

by Christopher Murphy

No Strangers

RECENTLY ATTENDED A REUNION of some of my childhood classmates. I had not seen many of these men and women since we were all excited 14 years-olds, leaving the eighth grade of Holy Cross Elementary School and looking forward to—and maybe dreading, just a little—the prospect of four years at various high schools outside the sheltered little world we had known. As I drove to the reunion, I couldn't help but wonder if I'd really have a connection anymore with these, now middle aged, adults who just happen to have the same names as the kids I'd once played and studied with and explored what was for us, at that time, a world filled with fresh and untried emotions, ideas, and adventures.

I needn't have been concerned. As an evening full of old stories, many laughs, and a few cathartic revelations was winding down one of my classmates, now a successful Wall Street player, smiled and said to the group, "You know, this seems less like a reunion and more like we've all just returned from summer vacation!"

The intensity of those early-life experiences—the joys, the tears, and the shared lessons learned—had bound us together in a way that even the ensuing 35 years could not disrupt. We were all profoundly shaped by what had happened to us then, and although we are certainly very much changed, the formative events we went through together still help to define who we are.

Our cover story in this issue, "Opening Young Eyes" takes a close look at the importance of starting international education in the K-12 years. Unquestionably, the world that will face the elementary and high school students of today is very different from the one my classmates and I faced in our own transitions to adulthood. But the passion of life we all experience in our youth makes it the best possible time to introduce intercultural concepts and international experiences. Often, in ways we don't even realize, the times of our young lives delineate the men and women we will become.

There were no strangers at my reunion.

Also in this Issue...

China is on everyone's radar these days. From the White House to corporate board rooms, the current and future relationship with that vast and important country is on the collective mind. In our special section, *IE* examines the strong attraction that China holds for U.S. students and the implications for higher education. **IE**

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