pinos camping trip where students enjoy dark skies to stargaze using large telescopes. Now, students will have the opportunity to dive deeper into the subject in a class taught by current physics teacher Micah Sittig, a Cal Tech graduate with a passion for astronomy. Said Sittig: "I'm excited because it's something I've thought about teaching all the time."



## TECHNOLOGY

Ojai Valley School's two competitive robotics teams participated in the LA/SoCal Regional Championships, concluding a stellar season in the FIRST Tech Challenge's robotics league. Teams Spudnik and Spudbot fought hard against 46 other strong teams at the event hosted at Monrovia High School. Although they did not advance to the World Championship in Houston, they are proud of their efforts and excited to have reached regionals. Teams Spudnik and Spudbot dominated during much of the season and were ranked 2nd and 4th out of 22 teams as they headed to the regional championships. Said Coach Micah Sittig: "This was OVS's best performance so far in four years of competitive robotics."



## BATTLE OF HASTINGS

Eighty soldiers donned armor, carried shields, and galloped steeds in a battle for the British Isles in the annual re-enactment of the Battle of Hastings at Lower Campus. Gathered on the Hermes Quad, William, the Duke of Normandy, led his army (well, in this case, the entire sixth and seventh grades) to victory over King Harold II, the last Anglo-Saxon King of England, and his eighth-grade defenders. Unlike the 1066 combatants, who crafted their crests, armor and weapons from chain mail and beaten metal, these middle school soldiers wrought their armaments from cardboard and duct tape. For nine years, OVS history teacher John Rowan has orchestrated this battle, which has become an annual tradition that brings history alive for our students.

## BASEBALL

Ojai Valley School's baseball team dominated this season, going 8-2 in Omega League play. The Spuds were led on the mound by freshman Ryan Farrell (L18), junior Tyler Davis (L16), and sophomore Derek Mendoza, who pitched a no-hitter early in the season. At bat, OVS players had multiple doubles and triples, including two that bounced off the back fence during a 19-3 victory over Santa Clarita Valley International. The team advanced to the CIF playoffs in May.



## EQUESTRIAN

Middle school equestrians hit the trails in late winter in preparation for their spring camping trip. The riders explored the Ventura River Preserve, a protected area for hikers and horseback riders that meanders along the Ventura River in the Ojai Valley. The site offers an excellent venue for the middle school riders to become familiar with water crossings and other challenges when riding off campus. Camping with horses is one of the unique aspects of the OVS equestrian program.

Upper Campus students also had the opportunity to join a Spring Break equestrian trip. This year, riders headed to Montana for a western riding experience that included trail rides, roping, and natural horsemanship techniques. In past years, they have ridden cross country in Ireland and trained in classical dressage in Portugal.



## TRACK

After a four-year hiatus, track and field has returned as a spring sport at the Upper Campus, drawing nearly a third of the student body to run, jump and throw as part of the 12-team Omega League. From champion cross country runners to flat-out beginners, athletes of all levels have been working since early February to prepare themselves for the season. The OVS track program shut down following the 2014 season due to league realignment. A move this year to the Omega League resurrected the program. Said track coach Fred Alvarez: "I'm really happy that our student athletes once again have access to this sport. There's so much athletic talent at our school and now our track athletes have the opportunity to demonstrate that talent on a large stage."





# Michael Mondavi



By Jack McClenahan and Tracy Wilson

*Michael Mondavi (L58), best known as a famous winemaker from a famous winemaking family, has spent a lifetime laboring in executive board rooms and earthy vineyards to promote the family brand and elevate the Napa Valley as one of the world's premier wine regions.*

At the same time, he has quietly transformed the industry by embracing sustainable farming practices, the kind used by his grandfather long before “green” became vogue, and he has served on numerous civic boards and associations in support of his community.

But Mondavi’s advocacy for the Napa Valley reached new heights in the aftermath of the devastating wildfires that ravaged the region in October 2017. The North Bay fires destroyed 8,900 buildings, killed 44 people, and led to more than 90,000 evacuations in five counties. The fires caused an estimated \$14.5 billion dollars in damage, becoming, at that time, the most expensive and destructive natural disaster in California history.

Mondavi watched the Atlas Fire march toward his own home and displace close friends. He also watched with concern as the Thomas Fire threatened the Ojai of his youth. Now, hoping to make a difference for Californians, Mondavi serves on the Executive Committee of Rebuild North Bay, an organization dedicated to helping communities rebuild – and rebuild fast to prevent potentially crippling business losses and housing shortages.

“The night of the fire, my wife, Isabel, looked out the window to see flames in the distance approaching a neighbor’s home,” Mondavi recalled. “When she phoned him, he said ‘Why are you calling me at this time of night?’ She urgently told him, ‘Look out the window!’ He barely got out in time.”

Longtime Napa and Sonoma leaders, including Mondavi, formed Rebuild North Bay to represent the region in a unified, coordinated effort. “We have traveled to Washington DC twice to meet with OMB Director Mick Mulvaney, FEMA and HUD,” Mondavi said. “I want to emphasize the importance of having private citizens representing the region, not just government employees.”

Taken together, California wildfires in the past two years have destroyed nearly 24,000 homes and burned more than 3 million acres, according to Cal Fire. Communities are still grappling with the emotional and financial impacts.

For Mondavi, a bold approach is needed to expedite recovery efforts and prevent a “brain

drain” of workers – whether they be doctors or mechanics – from leaving the affected North Bay communities. “You can rebuild buildings,” he said, “but you can’t replace those people.”

It should come as no surprise that Mondavi is leading the charge to restore a region where his family roots run deep.

His father, Robert Mondavi, is the legendary wine producer who helped put Napa Valley on the global wine map. As the story goes, the elder Mondavi and his brother, Peter, convinced their parents, Cesare and Rosa, to purchase the Charles Krug Winery in 1943 and the two brothers successfully ran it together, pioneering new technologies in winemaking, until managerial differences between the siblings ended in a serious rift.

It was during this time, in the late 1950s, that a young Michael Mondavi left the Napa Valley to attend summer camp at Ojai Valley School. To that point, he said, “I had been a poor student in a poor school district, but loved the OVS Summer School and Camp ... My parents came down on the Coast Starlight train to collect me and found a happy, positive Michael and later decided to enroll me for my 7th grade year, re-enrolling me for my 8th and 9th grade years.”

At Ojai Valley School, Mondavi found teachers who ignited his curiosity and took a genuine interest in him as a person.

“Teachers like Mr. (Robert) Cooper would make science fun, with the ‘trick question’ he would include in a test, like ‘What is the universal solvent?’ (Answer: water.) He would encourage the quiet kids to ‘open up’ and say what was on their minds. We would also talk about our subjects away from the classroom, at meals or in the quad or on camping trips,” he recalled.

“Otis Wickenhaeuser was amazing – that man, for me, walked on water ... he was very impactful for me in a positive way,” he continued. “I have to say, I didn’t like the scheduled study halls, but they taught me how to study, and got me ready for Bellarmine College Prep in San Jose.”

“They not only taught me reading, writing and arithmetic,” he said of his OVS teachers, “but

*Continued on page 14*





they also taught me the right thing to do and how to become a young adult. I think boarding school for many kids is better than living at home – even if you live in a quality home, a loving home – because you learn different social skills among your peers than you would if you just see them in the classroom.”

Mondavi would go on to earn a business degree from Santa Clara University before entering the wine business with his father in 1966. He said his early education at OVS taught him resilience, and the camping and outdoor experiences were particularly memorable.

“We used to go ‘bike-packing’ where 10 or 12 of us and our bikes would be mini-vanned up the mountain and dropped off to don backpacks and cycle back down,” he said. “It was thrilling and scary.”

They also learned how to set up tents, cook meals, and leave the campsite better than they found it. “We were taught to respect Mother Nature probably a generation earlier than most people started thinking about it,” he said.

Caring for the land was a lesson he also learned

from his grandfather, Cesare, who he remembers walking him through the vineyard as a boy, picking up a handful of dirt and putting it right under his nose.

“He said, ‘Smell this. It’s healthy and clean.’ And then he dropped it and he said, ‘What is your most important job when you grow up?’ and I said, ‘Make good wine,’” Mondavi said.

“‘No,’ his grandfather corrected him, ‘Your most important job is that someday this land will belong to you and when you have children you need to have this land in healthier condition for your children than you received it from your father or your uncle.’ He didn’t know biodynamics or ecology. He just knew that if you treat the soil with respect Mother Nature will take care of you.”

Those values stuck.

Mondavi vividly recalls a moment when he and his brother, Tim, in the mid-1970s, realized that winemaking had veered away from Cesare’s teachings. “My brother and I were signing checks and I noticed how much was going to the chemical company,” he recalled. “It reminded me of the walk in the vineyard with my grandfather, and it reminded me of those wonderful Piedra Blancas and I said to my brother, ‘We’ve become chemical farmers. We are not stewards of the land. We have to change.’ But part of that thinking was created during my formative years at OVS.”

Today, Mondavi’s estate vineyards – which he co-founded with his wife, Isabel, and now runs with his daughter Dina, and son, Rob Jr. – are sustainably farmed, with the winery recently achieving recognition as a Napa Green Certified Winery.

Asked what advice he might give to OVS students today, Michael didn’t hesitate: “Attitude and values. If you have the right attitude and the right values, you will have a good life.”

“Family is the most important thing we have in our lives,” he added. “The family we grew up in as children, the family that we created and nurtured as adults, and our sense of a supportive extended family in a place like Ojai Valley School or in a larger community like the Napa Valley, that mutual support is what helps us carry on and recover.”

# OJAI VALLEY SCHOOL

## ALUMNI WEEKEND JUNE 7 - 9, 2019



**Celebrate with us as we break ground on:** The Aramont Science and Technology Center, The Grace Hobson Smith House dorm, and The Student Commons. **Loads of weekend fun, including:** Golf Tournament • Guided Hike in the Sespe • Paint ‘n’ Sip Class • Cornhole Contest • Campfires • Alumni Soccer Game • Lots of great company!

**REGISTER NOW at [ovs.org/reunion](https://ovs.org/reunion) - [alumni@ovs.org](mailto:alumni@ovs.org) - (805) 640-2578**



Ojai Valley School Alumni Weekend
Schedule of Events • June 7-9, 2019

Friday, June 7			
TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	DETAILS
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Carl S. Cooper Golf Tournament	Soule Park Golf Course	Enjoy golf in Ojai! Check-in at 10 a.m. Tee time at 11 a.m. Pre-registration required
3 to 7 p.m.	Alumni Weekend Check-in	Lower Campus Alan F. Pearson	Pick up your name badge. Bring towels, pillows, and bedding if you will be staying in the dorms.
5 to 7 p.m.	Wine & Cheese Welcome Reception	Lower Campus Alan F. Pearson	Join us for live music and a delectable spread.
Saturday, June 8			
TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	DETAILS
8 to 10 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Upper Campus Dining Hall	Enjoy a continental breakfast with your classmates.
8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Guided Hike in the Sespe	Meet at Upper Girls' Dorm Village	Guided hike for all ability levels. Transportation provided; sack lunch fixings available at breakfast.
9 to 10 a.m.	Pony Rides	Upper Campus Stables	Pony rides for children.
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.	Pool Open	Upper Campus Pool	Enjoy a refreshing dip in the pool with friends.
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.	Alumni Weekend Check-in	Upper Campus Girls' Dorm Village	Pick up your name badge. Bring towels, pillows, and bedding if you will be staying in the dorms.
Noon to 1 p.m.	Lunch	Upper Campus Dining Hall	Enjoy a tostada bar!
Noon to 3 p.m.	Oral History Project	Upper Campus Burr Hall Library	Record your favorite memories of the people and places that made your OVS experience great.
1 to 3 p.m.	Corn Hole Tournament	Upper Campus Girls' Dorm Village	Participate in a Corn Hole Tournament with friends.
1 to 3 p.m.	Paint and Sip Class	Upper Campus Pool	Grab a drink, throw on an apron, and take a seat at our Paint and Sip Class. Pre-registration required.
2 to 3 p.m.	Alumni Soccer Game	Upper Campus Dok Smith Field	This will be a scored Alumni vs. Alumni game. Jerseys and water provided.
4 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.	Childcare and Teen Lounge	Upper Campus Girls' Dorm Village	Dinner and activities for potty-trained children and teens. Pre-registration required.
THE MAIN EVENT: GROUNDBREAKING AND CELEBRATION DINNER			
5 to 6 p.m.	Social and Class Photos	Upper Campus Top of the Hill	Join us for cocktails and music. Adults only. Class photos begin at 5:15 p.m.
6 p.m.	Groundbreaking	Upper Campus Top of the Hill	More than a year after the Thomas Fire, join us for a ceremonial groundbreaking of our new buildings, followed by dinner at the field. Dressy casual attire. Wear comfortable footwear.
7 to 9:30 p.m.	Dinner and Social	Upper Campus Dok Smith Field	Enjoy music, dinner and socializing with classmates.
Sunday, June 9			
TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	DETAILS
9:30 to 11 a.m.	Closing Day Brunch	Lower Campus Wallace Burr Pergola	Say farewell to your classmates and enjoy final breakfast at Lower Campus.

Ojai Valley School Alumni Weekend
JUNE 7-9, 2019 • REGISTRATION FORM

Please return this completed form with payment to: OVS Alumni Office • 723 El Paseo Road • Ojai, CA 93023

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class of \_\_\_\_\_
Address \_\_\_\_\_
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_
Name(s) of adult guest(s) \_\_\_\_\_
Name(s) & age(s) of child(ren) \_\_\_\_\_

Alumni Weekend Registration:

The 2019 Alumni Weekend Main Event Dinner is a seated event; we strongly encourage you to purchase your ticket(s) in advance, as this groundbreaking event is likely to sell out. All meals, childcare, and activities, except the Carl S. Cooper Golf Tournament, are included in your Alumni Weekend registration. Dorm accommodations are available for an additional cost per person.

Early-bird Rate: (\*Ticket prices increase by \$15 per person if paying after June 1)

☐ \$75 for 1 adult ticket \$ \_\_\_\_\_
☐ \$135 per couple ticket

Accommodations:

Alumni and families can stay in the dorms for \$50 per single room and \$75 per couple per room. There is no charge for children ages 4-16. Please bring your own towels, pillows, bedding or sleeping bags, and toiletries. Please indicate your preferred campus.

☐ \$50 single person room ☐ Upper Campus or ☐ Lower Campus \$ \_\_\_\_\_
☐ \$75 per couple per room

Activities:

Please let us know which Alumni Weekend activities you would like to participate in and the number of people in your party. Check all that apply. Please note there is an added \$90 fee for the Golf Tournament.

☐ Carl S. Cooper Golf Tournament ☐ Oral History Project \$ \_\_\_\_\_
☐ Guided Hike in Sespe ☐ Childcare for Main Dinner
☐ Paint and Sip Class ☐ Corn Hole Tournament
☐ Pony Rides for Children ☐ Alumni Soccer Game

Roundup for OVS!

Your tax-deductible gift supports the 2019-20 Annual Fund, which funds new educational initiatives, faculty enrichment grants, improvements to our equestrian, athletic and outdoor education programs, as well as increased scholarships and financial aid. Supporting the Annual Fund is the best way to have a positive impact on the daily life of our students and faculty.

☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment:

☐ Check Enclosed. Please make your check payable to Ojai Valley School. TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
☐ Credit Card. To pay with a credit card, please visit www.ovs.org/aw or call 805-640-2578

Thank You! We look forward to seeing you at Alumni Weekend!



### OVS Alumnus and Philanthropist Honored for Support of the Arts



The Washington State Arts "ArtsWA" Commission has honored Edmund W. "Ed" Littlefield, Jr. (U67) for his generous philanthropic support of the arts and the preservation of American history and folklore.

Littlefield was recognized at the Governor's Arts and Heritage Awards dinner last fall at the Admiral Theater in Bremerton, Washington. The Governor's Arts Philanthropy Award honored him for a "legacy of support for arts organizations across Washington State, making significant contributions both personally and through his private Sage Foundation."

Arts and Heritage Awards have been given by Washington State for more than 50 years, with nine recipients in 2018, including Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen at the same dinner.

"As a philanthropist, Edmund has shown incredible leadership through life-changing gifts of support to traditional and heritage-based organizations in Washington State and across the country," the Commission wrote in presenting the award. "These gifts have been instrumental in advancing singular missions and historic efforts to preserve American history, artifacts, and folklore

via archival recordings, publications and scholarship... Edmund regularly contributes significant donations to organizations such as the Fort Worden PDA, Cornish College of the Arts, Centrum Foundation and the Celtic Arts Foundation. His generosity has touched thousands throughout the state."

The Littlefield family, and Ed personally, have been similarly philanthropic to Ojai Valley School by giving substantial unrestricted annual contributions that directly benefit students and enhance the school experience. Most recently, Littlefield and Marley's Ghost generously donated their time and talents to host a benefit concert at the Upper Campus in support of the school's efforts to rebuild following the devastating Thomas Fire.

"Ed's dedication to the arts, and OVS, are significant and his award by the Arts Commission is well deserved," said Michael J. Hall-Mounsey, the school's President/CEO. "The Littlefield Family Endowment produces funds in perpetuity to support scholarships and financial aid. Ed was also an early leader in support of the Student Commons during the OVS Centennial campaign, which is now part of our campaign to rebuild after the fire. We greatly appreciate and value Ed's contributions over many years."

### OVS Alumnus Wins Overseas Press Club Foundation Award

Daphne Psaledakis (U15), a current senior at the University of Missouri, has received a prestigious Overseas Press Club Foundation Scholar Award.

Psaledakis, who got her start in journalism at the Upper Campus, was among 16 aspiring foreign correspondents selected by a panel of leading journalists from a pool of 175 applicants from 50 different colleges and universities.

The awards were presented at the Foundation's 2019 Annual Scholar Awards Luncheon in March at the Yale Club in New York City. Psaledakis was the recipient of the Flora Lewis Fellowship and received the award from Flora Lewis's friend, Jackie Albert-Simon.

"I am so grateful," she said, accepting the award, "to continue learning about the world through journalism."

In her application, Psaledakis, wrote about her childhood experiences traveling and living abroad and how it prepared her for a career as a foreign correspondent. She also wrote about the unintended consequences of Belgium's race-blind approach to data collecting, a story she first covered as an intern in the Reuters bureau in Brussels.

Psaledakis, from Aspen, Colorado, has also covered state government for the Columbia Missourian. Her interest in journalism started at the Upper Campus where she enrolled in that class in her sophomore year. She went on to become the editor of the award-winning student newspaper, On The Hill, and was accepted into the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri. She will graduate in May.



Fluent in French, Psaledakis will return to the Reuters bureau in Brussels this summer on an OPC Foundation fellowship. The OPC Foundation is the nation's largest and most visible scholarship program encouraging aspiring journalists to pursue careers as international correspondents.

"Daphne was a superior student-journalist at OVS and an exemplary leader of our program as its editor-in-chief, but I had no idea she would go on to rise to the heights she has," said Fred Alvarez, OVS history and journalism teacher. "In the past few years she has dedicated herself to this craft and is deserving of every honor she has received. The newsroom is cheering her on and we couldn't be prouder."

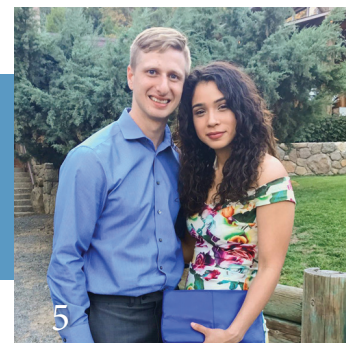
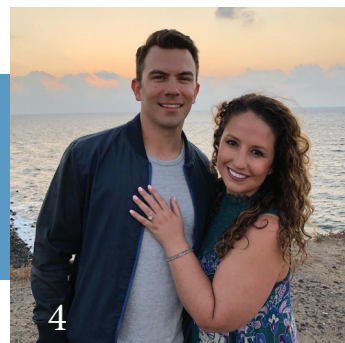
The University of Missouri School of Journalism contributed to this report.

### GET INVOLVED. STAY CONNECTED.

There are many ways to support Ojai Valley School. If you're interested in volunteering with community events, providing internship opportunities for students, or serving as a guest speaker, please contact the Alumni and Development Office at [alumni@ovs.org](mailto:alumni@ovs.org) or call (805) 646-1423. Additionally, we are eager to know more about our alumni! Stay connected through Facebook and/or Instagram. And send us your Alumni Notes for the summer issue of Family Tree by June 30 to be included in the August issue: OVS Alumni Office, 723 El Paseo Road, Ojai CA 93023.







**LOWER 1953**  
**Jerri (Batson) Prenzlowl (L53)** and her husband Ed sent us a note that caught us by surprise. Jerri and Ed's youngest son, Tom, was recently in a plane crash. As he was flying over the Cascade Mountains in the state of Washington, the engine malfunctioned and oil spewed across the plane's windshield. In spite of that, within eight minutes he had been guided by radio to the nearest road and, as his plane hit the tops of the tall pine trees, the wing of his plane detached. While the plane was still at full speed it skidded down one of the trees, shearing the branches and bark, which slowed the plane until it hit the ground. Miraculously, their son was not killed by the impact. Tom was hurt, however, and was losing consciousness. The mangled frame of the plane was crushing his legs and feet. GPS was able to locate him and rescue crews soon arrived. Tom suffered a broken ankle, and was taken to surgery where a metal plate was placed in his ankle. Within a week of the

crash, Tom had recovered and was back at work. Looking at photos of the crash, Jerri could barely see the top of Tom's head within the crushed metal of the plane. It was difficult for her to believe it was her son in that terrible crash, and she believes it was a miracle he survived. For Jerri and Ed, it was their belief that God had used that tree to save their son's life. In August, the couple celebrated 59 years of marriage and both of them turned 80 years old. They raised three sons – and now have four great grandchildren! We are delighted to read their story of faith, survival, and a long and happy marriage.

**LOWER 1968**  
**Sara Lawrence (L68)** It was so much fun having Sara drop by the Alumni Office. Sara has spent time living all around the world. For 10 years, she taught English in the Middle East, where her favorite place to live was Oman. For 16 years, she raised her twin sons, now 28, in New Zealand. She also lived and worked in Northern California. For the

past two years, Sara has worked as an ESL teacher at our OVS Summer Camp and is returning this summer to once again teach in our ESL program.

**LOWER 1986**  
**Frank Szeto (L86) (U90)** see Upper 1992

**LOWER 1989**  
**Yuka Aihara (L89) (U92)** see Upper 1992

**LOWER 1991**  
**1. David Moreno (L91)** had an action-packed 2018. He and his wife welcomed a beautiful baby boy, Elan, into their lives and recently celebrated his first birthday. They are now enjoying all the fun milestones that come with having a toddler – walking, talking, and getting into EVERYTHING. David says, "We are really looking forward to what this year has in store, and hoping to get back to Ojai to visit either this spring or summer!"

**LOWER 1995**  
**Dillon Kenyon (L95) (U99)** see Upper 1999

**LOWER 1998**  
**Robert Hodge (L98)** is working for the San Francisco Ethics Commission and lives in San Rafael.

**LOWER 2000**  
**2. Nando Cartocci (L00)** spent seven years as a junior boarding student at the Lower Campus before graduating from eighth grade. For Nando, dorm parent Eleanora Burright and her husband, Chuck, are like family – and the Burrights feel the same. El and Chuck recently enjoyed a wonderful evening at Universal City Walk with Nando and his girlfriend, Catarina.

**3. Lauren Van Keulen (L00)** and her sister, **Cassandra (L03)**, recently moved into a new home they purchased in Ojai. They are very excited to be back living in the community where they grew up. Cassandra welcomed her first daughter, Alex Anne, on August 14, 2017. On the career front, the sisters and their mom are all working together on a real estate team with their new brokerage, Keller Williams Realty.

**LOWER 2001**  
**Jason Goldman (L01) (U05)** see Upper 2005

**LOWER 2002**  
**Enrique Mauser (L02) (U06)** see Upper 2006

**LOWER 2003**  
**Michael Hodge (L03)** graduated from Middlebury College and worked for Whistle Pig Rye Whiskey in Vermont for seven years. Mike is now in his first year of business school at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business.

**Cassandra Van Keulen (L03)** see Lower 2000

**LOWER 2005**  
**4. Bianca Burright (L05)** got engaged to James Lewis during a beautiful trip to Greece in October 2018. Bianca and James are set to marry in August 2019 at McCormick Ranch in Camarillo.

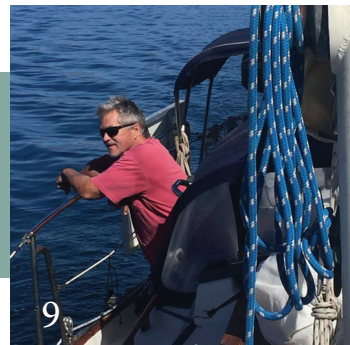
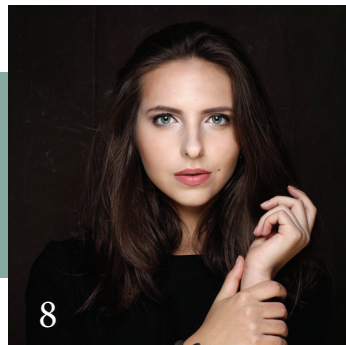
**Daniel Freeman (L05)** just relocated from the Bay Area, and is back in L.A., taking it easy. He is planning on pursuing a law degree. He hopes to practice

either criminal defense or join the tech field and practice for that thriving industry.

**5. Seth Santini (L05)** writes that life is good! "I am currently living in the Bay Area. I originally moved here to complete my undergraduate degree at University of California, Berkeley. After falling in love with the Bay, I've decided stay. I am in my second year at the University of San Francisco School of Law. I will finish school next year and begin working as an attorney in the area. I live in Oakland with my two Boston terriers and my girlfriend, Gaby. In my free time, I like to go hiking in Tilden Park, attend local sporting events (although I still love my hometown teams), and go to concerts at some of the great venues in the area. I think of my time at OVS fondly and hope everyone is doing well."

**6. Hyo Jung "Marie" Shin (L05)** writes: "I'm currently doing my master's with FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) in three different countries – England, Italy and





Switzerland. The years that I spent at OVS were the best time of my life!"

**7. Juan Jose Soto (L05)** recently reconnected with OVS. After graduating from the University del Valle de Mexico with a B.A. in Business Administration and Management, he is living in Guadalajara, Mexico, where he is an entrepreneur in the garment and entertainment industries. He just established two companies from start-up through "effective business planning." Juan Jose and Lorena Curiel are expecting a little girl in May.

**Emily (Thelander) Heming (L05)** (U09) See Upper 2009

LOWER 2006

**8. Tatiana Gorbunova (L06)** attended Lower Campus from September 2003 until she graduated middle school in 2006. She was not able to continue her education at OVS because her family wanted her closer to home in Moscow, Russia. Subsequently, she continued with her academic progression abroad in the United Kingdom, where she earned her Bachelor's and Masters degrees

in Law. Currently, she works as an immigration consultant helping migrants travel and settle in the UK. Tatiana says, "I am most grateful to OVS for introducing me to outdoor activities such as camping. I miss the Californian fresh air and the bonds that I have built with my fellow classmates. Those past experiences fueled my recent accomplishment – my husband and I have traveled all around Iceland in our campervan in four days!"

**Mi Yeon "Vivian" Park (L06)** (U10) see Upper 2010

**Ronit Warman (06) (U10)** See Upper 2010

LOWER 2007

**Belle Cook (L07) (U11)** See Upper 2011

**Paloma Renee Palau (L07) (U11)** See Upper 2011

**Yoon Jung "Lauren" Park (L07)** (U11) See Upper 2011

LOWER 2008

**Sei Yeon "Bin" Ko (L08)** graduated from Brandeis University with a double major B.A. in Art History

and Business. Bin is currently pursuing his M.A. in Art, Law and Business at Christie's Education in New York.

LOWER 2010

**Min Ung Choi (L10) (U14)** See Upper 2014

**Andrew "Keaton" Shiffman (L10)** (U14) See Upper 2014

LOWER 2011

**Noppasorn "Pinky" Cheng (L11)** (U15) see Upper 2015

**Connor Floyd (L11) (U15)** see Upper 2015

**Ali Fortier Weller (L11) (U15)** see Upper 2015

UPPER 1970

**9. John Enders (U70)** wrote this message while sitting on his boat in the Sea of Cortez: "I sailed from Anacortes, Washington, to Cabo San Lucas five years ago and have been sailing my boat in the Sea of Cortez and along the Pacific coast of mainland Mexico during winter months since then. Now preparing Victoria (34' Pacific Seacraft) for the journey back up the coast in March to San Francisco Bay. I'm single and

done with solo sailing for a while. In fact, one of my roommates from OVS, Bruce Gribbin (U70) is coming down to help me sail north. It's a long, uphill, upwind trip and I really will use the help!"

UPPER 1971

**Virginia Wheaton (U71)** reports that she has been married for 43 years and has two kids, now 25 and 22. She is an eleven-year member of the Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center. She is on the board and has edited the newsletter Peace Gazette since 2007. Currently, she is caring for her 97-year-old mom. She says she is "loving our beautiful planet."

UPPER 1985

**Yohtaro Hamada (U85)** writes, "It certainly took me too long to make this donation to OVS. Thank you, Craig, for organizing a breakfast with Coop and Dinkins and giving me a tour of the campus in September. Coming in from New York at that time, staying a night at Ojai Rancho Inn was an absolutely gorgeous experience. I hope to visit Ojai more often."

UPPER 1992

**Yuka Aihara (L89) (U92)** and **Frank Szeto (L86) (U90)** met former art teacher Bernadette DiPietro while

she was traveling overseas. They had lunch and visited a museum. Yuka currently lives in Chiba, Japan. She is currently in a Ph.D program in Developmental Psychology at the University of Miami, studying children's social and emotional development with a particular focus on implementing objective measurements in studying children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

UPPER 1998

**Georgijs "George" Krasovickis (U98)** dropped by OVS on a visit from his hometown in Latvia. He gave us this update: "I started running at OVS with Mr. Dinkins and still love doing it for most of the year. I have been really missing my Chinese friends from OVS, Gabriel and Bridget Lam. I would love to bring my three kids – Vlada and Natan, age 12, and Miriam, age 10 – and show them the school one day. I work in Fintech and live in Latvia."

UPPER 1999

**10. Dillon Kenyon (L95, U99)** has founded The Spark, a non-profit community Art Center in Boulder, Colorado. "We really think this is a perfect time to start this theater," she says, "We haven't even opened yet and people are already knocking

at our doors wanting to rent our space." Dillon, who has Master's in Social Work and has directed theater for nearly two decades, says that although the program is geared toward students and learning, The Spark isn't a children's theater. "We will have professional-level standards" she explains, "but, during rehearsal, if you mess up, instead of firing you, we'll use it as a learning experience." On May 31, The Spark will host its Inaugural Gala featuring guest professional artists, Spark Performers, and local performing artists. For more information. or to get in touch with Dillon, go to [www.theSparkCreates.org](http://www.theSparkCreates.org).

UPPER 2000

**Dumisani Mhlanga (U00)** is currently working for an organization called Achieving for Children, which has rapidly expanded in the past three years to provide youth services in the London area. His job is to find safe new homes for vulnerable children, or vulnerable parents and babies who need a new place due to unfortunate circumstances, including physical or mental disabilities, domestic abuse, unaccompanied minors crossing the border, and more. He also runs an after-school multimedia arts workshop called "Digi Den," where





young people can come and explore various arts, digital or otherwise. On top of that, Dumisani likes to write and has written a science fiction novel called neZuro: All Endings Begins (available on Amazon), which is based on a currently buzzing Hollywood film script he wrote. He has other artistic projects in the works and enjoys sharing his love of the arts with young people.

### UPPER 2005

**11. Liz (White) (U05)** and **Jason Goldman (L01) (U05)** just welcomed their first baby! Alexandra Grace Goldman was born March 12, weighing 7lbs. 514 oz. Congratulations!

### UPPER 2006

**12. Enrique Mauser (L02) (U06)** is still pursuing his passion for science and sustainability. After graduating from Upper, Enrique attended Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. For the first couple of years, he wasn't sure what career path he wanted to follow – but he liked science and wanted to live near the ocean, so it was only logical that he pursued marine science. Enrique worked part time during the school year at the New England Aquarium as a diver, where his responsibilities varied from scrubbing the artificial coral, to feeding the 8-foot-long sand



tiger sharks. During the summer, he interned at the Cape Eleuthera Institute in the Bahamas, where his work focused on shark research and conservation. He also discovered aquaculture, the farming of marine or fresh water organisms as a food source. Enrique earned a Master's in Marine Fin-fish Aquaculture at the University of Miami, which gave him the opportunity to travel to Chile, Panama, Costa Rica, and Mexico. After finishing graduate school, Enrique began working as a scientist for a San Diego-based research organization that focuses on developing sustainable marine aquaculture technologies and provides scientific advice to 21 countries on the management of the Pacific tuna fishery. Enrique still works there and his role focuses on raising yellowfin and bluefin tuna larvae from eggs spawned by captive fish in laboratories in Panama and Japan. Says Enrique, "Among other things, we can use the information we gather from these baby tunas as a tool for stock assessment, which is how we estimate the current population of tropical tunas. This is very important to know, because we don't want to keep overfishing and exhaust this resource. We want to properly manage it to ensure that the oceans have a healthy and diverse ecosystem, while still being able to



make use of this food source." Aside from his work, Enrique is enjoying life with his wife, who he met back in his aquarium days, and their baby boy. He said: "None of these great things would have happened without my experience at OVS, and the wonderful teachers, mentors, and friends who had a huge impact on me."

**13. Jordan Rigberg (U06)** is currently living in Aurora, Colorado, with his wife, Tamara, and their two daughters, Charlotte, age 5, and Leighton, age 3. They moved to Colorado in 2016 following Jordan's graduation from Santa Clara University's MBA program. Jordan is currently a Senior Vice President at Silicon Valley Bank, where he serves as a team leader and loan officer for the Rocky Mountain Region (Utah and Colorado) working specifically with start-up-to-IPO technology and life sciences companies. Jordan and his family love Colorado, but do miss Ojai and Ventura, and try to make it back for visits any chance they can.

### UPPER 2007

**14. Blake Estes (U07)** had his photo from the eclipse selected by the Rochester Institute of Technology to be featured in the prestigious Images From Science 3 exhibition on November 1.



### UPPER 2009

**15. Emily (Thelander) Heming (L05) (U09)** surprised us recently and walked through the front doors of Frost Hall at Lower Campus, accompanied by her new husband, Jason Heming. They were visiting her father in Ojai and chose to stop by and introduce Jason to OVS. Emily and Jason were married September 29, 2018, in a beautiful ceremony in the backyard of her childhood home in the Ojai Arbolada. She says, "We kept all our vendors local from Ojai, or from Chicago, where we're currently living. Our ceremony was pretty unique because we were literally surrounded by our best friends, who were the ones to confirm all our vows." The couple run their own Chicago-based real estate firm called the Heming Team.

### UPPER 2010

**16. Angus Beverly (U10)** graduated last year from the UCLA School of Law, where he served as the Student Representative in the Westwood Neighborhood Council, Third Year Representative to the Student Bar Association, and President of UCLA's Real Estate Law Association. Angus was sworn in to the California Bar. He is currently an associate attorney at the Sohagi Law Group in Los Angeles, which specializes in land use and environmental law.



**Sunghoon "Chris" Kang (U10)** is living in Seoul and currently works for Meritz Alternative Asset Management as a Fund Manager (Assistant VP). Meritz invests in Commercial Real Estate or infrastructure in the USA and Europe with institutional investors.

**17. Mi Yeon "Vivian" Park (L06) (U10)** married Sung Took "Greg" Moon on December 8, 2018, at the Hotel Signiel in Seoul.

**Ronit Warman (L06) (U10)** is living in Mexico City and working at a magazine called Food & Travel.

### UPPER 2011

**18. Belle Cook (L07) (U11)** is back in Ojai and loves spending time with her "children," aka her horse, Wiley, and her cat, Bunny. Belle attended the San Francisco Art Institute and later started work as a trail guide in Hood River, Oregon, a place she loved. Today, she is back at OVS working in the equestrian program, where she grew up in grades PK-12. "I love my work," she says, "because I'm always hanging around horses."

**Madisen Demery (U11)** has been living on the East Coast (Boston mostly) for six years. Recently, she has been working to start a crocheted jewelry and clothing



business, and writes: "I live with my partner (I call him my husband) and our cat."

**Yoon Jung "Lauren" Park (L07) (U11)** Having made some life changes, Lauren recently moved to New York City, where she is working on the tech-side of Citigroup as a project manager. She is happily exploring the Manhattan landscape after graduating from UC Berkeley and working at Uber in San Francisco.

**19. Paloma Renee Palau (L07) (U11)** works in media production and has helped create content for networks such as NBC and BBC. She has spent her free time volunteering on short films and for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. This year, she has been working on several new screenplays and recently published her first poetry collection titled "Soft" where she writes about love, healing, and self-empowerment. She has a great love for the OVS community and how it helped her become the goal-oriented and dedicated writer and person she is today.

### UPPER 2012

**Evan Cooper (L08) (U12)** is living in Washington DC and finishing his last semester of a Master's degree at the Center for Security Studies at





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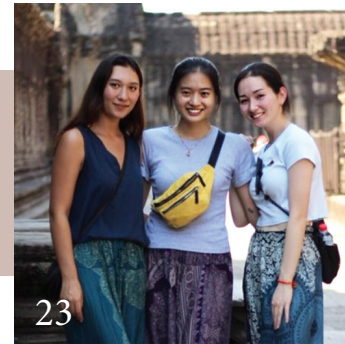
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Georgetown University.

**Reika Kijima (U12)** is back in Japan! After graduating from the University of Southern California in May 2017 with a B.A. in International Relations, she moved to Tokyo and is currently working for an IT company as a Customer Support Executive at Group IMD.

### UPPER 2013

**Polina Dermenzhi (U13)** sent us a note about her latest ventures: "I have known that I wanted to be in hospitality since I was a junior at Ojai Valley School. I believe that OVS prepared me well and I had an easier transition from high school to college than my friends who attended other schools. The OVS curriculum was quite challenging and the personalized approach of my teachers equipped me with the knowledge and skill set necessary for my academic and professional growth." Polina attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and studied hotel management with a concentration in restaurant management. While in college, she worked in different areas of hospitality, which helped her understand the industry. After

graduating, she moved to Los Angeles and became a manager-in-training at The Beverly Hills Hotel. "I was able to rotate in different outlets and learn about all aspects of the Food & Beverage department," she says. In June 2018, she was promoted as the department supervisor and hopes to continue to grow with the company.

### UPPER 2014

**Emily Addison (L10) (U14)** is attending graduate school at King's College London pursuing a M.A. in The Classical World and its Reception. The program examines the influence of the history, culture, and legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity on the shape of the modern world. Following her Master's, Emmy plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Classical Art and Archaeology.

**20. Min Ung Choi (L10) (U14)** is currently in China after completing his South Korean military service. In September, he will head back to the East Coast to complete his senior year at New York University. At the same time, Min's younger brother, Hyun Ung Choi, will join our incoming freshman class at the

Upper Campus! Min plans to stop by to visit his teachers. We can't wait to see Min and Hyun Ung together at Upper.

**21. Carolita Landers (U14)** graduated on December 15, 2018, from Colorado State University with two B.S. degrees, one in Animal Science and the other in International Soil and Crop Science. Carolita's future plans include graduate school, but not right away. For now, she intends to take a break and look for work locally in Fort Collins, Colorado.

**Yinan "Ellen" Liu (U14)** is finishing her last year in a dual-degree program, earning a B.S. in Biophysics from Brown University and a B.A. in Jewelry and Metalsmithing from the Rhode Island School of Design. She plans to pursue graduate school while crafting her jewelry practice in a studio setting.

**22. Shiyu "Shelly" Xu (U14)** is working as a reporter at The China Press - Boston Weekly while applying to graduate schools. Shelley writes: "After my four years at Boston University as a broadcast journalism student, I have learned

and grown so much as a person. I was able to not only learn, but also work with professionals to strengthen my journalistic skills. Throughout these years, I fell more deeply in love with the lifestyle of a journalist — whether it is to chase the news constantly; to report live on a snowy morning; or to sit in front of the anchor desk. I have gained skills for writing, reporting, shooting and producing through class practice to real-life experience such as BUTV10, our student-run TV program on campus, and various internships like WBUR News (NPR Boston) to WGBH News. It has been such a rewarding experience and I am so grateful for everyone who has supported me all through these years." Shelley's work is available on her website: [www.shiyuxu1030.com](http://www.shiyuxu1030.com)

**Andrew "Keaton" Shiffman (L10) (U14)** ended up taking an extra year at Occidental College following extensive surgeries from playing college football. He graduates in May, but before then will present his thesis on the psychological effect of chronic pain and its contribution to the diagnosis of depression and anxiety. While in school, Keaton has

been working for the past two years in the music industry managing the rapper Quez. He writes: "I recently started working with a guy named Nolan who manages Kyle (SuperDuper Kyle) who's a HUGE HUGE artist from Ventura actually, so very excited to be working with him. Currently working on finding the right label to work with and also searching for artists and producers to sign. It's been super cool to work in the music industry, and I can't wait to be able to devote 100% of my time to it once I graduate. I've basically been running my own business in a sense while in school, so it's been fun and difficult and very interesting. Definitely different than my original plan to go to med school, but I'm really happy doing what I'm doing and I think it's really what I'm meant to be doing!"

### UPPER 2015

**23. Nakita Moler (U15), Noppasorn 'Pinky' Cheng (L11) (U15) and Momoe Takamatso (U15)** wrote while traveling together in Cambodia and touring Angkor Wat, the largest temple in the world, built about 1,000 years ago. Nakita, Pinky and Momoe planned this trip to learn more about each

other's different cultures. Nakita grew up in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Pinky in Bangkok, Thailand; and Momoe in Ōita Prefecture, Japan. They hope to do a reunion in a different country every year. Meanwhile, Momoe will graduate from Occidental College with a degree in Kinesiology in May. Her twin brother, **Masaki Takamatsu (U15)**, will graduate from Loyola Marymount University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Both Momoe and Masaki plan to attend graduate school.

**Connor Floyd (L11) (U15)** is completing his senior year at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa. He will graduate in May with a B.A. in Sports Management and Philosophy, and a minor in Business. He is also a team leader on the baseball team playing outfield and first base.

**24. Ali Fortier Weller (L11) (U15)** gave birth March 23 to a beautiful baby girl! Katelyn Elizabeth was born 7lbs, 4 ounces, 20 inches long. She is a healthy and easy baby, says Ali, who recently moved back home from Montana and is now living in Ojai. Congratulations!



# In Memoriam

## 1953

**Corrinna (Jackson) Aragon (L53)** passed away on May 6, 2018, of natural causes in her beloved Los Angeles home. She treasured her time at OVS and delighted in participating in recent reunions. Corrinna’s time at OVS was a fundamental experience that influenced a lifetime of love for the outdoors. She is survived by her son, Manuel, her daughter, Maria, and their families.

## 1971

**Donald G. Pendergrass (U71)** noted musician, passed away peacefully on February 14, 2018, at the age of 65. A memorial and music jam was held in his honor at the Center for Spiritual Awakening in Pacific Grove.

## 1973

**Marty Thomas (L73)** passed away unexpectedly and peacefully in his sleep on January 30, 2019. His sister wrote to say: “He had a huge heart with the ability to reach people, an extraordinary talent of connecting with people through his humor and creativity. He was truly one of the kindest souls to others, offering internships to bright unknowns in the film business, providing opportunities with his guidance.” Marty was a Screen Actors Guild member, writer and director. He voted on the Oscars each year in his genre. He accomplished much in his career as an MTV director, guiding artists such as Tupac, Easy E, and Skeelo. He progressed into writing films with his partner and producer Jon Zuber. Together they wrote the Lions Gate film “Killer Holiday” that Marty directed. Many other film projects are listed on his Ridiculous Films company website. Marty attended Ojai Valley School between 1969-1972, including Summer Camps. He loved being at OVS and caring for two horses, Barflirt and Whisky. His sister recalls that even at that age, Marty would take his super-8 movie camera to film her and other neighborhood kids in an adventure he would write and direct. He attended Brooks Institute, Montecito, UCSB and UCLA and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Film Production. Marty stayed in touch with OVS over the years, providing entertaining updates on his

life and recollections of the school. In February 2005 he mailed a package and letter saying: “Please forgive me — when I was 10 to 12 years old I was attending OVS in 70-71 ... I neglected to return this classic James Thurber book and took it home with me. Last month I found it in an old box. Please return it to the library at the Lower Campus where it belongs.” He added: “I am 100% certain that had I not gone to Ojai Valley School, I may have never stopped being that unfocused, crazed, hyperactive, loud child I used to be. Now I’m just crazed!” Informing us of Marty’s passing, his sister added, “He was blessed to meet the love of his life and best friend, Shelise Thomas, 21 years ago. Marty lived vibrantly. He worked extraordinarily hard and played just as hard. He brought laughter and joy to thousands throughout his life though his humor, creativity and ability to embrace complete strangers, many of whom then became his comrades for life. Rest in peace big brother.”

## 1979

**David Scott Loy** passed away in his sleep on December 24, 2018. Born August 17, 1964, and raised in Mill Valley, David attended OVS for ninth grade in the 1979-80 school year. He completed his education in the Tamalpais School District. David suffered permanent brain stem damage in a motorcycle accident. Despite a bleak prognosis, he surprised everyone and took his first steps to recovery on December 24, 1983. He went on to compete in the Northern California Special Olympics in the powerlifting competition. Despite his disability, he never lost his enthusiasm for adventure and spent time talking to young people in local schools about his experiences and the importance of wearing head protection. David was well known in the community and was often seen riding his tricycle around town with a big smile on his face and a friendly greeting for anyone he met.

## 1983

**Betty (Lindheim) Tovar (L79) (U83)** passed away on August 4, 2018. Betty did not have an obituary. She has two adult children, Jasper and

Samantha. She had breast cancer twice, which later spread. She was divorced and later found a partner who gave her life happiness, as they camped and traveled together.

## 2000

**Min Ding (U00)** passed away in his home on November 4, 2018, from a heart attack. An obituary was not available.

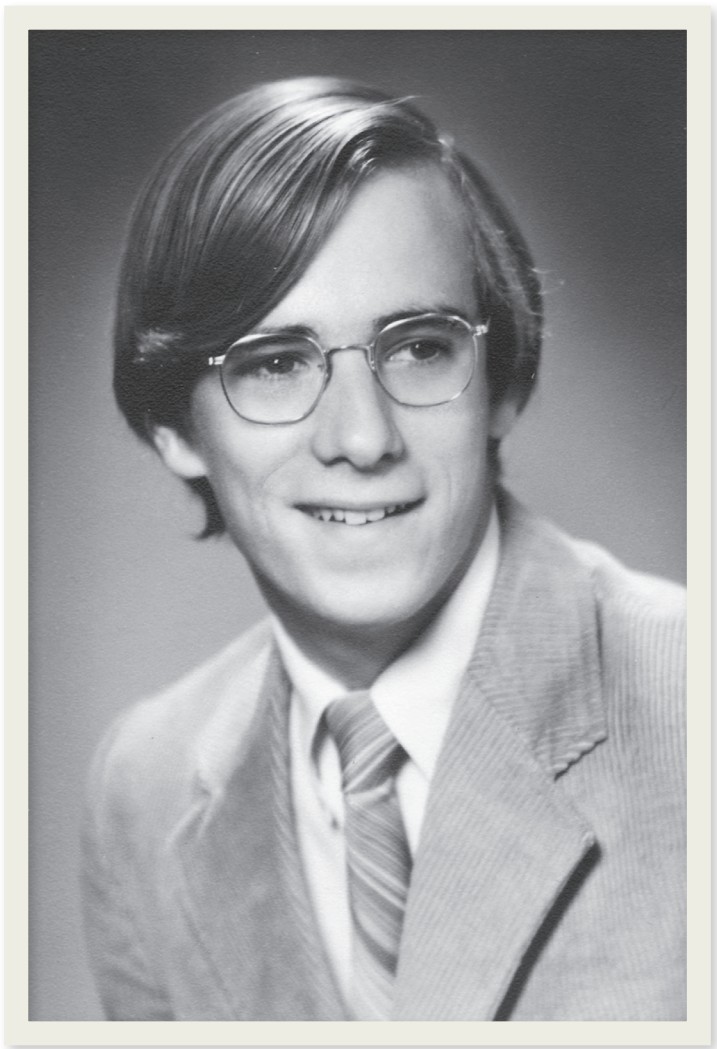
## 2017

**Marcella Peek (U17)** passed away on February 14, 2019, to complications with Type 1 diabetes. She leaves behind her loving parents, Karen and Steve; her siblings, Isabella (U14), Allison, Hannah, and Jeremiah; as well as cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, close friends, and her service dog, Jasper. Her mother wrote: “We are saddened by her loss, yet we are thankful to have had her for her wonderful, but short, life. Growing up in Reno she enjoyed hanging out at home with her friends, sitting on the rooftop stargazing, sledding on the mound behind the house, riding horses, wagon surfing down the driveway, biking on the trails, and especially playing and beating everyone at rummy, cribbage, and any other card or board games. She loved playing basketball, in addition to other sports such as tennis, golf, and a mean game of Mario Kart. Her style was eclectic and fanciful which led her to SCAD, Savannah College of Art and Design, where she was pursuing photography and motion media design. She was interested in every facet of art and design. Her love of design can still be seen in the remodels of her parents’ homes. She was the go-to person for aesthetic design questions and ideas. Taken way too soon, but a life lived full of adventure, she traveled to Europe, China, Costa Rica, and National Parks. She loved cross-country road trips, excursions to Tahoe, times spent in Jackson, Wyoming, with her grandpa, to Sandpoint and Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, with her Aunt, and Curaçao with her brother – some of her happy places. No words can express our loss and we thank everyone who holds her close in their hearts. Her smile and laughter will live on forever.”

## FACULTY AND STAFF

**John H. Williamson**, former Ojai Valley School teacher and administrator, died on March 17, 2019, after battling cancer for ten months. John died peacefully at home surrounded by his family. In his long career at OVS, John served as a middle school teacher, Summer Camp Director and Director of Admission. It was at OVS where he met his wife, Trisha (Hair) Williamson, and their son, Matthew, graduated from the Lower Campus. John was born February 20, 1960, in San Mateo, California, the son of Ronald Williamson and Kathryn Kennedy. He grew up in Northern California and Oregon, attending California High School (San Ramon), St. Mary’s College (Moraga), and the Monterey Institute of International Studies. John was a dedicated educator, having taught elementary and middle school in addition to having been an administrator. After leaving OVS, he worked at several schools in the Ventura Unified School District. John enjoyed being outdoors. He loved nature, gardening, hiking, travel, classic movies, sailing Hobie Cats and time with loved ones. He and Trisha had many travel adventures and were always saving for the next great exploration. John is survived by his wife and best friend, Trisha; his son Matthew (L08); mother Kathryn Kennedy of Arizona; sisters Melody Jenkins of Idaho and Jocelyn Ross of Arizona; nephews Daniel Jenkins, Jeff Ross, Ian Hair, and Dylan McClure; nieces Kimberlee Handy, Liz Jenkins, Jackee Randall, Diane Hair, Madison McClure; cousins Ken Donnelly, Kurt Donnelly, Ric Donnelly; and father-in-law, William Hair. John was predeceased in death by his father, Ronald Williamson, in 2006, and his mother-in-law, Judith Hair, in 2009. John’s family would like to extend their gratitude for the outpouring of support from ATLAS Elementary School, Portola Elementary School, Ojai Valley School, and from friends at various schools in Ventura Unified School District. The family would also like to thank UCLA Health, Community Memorial Hospital, St. John’s Regional Medical Center, and Livingston Memorial Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice for the care they provided.





I'm Sorry Ojai.

It Was Me,

Not You

Alumnus Paul McCandless published the following article on his blog and on Medium.com after OVS posted pictures from the 1969 yearbook on Facebook. He felt there was some unfinished business that required his attention ...

IN 1973 STEELY DAN released "My Old School" in which the lyric "I'm never going back to my old school" accurately expressed the relationship I intended to have as an Ojai Valley School alumnus.

Over the years, the distress I experienced whenever a high school memory would tumble out of my psyche's attic would be almost unbearable. Given the discomfort I had with anything "high school," the choice to be an alum in absentia was an easy one to make.

Now, I am forced to admit that I am an old man. I say "forced" because my wife insists on placing mirrors around the house. Her mirrors are unavoidable. So is aging.

Along with irrational fears of sudden

death and incurable disease, perspective has for me been an inescapable result of growing older. In spite of my best intentions I have, I think, been able to place my high school experience in clearer focus. Yet, whatever perspective and its first cousin (gulp) wisdom I've gained over the years hasn't come easily, believe me.

My relationship with my alma mater began to evolve in 2009. It was then I received an invitation from a friend to log into Facebook. I do not know to this day what possessed me to RSVP. Nevertheless, I did, and when I did I discovered Facebook's raison d'être, aside from disseminating cat videos and misinformation, is to connect one to others who attended the same high school.

No offense to all of my fellow alums with whom I've reconnected in the last 10 years, but I frankly never thought I would hear from or, let alone see any of you ever again. Fading into the foggy history of my high school years was my choice. It wasn't you, it was me.

I am the youngest child of a father who all his life, along with material gain, sought acceptance. My father's quest resulted in frequently relocating himself and, oh yeah, his family. My father's ambitions moved us from my birthplace in Cleveland, Ohio to New York, Wisconsin, Hawaii and finally to Southern California. When entering high school, I was moving again, to Ojai.

By the time I was 15, I had lived in 8 different homes in 5 different states, endured 4 kitchen re-models and had attended 7 different schools since kindergarten. Ojai was school number eight. The three years I was in Ojai would be the longest I stayed at any school until I entered grad school some twenty-plus years later.

Moving into a dorm at a boarding school requires packing for an extended stay. So, I packed my meager collection of Beatles, Cream and Jimi Hendrix albums, a reasonably ample supply of tightie whities, laundry detergent, a goofy grin, and enough internalized shame to choke a Clydesdale. I took the upper bunk.

When I arrived at Ojai, three powerful forces combined to influence my adjustment. One, I had a lifetime of experience being the new boy in school. Two, like my father, I longed for acceptance. And three, I was a child of an alcoholic whose disease was spinning out of control as I entered the tenth grade. In combination, all three aided me in masking my feelings behind a goofy grin and rigid compliance with the rules.

You see, when your internal world is a chaotic mess, you will grab ahold of anything providing containment. Drugs weren't an option at the time; they were against the rules. Nevertheless, when I reached the tenth grade and entered a new school, I needed all the containment I could glom on to.

While some of my more rebellious school mates chafed at the regimen of meals at regular times, study halls, lights out, and something called "Vespers" (I still don't know what "Vespers" means; I do know it's not an Italian-made scooter), I welcomed the structure boarding school provided.

For the three years I was at Ojai, the routine of school was something I hadn't had since early childhood. When I graduated, I was blown about the world like a tumbleweed. It would be over two decades before I would be able to provide for myself a structure that rivaled the one I had in high school.

Since Ojai Valley School was, and remains, a prep school, it was expected that all of us would go on to college. Most of us, including myself, did go on to a university. However, I didn't last long without the guardrails that Ojai provided. I dropped out of college after a few years and started working.

The intervening years from graduation in 1971 to the 2000s haven't all been bad, but a few have. There has been a divorce and a resultant bankruptcy. There have been way too many moves from place to place to count and losses. A lot of losses. I lost my mother. I lost my best friend and fellow OVS alum, Mike Candler. And I endured the loss of a lovely woman whom I dated for two and a half years who passed in my arms as we finished dinner celebrating her approval for a heart transplant

she desperately needed. Oh, and there was a time I nearly lost but wound up finding myself.

• • •

So Ojai, posting pictures from the 1969 yearbook has given me the opportunity to apologize. I am sorry. I am sorry for taking so long to acknowledge the role you played in my life. I shudder to think what may have become of me had you had not helped to develop the resiliency I've had to rely upon when I've faced adversity as an adult.

The time is also long overdue to extend my gratitude. So . . .

Thank you Mr. Enoch Wayne Russen for apologizing for the ground ball you hit at baseball practice, which nearly nullified my ability to procreate. Sure, you and everyone else thought it was funny at the time. Only now am I able to see the humor in an event that genuinely rendered me speechless.

Thank you JB Close for instilling in me a reverence for the written word. And thank you for the memory of you apologizing for being late for dinner because somehow your car found its way into the creek.

Thank you, Dr. Parsa. No, I still haven't done my sheets.

Thank you, Mr. Cooper, for demonstrating what character and commitment look like. I hated how much you had us run at soccer practice though. I still hate running. But the example you were is timeless. Thank you for making us write and write and write some more. As you might surmise, I'm still writing. I love it, and I hate it, but I am not going to stop.

Thank you, Joyce Biscoe, for trying to convince me not to set standards so high for myself that I could not possibly achieve them. You failed in your attempt. It wasn't you, it was me. I have, however, finally learned the lesson you tried so hard to teach me.

Thank you to all of my fellow alums with whom I've connected these last ten years. For a good part of my life, lasting relationships were not a strength of mine. Ironical, I know, for someone who is now a couples' therapist. Regardless, I am privileged to bear witness to your accomplishments, milestones, and tragedies. I guess having eaten, showered and slept with one another while in school indeed did result in creating a lasting bond.

Lastly, thank you Ojai Valley School for providing me a foundation of not only an education, but the sense of place that was a way station on my nomadic journey into adulthood. No amount of money could ever pay you back for what you have given me. I am forever grateful.





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