

PANAMERICANA



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Desiree Gutierrez, Editor

PAN AM REMEMBERS ELENA REISNER

Elena Reisner, 86, the wife of the late Sherwood Reisner, the first headmaster of Presbyterian Pan American School, passed away March 2, 2009 in Falls Church, Virginia.

She was born on June 1, 1922 in Inverness, Scotland to John A. Mackay and Jane Mackay.

Mrs. Reisner grew up in various parts of South America and Mexico until her family settled in Princeton, New Jersey, where she graduated from high school.

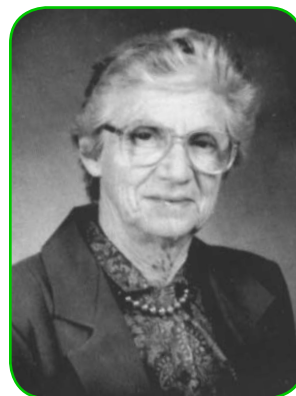
She received degrees in English from Wellesley College and Columbia University.

She was married for 44 years to Mr. Reisner, who served as President for Pan Am from 1956 to 1980. He passed away in 1990.

Mrs. Reisner served as interim president for Pan Am from 1990 to 1991 and lived in Kleberg County from 1957 to 1999. She was an Elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Kingsville.

When thinking of Mrs. Reisner, prepositions class sticks out the most for Suzanne Morales, Pan Am Class of 1973.

"I will remember Mrs. Reisner and prepositions. She made her mission clear. She was going to do whatever it would take to get her students to understand. She jumped out of the classroom, under the desk, on the chair, in the closet, all for the sake of our understanding. What an amazing teacher. I am one of the seeds Mrs. Reisner sowed in her lifetime. Her teachings



will live on in my creations. I am so grateful that she cared," Suzanne said

Rita Naranjo Gonzalez, Class of 1960, said that Mrs. Reisner taught through religious literature, hymns, and prayer.

"Mrs. Reisner encouraged and taught correct posture, dress, and table manners. As seniors, we dressed and had tea at the President's house. She was a wonderful role model who continued to teach by example. I knew her for many years and she never stopped teaching, or that is how I saw her. She was my teacher, my friend," Rita said.

Rita was invited by Mrs. Reisner in 1990 to return to Pan Am as the girl's dorm parent. The two worked hard and long hours that year, Rita said.

Leopoldo Rodriguez Ardon, Class of 1974, came to Pan Am from the tropical country of Honduras.

"I or my parents didn't think that I would need any winter clothes. It was Mrs. Reisner who gave me my first

brand new reversible black and green winter jacket, which kept me warm the three following years that I lived at Pan Am. I have always said that most of what I do today is due to the great influence which Pan Am had on my life while I loved, studied and worked there, and especially Mrs. Reisner, who was like a mother for me. I thank Mrs. Reisner for her influence in my younger years," he said.

Carmen L. Gonzales graduated from Pan Am in 1968 and returned to take on the role of school secretary in 1974. In 1988, she became the business manager.

"The only thing I can say is that I regret not being able to say goodbye to Mrs. Reisner. She was my teacher, my boss, but most important my friend. She was one very special lady to me and my family. She gave me my bridal shower, my first baby shower, and never forgot my birthday. I will always feel that I never thanked her enough for all the things she did for me. I will always think of her as one of the best friends I ever had," Carmen said.

Mrs. Reisner is survived by her daughter Ruth Brock of Falls Church, Virginia and her son James Reisner of Plano, Texas, along with four grandchildren and six great grandchildren. She is also survived by two sisters, Isobel Metzger of Princeton, New Jersey and Ruth Russell of Columbus, Ohio and a brother, Duncan Mackay of Washington, D.C.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

~DR. JAMES MATTHEWS

This past month has been a particularly challenging time for me. Needless to say, with the economy in the tank the school is struggling, but raising money to support this mission work has always been a challenge...and from all indications it always will be a challenge. And needless to say, any time you are faced with an accreditation review there are pressures that take a toll on anyone in a leadership role, on their patience and sense of humor. So why is this month any more difficult than any other month in the past twelve years? Figuratively speaking, everyone has an Achilles heel. Mine has always been moderation, especially with regards to physical activity. I seem incapable of doing things leisurely or sedately: I walk leaning ahead; I ski straight downhill; I fish with total intensity. My children claim that I have two speeds...fast and sleep. While I



can't prove it, I probably even sleep hard, which is to say full speed ahead.

Literally speaking, my Achilles heel turned out to be my Achilles heel, which I tore completely a few weeks ago diving for a shot on the racquetball court. At that moment I learned a new speed – STOP. My doctor told me to “put it on ice” and I don’t think he just meant the foot. My secretary just chuckled and said “no more racquetball

for a while.” And the orthopedic surgeon who sewed the tendon back together said “big life-style changes” and I now realize he meant changes for the rest of my life.

It may have been foolish of me to be cavorting around in a young man’s arena, but it would be even more foolish not to learn something from this injury...something about my own personal limits to be sure, but even more profoundly about God’s timing. You see, at exactly the time we have had to face reality and slow down our capital expansion campaign, God put me on ice in order to give me a clearer sense of things.

I will never forget, as long as I live, something a student said in prayer during my first year at Pan Am. “Thank You Lord for problems, for without them we would not know you and your power.”

SCHOLARSHIP PROFILE

~REYNALDO TORRES



As a sophomore at Presbyterian Pan American School, Reynaldo Torres, 16 of Valle Hermosa, Tamaulipas, has been

named to the President’s List twice for maintaining an average of 95 or better.

Both times, he was the youngest on the short list of four students—the others being seniors.

“I am focused on goals and tasks. Being in school, studying and getting good grades is one step closer to a good future. School always comes first,” he said.

Reynaldo is spending his first year at Pan Am and like many other students, came to learn English.

“It’s a universal language and important to get a job and have many opportunities in the future,” he said.

Reynaldo is the youngest of Rolando and Rosario’s four children. All reside two hours away in Valle Hermosa, except for Reynaldo’s oldest sister, who lives an hour away in Corpus Christi. Reynaldo’s father is a farmer and his mother, a homemaker.

At Pan Am, Reynaldo enjoys his math class and spending time with his friends. His favorite, though, is singing as a tenor in the school’s Morris Chapel Choir.

“I like to sing and I am learning how to breathe correctly to demonstrate good notes while singing,” he said.

Reynaldo not only enjoys singing but listens to a variety of genres as well. Music helps him relax, he said.

Before Reynaldo came to Pan Am, he was not a frequent churchgoer but that soon changed.

“The pastor told me Jesus is connected with the life of everybody, not only me, but everybody,” he said. “I feel better with myself when I go and comfortable singing to praise God.”

Although, Reynaldo has two years before he graduates, he knows that he wants to major in chemical engineering in the U.S., obtain a law degree and study classical music to one day become a choir director.

Reynaldo, like the majority of students, earns good grades, stays active and works six hours a week on campus, to maintain his scholarship, allowing him to receive his education at Pan Am.

“Those that support the school in order for us to receive financial assistance gives us students opportunities,” he said. “We are the future and they make it possible for us to become something.”

ALUM SPOTLIGHT BARBARA ACOSTA ROZO

Since a young age, Barbara Acosta Rozo, had longed to study abroad to learn about different cultures and visit new places.

Barbara, who was originally from Colombia but moved to Honduras, was told about Presbyterian Pan American School by a co-worker of her mother, Leopoldo Rodriguez, Pan Am Class of 1974.

"My family always saw Pan Am as a blessing, an answer to our prayers," Barbara said. "It was the perfect place to live and learn in a Christian environment, an opportunity for me to grow as a person far from home but close to home at heart."

But when Barbara arrived to Pan Am, she had changed her mind. She would be alone and she wanted to go back home.

"I remember sitting at the gazebo with my dad and turning to him in tears, asking him to take me back with

him. His answer was, 'Let's try it for a year, if you still want to go home by then, you may go back,'" Barbara said. "When my dad left, my perception of Pan Am slowly started to change. I got used to the hotness of the summer, but far more important, I got to know the heart of Pan Am—its people."

Barbara's experience at Pan Am became an unforgettable one, she said.

"I learned to appreciate my family, to be thankful for all the blessings I had, to share with others and to seek God's guidance everyday," she said. "Leaving one's family at a short age is hard, but sharing that with a hundred other kids creates a special bond between them."

After Barbara graduated from Pan Am in 2003, she attended College of the Southwest in New Mexico, majoring in biology because she wanted to attend medical school. Since College of the Southwest did not have a

premedical school orientation, Barbara transferred to Dordt College in Iowa her sophomore year.

That Christmas, Barbara visited home and her father suffered facial paralysis caused by stress. She decided to rethink her life priorities—putting her family first.

Barbara is currently in her fifth year of medical school in Honduras, close to her family and studying hard to be the best doctor she can to serve her people, she said.

"I remember my experiences from abroad as enriching. The people I met, the places I visited, all of that makes me a better person, a well-rounded individual," Barbara said. "But I am thankful to the Lord for making me understand there is more to life than growing as a person, because we achieve nothing by growing if we do not share our growth with others, especially our loved ones."

YOUTH GROUP DONATES TO THREE CHARITIES

The youth of Presbyterian Pan American School have requested that \$500 of the offerings received at chapel each Sunday be sent to each of the following three charities, Heifer Project International, Mission Presbytery and Pennies for Patients, on their behalf.

"They have chosen these particular ones because they all represent mission opportunities that continue to give beyond their one central gift and represent the most people touched with their gifts," said Pan Am Pastor Josyph Andrews.

This year, the youth group consists of 40 students.

"It feels good to help other people," said Youth Member Jimena Hernandez, 17-year-old Junior. "We wanted to contribute and help more than one charity so we chose three and they all get the same amount."

Heifer Project International is an organization that helps impoverished families worldwide through livestock and training. Heifer International works with livestock and agriculture to develop

programs that alleviate hunger and poverty.

"They chose the Heifer project because the family that receives the heifer must learn how to care for it and once that heifer has her first calf, then that calf is passed on to another family and the cycle is repeated," Pastor Josyph said.

Mission Presbytery is planning a mission trip in July to build a church, no bigger than a three-car garage, in the village of Candelario in Guatemala for 104 church going Mayan men, women and children, who have no church to worship in. Mission Presbytery, Committee for Service and Support to the Maya Quiche and the Guatemala Partnership Team are asking for support to fund the estimated cost of \$29,000 to build the church, which will be named Divino Libertad.

"The gift to the Mission Presbytery Summer Project is a portion of a gift to build a chapel in a remote village in Guatemala where there are over 100 believers with no place to worship,"

Pastor Josyph said.

Pennies for Patients is a program for schools nationwide to raise funds to help cure leukemia and other blood-related cancers. It is a two-week campaign in which students of all ages are encouraged to donate spare change to The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

Pastor Josyph said the students chose Pennies for Patients because the search for a cure for Leukemia is an ongoing battle and affects so many.

"I am so very proud that the students chose to give some of their money to better the lives of others," said Ellie Perez, Pan Am Counselor. "It came from their heart and for that I am proud to be part of the PPAS family. I thank the students for being so loving."

For Youth Member Ilse Ibarra, Pennies for Patients is close to her heart.

"Those kids may not have the resources and maybe we can make a dream come true," said Ibarra, 17-year-old Junior, "and we can make a difference."

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

~TANIA MARISOL BARREIRO

In her first year at Presbyterian Pan American School, Tania Marisol Barreiro, 19, formed friendships quickly with her outgoing personality and even earned the title of Cheerleading Captain.

"My father is in the Mexican Navy so I moved around a lot," she said. "We moved every two years so I learned to make friends fast."

While Marisol was in elementary school, she changed schools every year. In the fourth grade, she attended a school in San Antonio and in Maryland, both for four months. In middle school, she attended four different schools.

Marisol, as she is known at Pan Am, graduated from high school in Mexico, where she managed to stay all four years, but enrolled in Pan Am as a senior to learn English.

As the oldest of three, she left her home in Mexico City, where her family currently resides.

"I knew it was a great opportunity for me to come and I was excited about the new experience," she said. "And although I was sad because it was the first time leaving my family, growing is a part of life."

Marisol came to Pan Am in July of 2008 for Intensive English Program and started the fall semester in August.

"I like living here on campus. It's great. It's quiet and peaceful—a change from Mexico City, where it's noisy. It is the most amazing experience being here and I've learned to be more tolerant, punctual and respectful," she said.



Marisol shares the largest suite in the girl's dormitory with four other senior girls. Marisol keeps busy with her academic schedule including classes such as history, biology and math, which happens to be her favorite. In addition to the cheerleading squad, she is also part of the school's choir and youth group.

"It was a surprise for me because I didn't expect to get that position but it was a great experience and sometimes I had more responsibilities than the others," she said.

Out of a 16-member cheer squad, the Mazatlan Sinaloa, Mexico native was chosen.

Choir is fun for Marisol, she said, although it is not new to her. She was in choir at her previous schools. Being part of the youth group, however, is new to her.

"It is amazing how you can be with God and have fun and the same time," Marisol said. "I learned how one or two hours on Sundays is nothing, compared to all the blessings that God is giving us."

Learning English and being independent is essential to Marisol,

but religion also plays an important role in her life.

"When I got here, I became more connected with God. Everyone may have different ideas, but it's the same—it's God, its faith.

Pan Am thrives on their mission to build young Christian leaders and for Marisol, it does just that.

"It's a great school and the mission is something that we need for a better standard of life," she said. "The institution helps you not just in academic life but also prepares you for real life."

Marisol is ready to start her future after she graduates in May of 2009. She has been accepted to the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas and hopes to take courses that will certify her to become a flight attendant for a major airline in Mexico.

And thanks to the donations provided by the churches and individuals who generously support Pan American School, Marisol was able to attend and have better opportunities.

"Those who donate to the school are helping students like me to prepare for a better future. Thank you for making dreams possible," she said. "It's amazing these days that good people still exist. They are angels on Earth."

Tania Marisol Barreiro and many others students at Pan Am, thanks to our supporters, are preparing themselves for lives of Christian leadership, to take their places in God's world and to do so for His glory.

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

~MARY REYES

Mary Reyes is not only familiar with teaching Bible and Spanish at Presbyterian Pan American School but has become acquainted with the students because of her job as girls' dorm director.

The only difference—Bible and Spanish class ends after 45 minutes and the responsibilities of being a parent to 55 girls does not.

"I felt that I could do a good job as a dorm parent," Mary said. "And it's tiring at times but rewarding and satisfying too. It gives them a homelike atmosphere."

Mary, of San Luis Potosi, Mexico, has been teaching for 33 years. She attended Mary Hardin Baylor University, Ibero American University, University of Madrid and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She holds a bachelor's degree in Bible and Spanish and a master's in Spanish and religious education.

"I enjoy the challenge and satisfaction of contributing to students' future Christian development," Mary said. "Some of the students are different to teach sometimes, but the potential they represent is a daily challenge and I'm also glad to be a part of their growth."



Before coming to Pan Am, Mary was the International Student Development Coordinator for Valley Baptist Academy in Harlingen. She came to Pan Am three years ago.

"I prayed to the Lord to come to a wonderful place like this," she said. "The campus is a unique place. The faculty is friendly and easy to work with, and they share common interests. The administration is cooperative, fair and stands behind you."

Mary is currently teaching two classes of the New Testament and sets goals for herself.

"I strive to be the best teacher possible, a positive influence to the students and be there for their problems and concerns," she said.

Mary also has expectations for her students. "I want students to stay in school, apply the Biblical concept they have learned to their daily lives and challenge them to graduate and pursue higher education," she said.

To Mary, a teacher is a person that wants to impart and share knowledge with a willing student and sees the results and changes in the students as they apply their knowledge to their lives.

"Teaching is an inward calling," she said, "and a good teacher is one who sees the fruits of his or her labor being applied in their lives of students in positive ways."

Every summer for the past 28 years, Mary has taken students to Israel and Europe. This year, some Pan Am students will go to England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Greek Islands and Turkey for 20 days.

"I fell in love with traveling," she said, "and I will go to great lengths to further my students' understanding of the teachings of the Bible. I have done everything that I've ever wanted to do because of the Lord."