



People & Places

Int'l School of Yangon Adds Visual Delight to New School Wall

By: Jennifer Henbest de Calvillo

Art teacher, International School of Yangon, Myanmar



After September 11, 2001, The International School of Yangon built a wall around their school as part of their updated crisis plan. In September 2003 art teachers and students decided to add a bit

of color to the wall. The mixed media installation made of clay, steel, cut glass, cement, and teak took over a year and a half to finish. Seventh and eighth grade students chose a theme for the project and decided on local materials so the rain would not destroy the art. The entire project was designed and completed by ISY Middle School students. 🌐



Moja Prva Knjiga—My First Book

By: Joy Koller

Reading Specialist and Consultant



Students proudly show off their first books.

Croatia is etched into the minds of many of us in the west as a war zone of the 1990's. Fast forward to 2004 and Croatia is one of the world's newest countries. Some 5 million people inhabit this beautiful nation that has almost 2000 km of Adriatic coastline just across the straits from Italy.

With so much of the country's efforts focused on infrastructure and budgetary concerns—the job of stimulating the children and youth here to achieve their potential has been taken up by some forward thinking Non-governmental organizations.

In this environment, The Center for Neohumanistic Studies (CNS) and

Domachi—Association for Creative Development banded together with the patronage of the Ministry of Education to pilot a literacy project called "My First Book".

The participants are required to write and illustrate their own book, which is then to be submitted to a panel of 3 local prominent authors to determine the winner in each of the three age categories. The winning student entries will be published and those students will each spend a week with one of the author judges, where they will assist in editing their manuscripts and developing the illustrations. There will be exhibitions in schools, libraries, and museums of all books.

I first became aware of the project in mid 2004. What impressed me is that it encourages students to become self motivated and explore their literary talent and critical thinking skills, which is so vital in the context of education. It is an exercise of the mind that goes beyond any school's objectives in basic communication skills. Students will:

- Create an end-product;
- Experience the process of writing and illustrating their own stories;
- Become motivated to do their best work;
- Feel complete freedom to choose and explore their own interests, reflecting a wide variety of influences in their lives; and
- Exercise language art skills, reading, writing, spelling, grammar, listening, speaking and illustrating.

I began communicating with the co-coordinator of CNS to get some detail on the work being done—my enthusiasm took flight and I traveled to Croatia to get involved first hand.

I worked intensively with CNS to develop a detailed structure of how to both deliver and execute the project—clever planning was required as it is the first time this sort of competition has been run in Croatia on a national level and funding was tight.

At the beginning of September I banded together with Sanda Kovacevic, a Croatian graduate teacher, and Mihaela Trpcic, from the northern city of Karlovac, to both promote the competition in schools and run workshops to help students understand story form.

The reaction has been outstanding. Students have responded with enthusiasm and delight. Local media support has been phenomenal—we have appeared on TV and been written up in many of the papers.

We have received over 500 entries to date and are expecting to come close to the

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People & Places

Heeding an Olympic Calling Behind the Scenes of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games

By Dr. George Besculides

Superintendent, American Community Schools of Athens, Greece



George and Penny Besculides demonstrate their Greek and American spirit before venturing onto the floor of the Olympic stadium at this year's Summer Games in Greece.

I was born in Manhattan and attended elementary school in the area east of the Bronx. At the age of eighteen I tended bar for my parents. Both of my parents were Greek and had immigrated to the U.S. around the time of World War I. My wife, Penny, was born on the kitchen floor of her ancestral home in Nafaktos, Greece. She immigrated to the United States at the age of seven and was raised in Hot Springs, Arkansas by her uncle and had the distinction of being a classmate of Bill Clinton. So coming to Greece over 5 years ago to serve as Superintendent of the American Community Schools of Athens, was a homecoming of sorts to me and a true

one for Penny. Our upbringing was steeped in Greek culture. As a youth in New York I belonged to a Greek social club called the Olympians and attended a summer camp called Camp Olympia. So when there was a general call for volunteers for the Olympics it seemed like a natural choice for both of us.

Initially we volunteered to serve at the softball venue, since the ACS Athens athletic director served as the competition manager and venue director. It turned out that volunteering was a more involved process than we anticipated. There were applications followed by interviews. After months of waiting, a letter arrived saying we had been accepted! Several training sessions oriented us to our responsibilities. Penny was involved in information services for the

athletes. She got to sit in an air-conditioned room where the athletes came before and after each game. As a result, she had significant contact with all of them.

"There are 64,000 volunteers in the Olympics and only a few people will ever have the opportunity to be on the floor of an Olympic stadium."

I served as an athletic marshal. My responsibilities varied depending upon which position I was assigned. The outfield marshals were responsible for retrieving home run balls hit by players and ensuring that no one wandered into the area behind the outfield fence. While tiring to stand for hours on end, often in 32–38 degree weather, through two full games, one quickly forget one's backache when having the opportunity to return home run balls to the players. The marshals seated next to the dugouts were responsible for ensuring that the area stayed clear, particularly of press and photographers, during the games. They were also responsible to visually ensure that fans maintained an appropriate demeanor reflecting good sportsmanship. I was also assigned to the marshal position that helped in the "mixed zone." These marshals had the responsibility to ensure that after the game, only properly

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Moja Prva Knjiga— My First Book

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1000 mark by the time competition closes. Students write of social problems, environmental care, racial injustices, self-evaluation, love, political issues such as human rights, and the courage of the individual—as well as tackling some of the traditional genres such as ghost stories and fairy tales. Encouraged by pride in their work and the fact that their books would be available for everyone to see creates miracles. Students discover their hidden potential and find skills they little suspected themselves having.

"My first book" offers exciting publishing opportunities to students and an enjoyable experience that may change lives of students in an unforgettable way. 🌐

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