



AIGLON
Switzerland



School

To mark Aiglon's 65th year, alumni and staff remember Aiglon's founder, John Corlette.

People

Do you remember Mürgerli's? Mr and Mrs Mürgerli talk shop.

Mountain

As the meadows around Aiglon explode into colour, we explore the enduring fascination of alpine flowers.

Ideas

Where is home? In a house, a country, or just in your head?

AIGLON
The Magazine of Aiglon College

ISSUE 2 VOLUME 1
SUMMER 2014

AIGLON
THE MAGAZINE



Photography by Warren & Nick

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AIGLON
ISSUE 2 VOLUME 1
SUMMER 2014



AIGLON

THE MAGAZINE

Contents

Aiglonology

- 02 Letters
- 03 News
- 05 View from the mountain
- 07 Here's looking at you
- 08 Around the mountain
- 09 Diary
- 13 Staff room

A+

- 41 Hello Aiglon!
- 43 Why I love...
- 44 Behind the scenes
- 46 Sports
- 48 Hitched

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Mountain cowslip (Primula auricula)
Photograph by Marcus Ginns



Features



Private passion

Geography teacher Mr Steven Saunders talks bikes, races and hair-pin bends. **page 10**



Laid bare

Aiglon Magazine takes a look inside the Sports Hall store. **page 14**



A sense of home

Aiglon students and alumni share the objects that mean 'home' to them. **page 16**



A life in balance

Alumni and staff remember Aiglon's founder, John Corlette. **page 24**



Flora Alpina

As the meadows around Aiglon explode into a riot of colour, we explore the fascination of the alpine flower. **page 28**



A knife's tale

Invented in the 1880s and still going strong, the Swiss army knife has enduring appeal. **page 34**

Editor's letter

When we were considering how to put Aiglon 'onto the page', one of my hopes was that we would reflect the unique spirit of the school and evoke the memories and feelings of being here. After the publication of the first *Aiglon Magazine* last December, many of you wrote to us to express your approval or perplexity with regard to this new approach – but as I hoped, it left few of you indifferent. We will keep trying to delight and move you; please keep telling us how we are doing.

The magazine is designed to mirror the seasonality of the alpine setting that makes Aiglon a special place to study and live. In this, our first summer edition, we report the full season's ski-racing results and, on page 46, turn our thoughts to tennis and football. On page 28 our slopes emerge from the snow, allowing the wonder and beauty of alpine flowers to be revealed. And as we prepare to welcome many of you back to Villars in July to celebrate 65 years since Aiglon was founded in 1949, on page 24 we include an intimate profile of the school's founder, John Corlette. We spoke to a handful of those who knew Corlette well and asked them to recount their personal experiences. The result is a succinct but faceted portrait of the remarkable man whose vision of 'an English boarding school in the Alps' continues to thrive.

It was a special joy to interview and photograph students for our story about home, on page 16. We asked them what made Aiglon feel like a 'home away from home' and their answers were amusing, refreshing and engaging. No doubt many of you who called Aiglon home for many years will hear an echo of your own school days. The photos of the students capture their diverse characters – and some of the enduring traits of Aiglonians. Please share your 'sense of home' with us on Facebook, Twitter and on aiglonlife.ch, our dedicated space for alumni online.

And finally, we would love it if you would send us a postcard (page 41), let us help celebrate your wedding (page 48) or tell us what you think. We are always delighted to hear from you by letter, email or via social media.

Joelle Lambiotte du Lac
Director of Advancement



-  School
-  Mountain
-  People
-  Mind
-  Body
-  Spirit

Letters

Reader's letters



Your piece on skis (*Aiglon 01*) reinvoked my own connection to Aiglon-specific ski equipment—and by connection I am referring only in part to the leather safety straps that tethered me to my gear during the unforgettable year I attended Aiglon 40 years ago. I may not always be able to find my car in the supermarket parking lot, but I can still, in my mind's eye, trace the path between Belvedere and Col de Bretaye.

The time I spent as a 10-year-old at Aiglon is defined by all sorts of numbers. *Three-hundred-forty-three* was stitched into every piece of clothing I wore at the school. *Five* was the per diem (in Swiss francs) received by students dispatched into the mountains for an overnight short-ex. Your stunningly illustrated and historically robust survey of alpine gear added another number to my mental registry: *One-hundred-eight-five*. That's the length, in centimeters, of the battered Fischers on which Monsieur Stump tried to teach me to *wedel*.

Allen Kurzweil
(Belvedere, 1978)
Fischer 185 cm,
Marker Expedition bindings,
Lange boots

Thanks very much for the fine new *Aiglon Magazine*. We loved the refreshed format, the interviews with alumni such as Tom Meadowcroft and the themes you covered, such as *Silence* and *Lessons for life, learnt at altitude*.

Kees van Ophem
Aiglon parent (2005-2012)
General Counsel & VP
Corporate Management
Leica

Congratulations. I am so relieved to see Aiglon presenting itself in a relevant, useful, interesting and editorially beautiful way. The magazine encompasses all the values of the school's principles. It is not a boring 'school' magazine but a good read too. We all feel passionately about our special school and you have brought this to life.

Julietta Dexter
(Chantecler, 1987)
Life member
Director
The Communications Store

One of the best end-of-year surprises was the new *Aiglon Magazine!* The layout and photographs are excellent, the contents interesting, seriously researched and well written – and once I started reading I couldn't put it down. The old glossy magazine always used to land on the recycling pile pretty quickly – this one is something to save and show others with pride. Thank you and good luck!

Marcia Phillips
(Exeter, 1987)
Research Group Permafrost
and Snow Climatology
WSL Institute for Snow
and Avalanche Research SLF

Is this supposed to replace *Aiglon Life*? If it's supposed to be in addition, all well and good; but if it's intended to replace it, it fails dismally.

Patrick Roberts
(Teacher, 1965-1987)

Editor: Definitely in addition!
Aiglon Life has moved online to
www.aiglonlife.ch.

We are always delighted to receive your letters.
Please email
advancement@aiglon.ch
or write to:
Aiglon Magazine,
Aiglon College, 1885 Chesières,
Switzerland.

News



Volunteers & donors' weekend

Volunteers and donors enjoyed an overview of Aiglon's emerging social media presence and a peek at the final stages of the strategic Campus Masterplan. Aiglon volunteers and donors, the next weekend will be: February 7–8, 2015.

Celebrating 65 on skis

In March, Aiglonians came together for two glorious weekends in the mountains, in Mammoth, California and then in Villars to celebrate the 65th anniversary. As well as the skiing, alumni enjoyed meeting old friends and reviving the Aiglon spirit. Join us in the US and Villars in March 2015. www.aiglonlife.ch

Torch-lit descent

The Class of 2014 made their final trek down the mountain at the annual Torchlight Descent, marking the last day of the ski season. Following long-held tradition, students skied down holding flambeaux. **Jonathan Fackelmeyer** (Belvedere, 1995), Vice President of the Aiglon Alumni Association, welcomed Aiglon's newest alumni and, in his city tweeds, showed them how it should be done, skiing down the mountain, his torch still burning bright at the finish.

It's a wonderful play

Aiglon students wowed audiences with their production of *It's a Wonderful Life* in December. Not to be outdone, in May the juniors' theatre showcase included vignettes from a wide range of plays and poems including Shakespeare and Kipling.

Art Basel

Princess Alia Al-Senussi (Chantecler, 2000) kindly hosted Aiglon parents and alumni as VIP guests at Art Basel Hong Kong on 19 May and at the event's home in Basel, Switzerland on 19 June.

His Highness the Aga Khan

Aiglon College is honoured to welcome **His Highness the Aga Khan**, the spiritual leader of Shia Ismaili Muslims, as the 2014 Graduation Speaker on June 21.

Aiglonology



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HEAD MASTER RICHARD MCDONALD

View from the mountain



The mountain: of all the natural physical entities most cited in a metaphorical context, there can be few that compare in stature and frequency. Mount Olympus: seat of the ancient Greek gods; Mount Fuji, iconic source of artistic inspiration, one of Japan's three holy mountains and a place of pilgrimage; Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*; making mountains out of molehills; if the mountain will not come to Muhammad, then Muhammad will come to the mountain. All of these manage to harness the enormity, the mystery, the enigma and the sense of challenge that the mountain universally represents.

At Aiglon we talk about living 'on the mountain'. It would be more precise to say we live halfway up a mountain. In many ways this mid-point gives us a richer view, physically and metaphorically, than if we were perched on a summit. Significantly, it prompts us to cast our eyes upwards as well as downwards. Let us inhabit this metaphor for a moment: if we see our life, or the challenges within it, as a mountain to be climbed, we are constantly able to look upwards, downwards, outwards and inwards. Each of these gives us a new perspective. Where have we come from? Where are we heading to? What lies around us and beyond us? What lies within us? Why are we making this ascent? How do we synthesise all of these to develop a coherent view of life and the world?

A holistic education prompts us to examine all of these six fundamental questions, initially through the more conventional subject pathways – history, science, geography and the social sciences, language and communication, literature, the arts, theory of knowledge – but ultimately by encouraging us to experience and engage with the mountain. It has become a self-evident truth for generations of Aiglon students past and present that expeditions in the



Aiglon, perched between valley floor, summit and sky, lives astride a metaphor.

mountains exemplify, metaphorically and physically, that ultimate spirit of engagement. Our breathlessness, our elation, our frustrations, our sense of achievement, our self-doubt, our self-confidence, our sense of loneliness, our sense of belonging, our fears, our aspirations – all of these are hammered out on the ancient anvil of our earth's geomorphic uprisings.

Aiglon, perched between valley floor, summit and sky, lives astride a metaphor.



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HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

Kit Rogers (Alpina, 1985)

Words:
ANNE WOLLENBERG
Photographs:
MARCUS GINNS



"Being at sea is a bit like being on a mountain," says **Kit Rogers** (Alpina, 1985). "You have to be resourceful and fairly tough in some respects. I loved the outdoor aspect of Aiglon."

After a degree in biochemistry at Oxford, Rogers spent 11 years at sea doing benign (non-harmful) whale research and assisting film crews from the BBC and Discovery Channel. He spent five years on board *The Odyssey*, a boat owned by Roger Payne – who was the first person ever to record whale song. "We tried putting cameras on whales and even did the first ever electrocardiogram of a sperm whale," he remembers.

He sailed from Alaska and Hawaii to Costa Rica and the Galapagos, where he met his wife, Jessie. The BBC helped them buy a 60-foot yacht, *Silurian*, which was used to film much of the TV series *The Blue Planet*. "We were good at finding whales and dolphins, and getting people into the water with them. Life at sea is just normal life in a moving home, except it's small and things break!"

These days, Rogers has four sons and is based on land in Hampshire, where he divides his time between teaching astronomy and managing Jeremy Rogers Limited, the family boat-building business. Brother Simon (Alpina, 1984) runs internationally renowned Rogers Yacht Design and David (Delaware, 1991) is a successful potter.

Rogers is still inspired by his love for the world around him. While teaching at local secondary school, Priestlands, he has encouraged pupils to get involved in eco-friendly activities including restoring a walled garden, growing vegetables and raising their own pigs.

"In terms of shaping me, Aiglon opened my eyes to the world and different cultures," Rogers reflects. "It made me realise that all humans are fundamentally the same."

Life at sea is just normal life in a moving home, except it's small and things break!

AROUND THE MOUNTAIN

Mind, body and spirit(s)

Words:
SANDRA HAURANT
Photos:
MARCUS GINNS



A sudden need for chocolate, a craving for a treat, or a longing for fresh fruit outside mealtimes ... Mürgerli's has been providing a little something for Aiglon's students for 40 years, and the student body's appetite is one that is not easy to sate. Of course, for a growing boy or girl, hunger can strike at any time. And when that happens, whether or not you have time to get dressed is neither here nor there.

"When Delaware house was just behind us, the boys used to come down in their dressing gowns and slippers on Sundays," laughs **Graziella Mürgerli**, daughter of the original owners, **Mr and Mrs Mürgerli**, who still run the shop. "They would knock at the back door when they were up too late for breakfast on a Sunday morning. Sometimes they'd come in the evenings and knock and say 'Madame we need pasta, the food was awful tonight!'"

These days, pyjama-clad visitors no longer appear at the back door, perhaps because Delaware is now further away from the shop, or more likely because the choice of food at school these days is so varied. But there are plenty of other reasons to call by at Mürgerli's. "There are certain items that I stock up on when the students are here. They love sweets, iced tea and other drinks, the yoghurt drinks. A lot of the girls love to buy fresh fruit, or sometimes ingredients for baking cakes."



Above: Mrs Mürgerli enigmatically scotches rumours that she used to leave drinks round the back of the shop for older students to collect!

The relationship between Mürgerli's and Aiglon began when the store began delivering food for the kitchens, but over time this part of the business was no longer needed and individual customers became a mainstay. Graziella remembers the store delivering food for founder John Corlette, and even recalls him coming to the store when she was a child, although more often than not his chauffeur or housekeeper would come in his place. "He was a very discreet man, very distinguished and polite," says Graziella.

The Mürgerlis enjoy being a part of Aiglon's daily life, and appreciate the buzz in the village during term time. "The students bring a lot of atmosphere to the village and make it come alive," she says. "The children we see are nice, polite, they don't cause any trouble. On the odd occasion, I've had to intervene when they have been having arguments with each other, though!"

Far left: Mürgerli's colourful interior with miniature trolleys at the ready.

Left: Mr & Mrs Mürgerli and daughter Graziella.



Above: Mürgerli's entrance

Right: Mürgerli's 'bear' necessities of life: sweets galore – always popular amongst Aiglon's visitors to the shop.

Below: Trigger happy! Back from hospital, Mr Mürgerli is immediately back on the shop floor stocking the shelves and pricing items.



JUNE – DECEMBER 2014

Diary



For further information or to book an event visit www.aiglonlife.ch

3-6 July; 24-26 October Celebrating 65: Villars & NYC

Join us in Villars from Thursday 3 July to celebrate Aiglon's 65th anniversary in style. Meet old friends and new at a packed programme of events including the ever-popular Aiglon Golf Tournament, mountain activities including meditation and the opportunity to experience a tandem paragliding flight and a gala dinner and dance. For more information and to register, visit our website. And in New York City, Aiglonians from around the globe will be gathering from Friday 24 October for the final anniversary event. We are planning something very special, so keep checking your emails! www.aiglonlife.ch/events

11 & 12 October Le Golf!

Aiglon golfers are invited to the south of France on 11-12 October for a tournament kindly sponsored by an Aiglon parent at the Domaine de Barbossi, Cannes. All proceeds go to the John Corlette Scholarship fund. Information at www.aiglon.ch/golf

19 November Hélène de Beir

The annual Hélène de Beir Lecture will take place on 19 November at Exeter Hall. Hélène de

Beir (Clairmont, 1992) was killed in Afghanistan while undertaking relief work for Médecins Sans Frontières. Her father, **Mr Francis de Beir**, set up the Hélène de Beir Foundation in her memory and invites an inspirational speaker to Aiglon every year.

November Private View

Join us in London this November for champagne and a talk titled "Walls of Freedom – Street Art from the Egyptian Revolution". An Aiglon family will share important contemporary art works by Egyptian street artists from their private collection. For more information visit www.aiglonlife.ch/events or contact the Advancement Office.

15 December Starry nights

Join us in hoping for cloudless skies for our next Public Star Party on 15 December. Students, staff and members of the public will be able to view the beauty of the night sky using the telescope in our Kalouti Observatory. The event is run by **Mr John Turner**, Head of Physics, and students at AiglonSPACE will be on hand to talk about the wonders of the stars. For more information, or to help Aiglon's students explore the universe, visit www.aiglon.ch/nightsky

PRIVATE PASSION

Steven Saunders

Geography teacher,
Belvedere house parent



Words:
ANNE WOLLENBERG
Photographs:
MARCUS GINNS,
IAN GC WHITE

had punctures or cramps every time I've done it," he says. Most recently, he won the *populaire* category in local series Giron du Rhône.

As a geography teacher, he enjoys having a mental map of the local area. "As a cyclist, you get to know every back street and every little lane. You don't experience places in the same way if you're driving a car." Cycling to work is something he misses, he adds. "You arrive feeling energised and positive because you've used your heart and lungs and you haven't been sitting in a traffic jam."

These days, Mr Saunders tries to ride every day if possible, selecting a bike according to his mood and the weather. "If it's wet, I'll go out on a cross-country mountain bike as it's the most rugged and least dangerous," he says. "I did a morning meditation last year about being caught in a storm on a bike in

the woods." He also takes groups of students mountain-biking and says he loves incorporating his passion for cycling into his job. "It's great to be able to share that with the students. We've got some really keen mountain-bikers at Aiglon."

But although they may be keen, application is still essential. Good cycling, says Mr Saunders, comes down to hard work. "More than a lot of sports, it rewards the person who's willing to work hard. The harder you train, the faster you go. It doesn't really hurt any less, though. You just go faster!"

Mr Saunders' current bikes are:
a Specialized S-Works Tarmac road bike, a downhill Canfield Brothers The One, an all-mountain Yeti 575 and a cross-country Boardman Pro 29er.

"I've only got four bikes right now," says geography teacher and Belvedere house parent **Mr Steven Saunders**. "There have been times when I've had seven. We're really well-served for mountain-biking in Villars, so I've bought bigger and bigger bikes."

Mr Saunders says he's "a big romantic" when it comes to bikes. "As a kid, they gave me my first taste of freedom. My brother and I rode miles to see friends," he remembers. "It's a very free thing to ride a bike. You just have the cost of buying it and then all the energy comes from you. I still find that very liberating."

Cycling became a more serious pastime almost by accident. Mr Saunders took up rowing while studying at Staffordshire University and then joined Molesey Boat Club in Surrey. "I bought a bike to cross-train in summer and realised I was beating everyone up climbs in the Surrey Hills, so I took up racing and progressed very quickly."

His most memorable race was the Grand Raid Swiss Mountain Bike Marathon, a savage 125km scramble across the Alps that includes more than 5,000 metres of vertical ascent. "I've



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Head of the Junior School



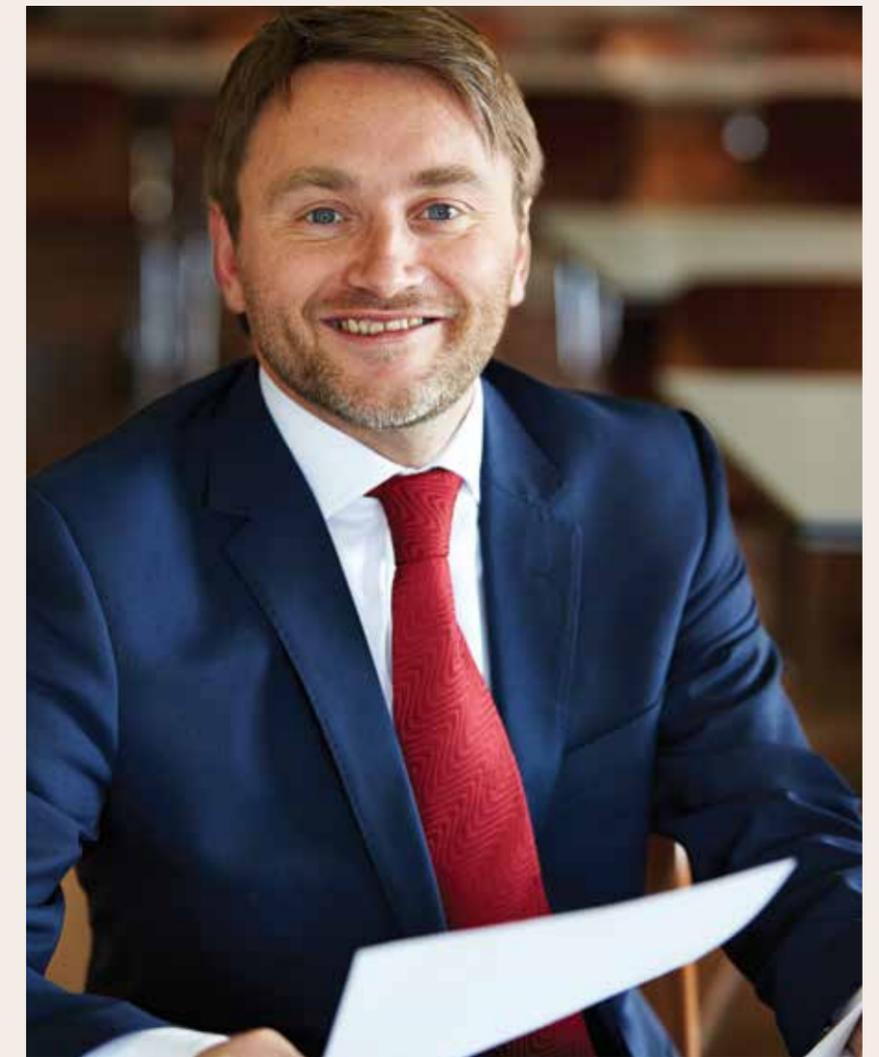
Coming to a new school, whether as a new student or as, in my case, Head of the Junior School, can be not just intimidating, but downright disorientating. Will you fit it? Will they like you? Will you like them?

Nine months into my first year at Aiglon I am happy to say with great firmness: "I like them". Perhaps that is no surprise, as there is much to admire in the way that we do things here – and for me, one of the keys is the way in which we live our values.

One of those values is tied up in the way we encourage everyone – students, staff, even alumni – to try new things, to be tested in the fires of challenge. In the Junior School we do this on a daily basis in small and big ways. This term I have watched in awe as students who have never set up a tent or skied have been transformed into effective, active mountain dwellers who feel at ease and capable in our – by most measures – extreme environment.

Our youngest students are sometimes challenged just by the fact of being at a boarding school for the first time. As Head and as a house parent I am always acutely aware of how important it is to help our younger students settle into school life. The security of a daily routine, comforts like milk at bedtime and some homemade cake at the weekend, are sometimes all that is needed to help a child feel at ease. Our students' confidence that they can come to us to discuss anything about their day is paramount in building up trust and relationships with their house parents.

And despite a long teaching career that has taken me to top schools all over the world, there have still been surprises. The way our children appreciate simple things like the chance to make their teacher a cup of tea or share a game of table tennis outside on a sunny day. How willingly the parents of our students readily volunteer to help out in whichever way they can, baking for charity or seeking to work with school to advance the reputation of Aiglon further afield in Asia – the



support has been truly outstanding.

Aiglon challenges everyone who comes through its doors, and I am no exception. Whether navigating the ice and snow on the way down from La Baita to Forbes in the depths of winter, learning to ski, the challenge of implementing changes or the demanding role of leading the Junior School into the future, it has been a year of engaging, interesting hard work!

I have met many prospective parents over my career and almost all state that

they want a 'better education' for their children. What do they mean? For me it is about John Corlette's emphasis on educating the whole child, whether that means issuing every child with an iPad Air, to support their development as digital citizens, or encouraging them onto the mountain accompanied by only their common sense.

My first year has been an amazing expedition. I look forward to many more to come.

Marcus Gimms

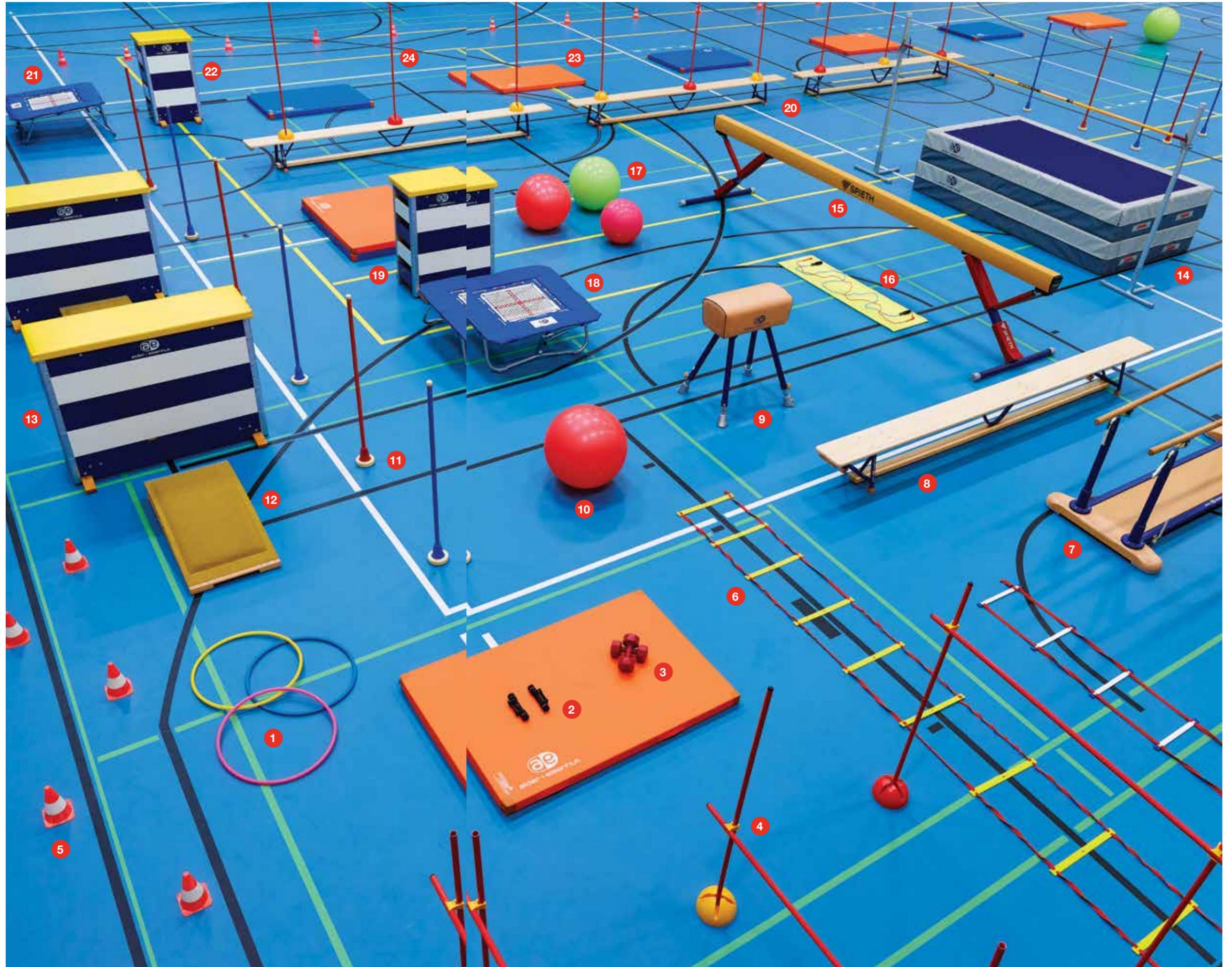


LAI D BARE

Sports Hall store Circuit training and gymnastics



Photographs:
MARCUS GINNS



- 1 Hoops
- 2 Light dumbbells
- 3 Middle-weight dumbbells
- 4 Agility poles
- 5 Cones
- 6 SAQ (speed, agility and quickness) ladders
- 7 Parallel bars
- 8 Bench
- 9 Vaulting horse
- 10 Swiss ball
- 11 Slalom poles
- 12 Springboard
- 13 Gymnastics boxes, large
- 14 High jump and crash mat
- 15 Gymnastics high beam
- 16 Gym mat and skipping ropes
- 17 Swiss balls (small, medium, large)
- 18 Trampette
- 19 Gym floor mat
- 20 Benches
- 21 Trampette
- 22 Gymnastics box, small
- 23 Gym floor mats
- 24 Agility poles

A sense of home

Home: for a small word it contains a world of emotion. But where does our sense of home come from? Lucy Jolin investigates, while Aiglon students reveal their home comforts.



Words:
LUCY JOLIN
Photographs:
MARCUS GINNS

What is home? It's certainly not always what you think it will be. When the then 14-year-old **Alessandro Barel di Sant Albano** (Belvedere, 2012) first visited Aiglon, his first impression certainly wasn't 'homely'. "I was halfway up a mountain and surrounded in this thick fog – only later did I learn that Aiglon only gets this about 25 days a year," he remembers with a laugh. "I thought: what on Earth is this place? But very quickly it became home for me, in so many ways."

'Home' is one of those words that is so over-used, painted so many times on signs and tea-towels and novelty mugs, invoked so often as an ideal, that you'd imagine it would lose all its potency. But the idea of home remains astonishingly powerful. Home is where, as young adults, we long to leave – only in order to make our own. It's something that we fight for, that we long for, that we try to re-create wherever we are.

For Alessandro, now 20 and studying history and economics at Duke University, USA, home is less about place than about people. An Italian-American born in the USA, he spent his early years in London, then Italy, with a year at a Florida tennis academy.

Opposite page: "My teddy bear"
Nanoha Yoshioka
(La Casa, first form)



“Four walls and a ceiling aren’t enough. There has to be something else, something less tangible.”

Because he moved around so much, Alessandro says home was where his family were. Aiglon was the first time he felt integrated into the wider community, because ‘home’, he says, isn’t about a picture perfect vision of “a nice couch and a living room”. “There were 55 nationalities when I was there, and our differences brought us together. There was a real sense of home. We were a family.”

That’s an attitude which **Nigel and Jackie Gaston**, house parents of Le Cerf, can identify with. Partly, it’s to do with an accident of geography – a former Swiss chalet-style hotel, Le Cerf sits away from the main school. So when the girls finish their school day, Mr and Mrs Gaston want them to feel they return to a family home.

“We have two daughters ourselves, and we ask: ‘What would we do with our own family?’” says Mr Gaston. “How can we replicate that idea of a family home?” They use both time-honoured rituals – the Sunday evening dinner, where the entire house sits down together – and simple acts of consideration.

“For example, two of our girls were recently selected for a tennis tournament,” says Mr Gaston. “So we spent an afternoon going to watch them play – just as parents would. Or it could be

something as normal as making a cup of tea for a girl who’s just come back after an exam. It’s those things that help create a real atmosphere of home.”

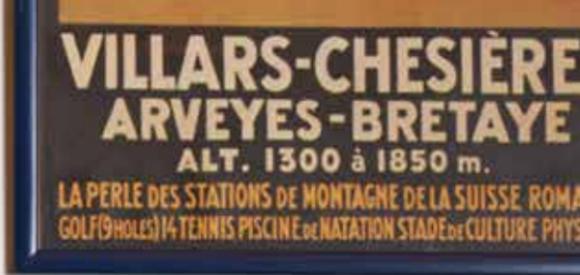
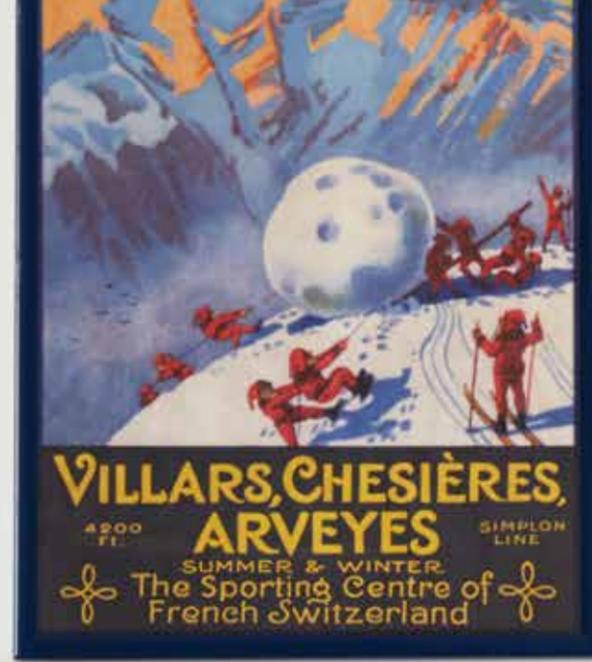
The idea of home as simply somewhere to live is as old, varied and delightful as humankind. Look at what human ingenuity has fashioned and it is impossible not to be delighted: from Ice Age caves and animal-skin huts to the elaborate roofs and simple sliding doors of traditional Japanese dwellings to the fairytale Bavarian palaces of Ludwig the Mad. Marble Roman palaces, Bedouin tents withstanding the fearsome heat of the Sahara, Zulu beehive huts. Versailles. We fashion floating homes, homes that cling to mountains, homes that move with us. We use mud, brick, clay, stone, grass, concrete, glass, cardboard – or whatever we can find.

Why do we do it? First of all, of course, it’s about the basic human need for shelter. Without homes, we can’t survive. But, says Edwin Heathcote, architecture critic of the Financial Times in London, the homes we create tap into something deep and ancient. When we choose a door handle, or a ceiling moulding, or a skirting board, we’re making decisions that go far further back than we

Opposite page:
“Chocolate sprinkles!”
Feyona Lohr
(Le Cerf, lower sixth)

Overleaf:
(left hand page)
“My flag”
– Rodrigo Pessoa de
Queiroz Davies.
(Delaware, lower sixth)





realise. Our homes, say Heathcote, are vessels of history, replete with symbolism and iconography.

Take the humble front door. "In the very old days, in most Western cultures, the front door would be orientated towards the rising sun," says Heathcote. "The very word 'orient' derived from the word for east, where the sun rises. The threshold is a sacred place. This is the object that shows that you have passed from the public to the private realm. Thresholds used to be brass, and you had to polish them to reflect the sun. And even now brass is a popular material for door furniture like key surrounds and letterboxes, or door knockers, which are often in the shape of a lion's head. The lion's mane is also a symbol of the rising sun and this symbolism stretches back for thousands of years."

This awareness helps to make everyday life a little richer – something that anyone who has restored an old house knows instinctively. "The iconographic background helps you interpret what you are doing and why you're doing it," Heathcote says. "It increases the bond between you and where you live. In an increasingly deracinated society, I think that's an important way we can feel a little more rooted where we are."

So this kind of knowledge is perhaps something that helps make a dwelling – a house, a school, a flat, a hotel – into something that we can truly call home. Four walls and a ceiling aren't enough. There has to be something else, something less tangible.

Charlotte de Brabandt (Exeter, 2005) has a Swedish mother, a Belgian father and has lived all over the world. "Home for me is two things - my parents and an international life, living in many different places. So when I am on a plane, going somewhere, I feel like I am going home. So I guess you could say my home is the world.



When I stay in one place for too long, I find it boring. You might say I get homesick."

"The more I understand the natural world, the more I see it as a series of overlapping, very tightly focused habitats," says Verlyn Klinkenborg, author, former member of the New York Times editorial board, and teacher of creative writing at Yale University, Connecticut, USA. "And humans have nothing like that. We are such generalists. We love to think we have a habitat. But really the entire planet is our habitat. It hardly matters where someone grows up. Home is so many different kinds of places."

So perhaps home is just a state of mind – in the most literal sense, where we 'feel at home'. Klinkenborg remembers going back to his father's house after he died. It wasn't an ancestral family dwelling. He'd never even lived there. "It was his home, but never mine," he remembers. "He'd lived in many places. It was the latest version of his home, if you like. Yet we all felt the loss of that spirit. The way that a material collection of objects is somehow animated by a person's presence. It made me think that home really does exist purely in the human mind. There's just our awareness of it. It doesn't exist otherwise."

And that fluidity means that home can be a place, an object, a person, a landscape, the familiar or the unfamiliar. It can be anything - and anywhere. For Mr Gaston and his students, of course, there's no question about where it is. "Le Cerf is a very special place," he says. "We live together. We eat together – for me, it's wonderful to cook for girls in our own apartment. The house is festooned with photographs of happy girls, and those images help to create a healthy, positive atmosphere. We share special experiences with each other. We are there for each other. There are so many little things that go together to create a happy home."

Previous page:
"My mobile phone, because it makes me feel connected to my family and friends"
Omar El Tanani
(Belvedere, fifth form)

Left:
"E.T. – he's been everywhere with me since I was three – I've even made some trousers for him"
Elsa Efendieva-Yammin
(Clairmont, lower sixth)

Right:
"Homemade carrot cake"
Léo Féau
(La Baita, second form)



John Corlette's vision has bestowed a lasting legacy on Aiglon College. In this, our 65th anniversary year, we speak to alumni and staff who remember 'JC'.



A life in balance

Interviews:
PENELOPE RANCE
Illustration:
LEE WOODGATE

It is 65 years since **John Corlette** chose the village of Chesières to establish his vision of the model school. During the first quarter-century of Aiglon's existence, until his death in 1977, he was central to staff and students' experience of the school. From its founding principles to the daily meditation, which he often led himself, his personality informed and influenced life in the local area.

Today, Aiglon students still experience an education guided and formed by his vision and ideals, but what of the man himself? Here, through the recollections of those who knew him, Aiglon Magazine commemorates the man who shaped the College, and introduce him to a new generation of Aiglon alumni.

Joyce Lowe

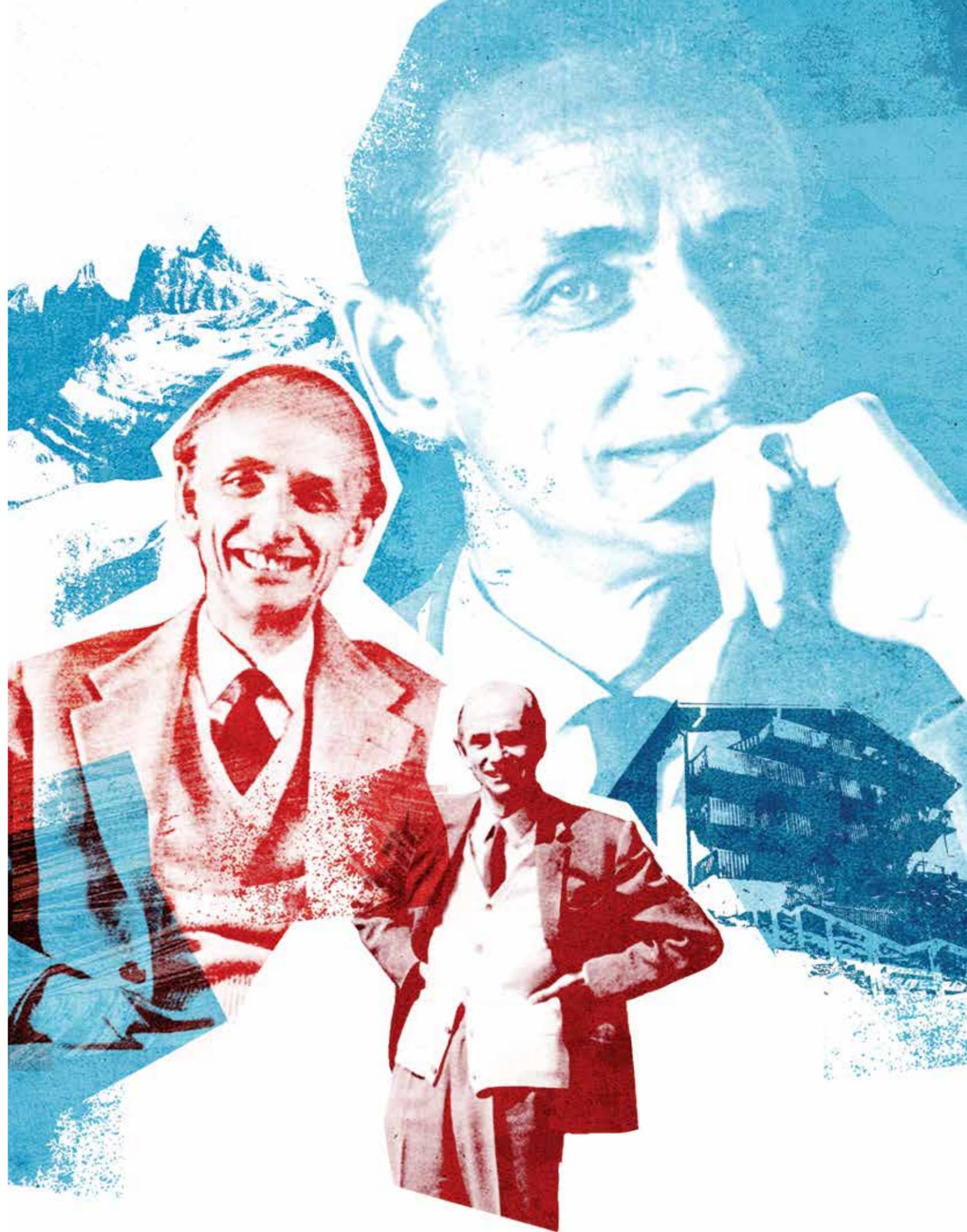
(Assistant to John Corlette, Board Member and Life Member)

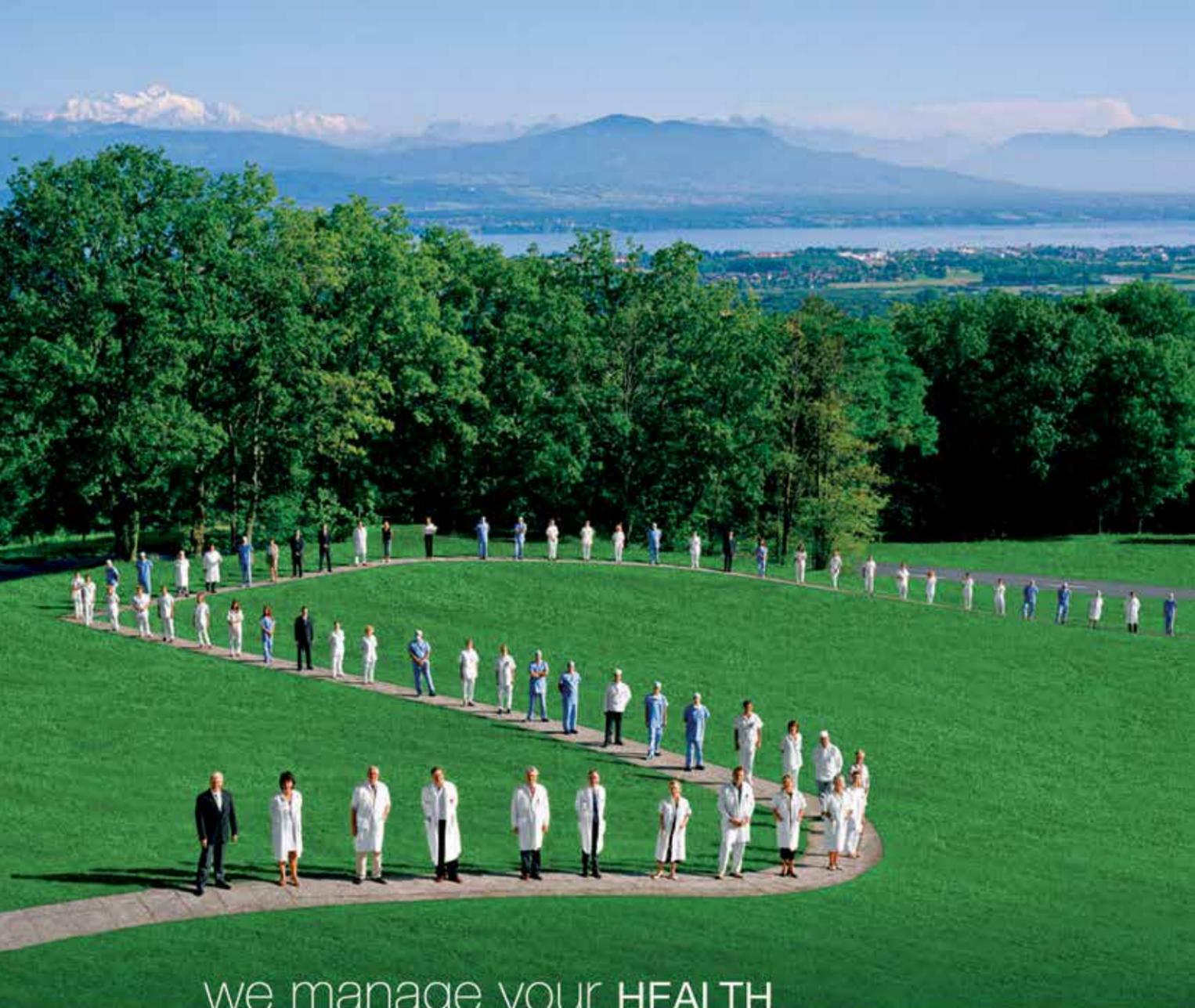
Working for John Corlette was simply inspirational. It was his whole personality – he had that quality of getting students to give their best. The number of old boys and old girls who have made a figurehead in their lives of John Corlette is really astonishing.

He did help boys – it was mostly boys – who were troubled. But no-one could buy themselves into Aiglon. There were parents who had a son expelled from another school, and it didn't matter whether they promised him a new gymnasium or a swimming pool – the answer was 'no' if the boy had been sent away from another school for something that was an offence at Aiglon.

He did give boys and girls a second chance quietly. It was never so cut and dried that an exception in certain circumstances couldn't be made. I don't think the students lived in fear of him, as much as in awe. He had a sense of humour when he was dealing with them.

The thing I liked best about working for him was playing piano duets on his Steinway Grand. I had the advantage of being a very good sight-reader of music and he was a poor one, so I had to have lots of patience! His strong point in music was his fantastic knowledge of it.





we manage your HEALTH
we also speak your language



Karel Fisher

(Alpina, 1965)

I recall vividly two trips in JC's Bentley, with JC driving, Joyce Lowe beside him, and myself with other boys in the back seat. One trip was thrilling and the other disciplinary in nature. The first was a road trip from Chesières to Milan, where we went to La Scala Opera House to hear Artur Rubinstein play the piano and respond time and again to calls for encores. Amazing!

The other trip was down to Montreux to visit the principal of a girls' school – which used a Villars chalet in winter months – to apologise for trying to lure some young ladies to join us for conversations one snowy evening. Boy, was that a silent ride down to the valley! In retrospect, JC handled the situation perfectly: have the boys apologise in person, not just write a letter expressing regret.

For several terms, I chose to be a part of the 'regime' meals programme, which involved a diet of vegetarian meals, such as dandelions, cheeses, soy products and other delicacies. There were relatively few boys involved and JC often came to our meals. I recall having numerous one-on-one conversations with him during those occasions.

I really enjoyed my time at Aiglon, especially the mix of academics and outdoor expeditions virtually every weekend, and I know I have JC to thank for that. JC's guiding principles, emphasising spirituality, standards of behaviour, and contact with nature, have stayed with me and guide me in my relationships with my children, grandchildren and others.

Maria Flood Brown

(Clairmont, 1974)
One of the first five girls to study at Aiglon

I met him on my very first day there. We were marched up to Alpina. I'd been living in Holland and hadn't got used to the altitude. I was gasping for air and he took us straight into this practice of meditating. I was a fidgety 13-year-old and I thought, "What is he on about?" But he had such an air of confidence and calm that you just went with it. It made a huge impression, so much so that I now teach meditation.

He was interested in unusual people. He saw qualities in them, potential, that others didn't. He looked beyond the academic to their character and leadership ability. On a whim, he would employ someone he thought was interesting. And they all were!

In the second year I was confirmed at school, and as I was walking up the hill to church he stopped and gave me a lift. I was so surprised that he knew my name and all about me, even though I'd never had a class with him, and the school was 250-strong. It was his deep interest in people.

He was controversial himself, so he knew that teenagers would try to knock the system. He understood them. He could really get down to the fundamentals, the root of the thing, the essence. He encouraged us to question and search.

The school was a collection of old hotels and chalets. Not smart, but he felt the community was more important than all the trappings. It was about learning to get along without those trappings – very unusual in today's world. He was approached to buy a big hotel, but said: "Absolutely not, I value community spirit within the houses, competition between the houses, dining together in the chalets."

It's fascinating how many alumni are involved in compassionate causes. And I think that's his legacy – it's all part of growing that community spirit.

Tony Hyde

(1970-2009)
Physics teacher,
later Head of Science

When I retired in 2009 I was the last one still at Aiglon who had actually been interviewed by John Corlette as the headmaster. My first impressions were of someone who had his own ideas about things.

His approach was "the use of the classroom outside the classroom". The experiences that the kids got outside the normal school environment, they were not going to get in the classroom. Book learning is not going to teach you anything about yourself. You only get that with adventurous activities, when you're doing something for the first time. At Aiglon, the healthy lifestyle, being above the pollution, the fresh outdoors, was something he knew was good for people, even if they didn't like it at the time!

In 1972, he retired from active duty as Head Master. From then on he was an éminence grise – like Long John Silver's parrot, sitting on your shoulder, keeping an eye on things, squawking instructions from the 'penthouse' flat at the Alpina boarding house.

I think he was a lonely man. He didn't find it easy to socialise. He used to have groups of staff up for dinner and at the end of the meal he'd have you listen to music. I think it was easier for him to cope with that than the usual after-dinner chat.

He was someone who was looking for things in his own life in the spiritual sense. He was brought up as a Christian, but sat in the middle of all the world religions and pulled the best from each.

His legacy is typified by the John Corlette Prize, which includes an element of the academic, and all the adventurous activities offered by the school, but is also about service. It's a major aspect of Aiglon for students to learn about their position in life and how they can best help others and be useful citizens of the world.

David Rhodes

(1972-1976)
Head of Integrated Studies,
(1983-2006) Director of
Studies and Deputy Head

My overriding memory is of his penetrating gaze when he spoke to you. It left little room for trivial conversations. With hindsight, I believe what drove the man in later life was an overriding fascination for what lies at the core of human consciousness and how this can evolve into something great. What impressed me was the strength of his convictions, and the supreme self-confidence with which he expressed them.

He came up with an advert for a very strange job, Head of Integrated Studies. At that time, education was very compartmentalised, with no attempt to relate one thing to the other. My job was his attempt to link up the programme.

He was regarded as a dangerous innovator. By the early 70s, he was a pioneer of spirituality versus religion. He was reading Eastern mystical literature and invited an Indian swami to address the school. People found it quite unnerving.

I believe he had a radical vision, one enshrined in the practice of daily meditation, which he believed could progressively transform every other aspect of life.

I was fascinated by him, curious, slightly worried, as he was strangely avant-garde. But I had a great affinity for the way this unusual man thought about education. If I could go back to 1972 as the person I am now, I would jump at the chance to spend long evenings with him just talking things through. He was intent on finding what a 'good life' actually means.

Flora Alpina

*As the meadows around Aiglon
explode into a riot of colour,
Lucy Jolin explores the enduring
fascination of alpine flowers.*



Right: Mountain cowslip
(*Primula auricula*)

Opposite page:
Mountain cornflower
(*Centaurea montana*)

Photographs:
MARCUS GINNS





Opposite page

Top left:
Columbine
(*Aquilegia alpina*)

Top right:
Birdsfoot trefoil:
(*Lotus corniculatus*)

Bottom left:
Bladder campion
(*Silene vulgaris*)

Bottom right:
Sainfoin
(*Onobrychis viciifolia*)

Karen Sandri has long been intrigued by a plant known as ‘Swiss tea.’ Why? It didn’t seem to bear any relation to actual tea – certainly not in its appearance. “I asked a neighbour,” she says, “and she told me that during the second world war, when real tea was in short supply, people would steep it in boiling water and use it as a tea substitute. Hence the name! There are so many surprises in nature.”

In Switzerland, alpine plants are not just part of the physical landscape. For centuries, botanists have prized them for their rarity and beauty. We love them for their miniature perfection, for their colour, for the way they seem to survive in such impossible conditions. But they are part of something less tangible: a way of life, of thinking, of living in almost unconscious harmony with one’s surroundings. Karen Sandri, who before she became Aiglon’s advancement assistant worked leading hikes in the mountains, remembers a teacher on her guide training, who could tell the quality of the soil in a field – over-fertilised, or over-grazed – just by looking at the flowers and plants growing there.

And where there are alpine plants, there are inevitably plant hunters. The Swiss naturalist and botanist Conrad Gessner – possibly one of the first people ever to climb a mountain just because it was there – included many varieties of alpiners in his illustrated botanical encyclopaedia. In a letter to a friend written in 1541 he declared: “I am resolved that as long as God grants me life, I will each year climb some mountains, or at least one, when the flowers are in bloom, in order that I may examine these and provide noble exercise for my body at the same time as enjoyment for my soul.”

Gessner was followed by many others. In his *Itinera per Helvetiae alpinas regiones* of 1723, Johann Scheuchzer, professor of physics at Zurich University, recounted a local gravely telling him that the chamois became invulnerable after eating the ‘blue flower of the Doronicum’, and that if a man were to eat the roots of that plant before sunrise, he too would enjoy the same powers. (Scheuchzer dismissed the tale, informing his readers that “there is no such thing as ‘Doronicum with a blue flower’” in the Alps, although it is likely that Gessner, or his informant, was in fact referring to the very poisonous alpine *Aconitum* or Monkshood.)

In 1732, botanist and physician Albrecht von Haller published his fifty-stanza poem *Die Alpen*, including a paen to alpiners – “Where Freedom reigns, ev’n labour is repose, Bare rocks are strewn with flow’rs, and soft the north-wind blows”. He gave sage advice to the thousands who were to come after him, as the Romantic love of sublime Alpine vistas combined with the Victorian mania for plant-collecting meant that suddenly, mountains were tourist magnets. “One ought to go as slowly as possible and above all on the Alps to sit down from time to time, even to lie down, so as to get a close view of the growing plants,” advised Haller.

However, alpine plant expert, Jim Jermyn says

that the obsession can take many forms. As a teenager, Jermyn took a trip to London with his parents. They presented him with a book token, advised him strongly to pick a proper book that wasn’t just pictures, and then took him to the Foyles bookshop in Charing Cross Road. By chance, he picked up an encyclopedia of plants. On the train back to his Hertfordshire home, he opened it at the alpiners entry, and a lifelong obsession was born.

“What was the fascination for me?” he muses. “I could see that these plants were miniature and exquisite – and almost impossible to grow in gardens. In nature, these plants grow in an absolute niche. There are some exceptions but they usually all grow between the permanent treeline and the permanent snowline. Therefore, they sit under a canopy of about nine feet of snow for many months: usually October through to May and somewhat longer in the alps of Switzerland, as the Swiss Alps are somewhat higher than other parts of the Alps. Where can you emulate these austere conditions – the levels of oxygen and light, the perfect drainage? So that was a challenge. I simply loved them. And I felt the lure – and still do – of finding new and exciting forms or plants we already grow. I have to say that I’m one of those people who is always on the lookout for something special.”

Indeed, there’s a particular thrill, he says, in finding hybrids. This happens randomly in nature, and produces plants that are stronger and easier to grow in gardens. Primulas, in particular, do this very efficiently. He’s found some of his finest in the Bernina Pass. “When you are climbing up a typical alp – and most of these primulas grow in dampish meadows, areas where the snow melt is running freely – you will see a mass of a particular species, *Primula integrifolia*. And then close by you will find another species in a slightly different habitat, perhaps slightly tucked in besides some rocks – *Primula latifolia*. And then suddenly you see something intermediate between the two. Even with a casual eye, you can tell the difference – you see something darker in colour, or larger, and that immediately tells you it’s a hybrid.”

There is a certain clichéd view of the Victorian alpine plant collector – magnifying glass in hand, greedily grubbing rare specimens out of the ground to gloat over in private – but, Jermyn says, an obsession is not necessarily negative. It’s hard to see how botany would have developed as a science without plant collectors risking life and limb to find and classify new specimens in some of the most inhospitable regions of the planet. “Yes, they did dig up plants, which we absolutely do not do nowadays,” says Jermyn. “But if they hadn’t done that, we wouldn’t have any garden plants. And of course, now there’s no need to remove plants, as we can collect seed.”

Yet the meadows and mountains around Aiglon aren’t just a glorious flower show come spring: they’re a dispensary and a delicatessen as well – if you know what to look for. But remember, cautions Karen, that every beneficial

plant will have its evil twin – a very similar plant with very different qualities. The common *Lotus corniculatus*, for example, makes a wonderful sleeping aid. But it has a highly toxic neighbour that the inexperienced collector could easily mistake for the real thing.

For Karen, the real fascination of Alpine plants lies in their usefulness, and the part they play in everyday life. “It’s a free gift from nature,” Karen says. “I like to think about the hundreds of years of mothers and grandmothers who treated their children with these plants. There’s a huge wealth of this knowledge in the area. I like to think that I am helping to keep that tradition alive.”

Nicole Rogenmoser is also part of that tradition. A certified mid-mountain guide, and wife of **Frank Rogenmoser** (Belvedere, 1976), she has spent years perfecting her knowledge of alpinists. “Every spring, I am so happy and amazed to rediscover what nature is able to craft,” she says. She takes particular pleasure in the glorious adaptability of these little plants, which seem to take whatever nature can throw at them and still come up roses, so to speak. They can stand the cold, the wind, the extraordinary intensity of the Alpine sun. “They have more hair, they are shorter, they have more perfume and are more colourful in order to attract insects,” she says. “And they have little pillows, to keep the water.”

She talks of a multitude of tiny wonders just in the Villars area. There’s sweet woodruff (*Asperula odorata*), a white spring flower that grows in the forests around Aiglon. Every spring. Once dried, its leaves and flowers emit a glorious vanilla-like perfume and can be used as infusions to flavour cookies and ice-cream. There’s pale-yellow Alpine lady’s mantle, (*Alchemilla alpina*), which is good for female health. Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) is used to cure coughs, while even the humblest of plants can be used in cooking, such as wild garlic, the wonderfully-named Good-King-Henry (a kind of wild spinach) and nettle. And then there are the rarities: the astonishingly blue Koch’s gentian, pure white Alpine pasque flower, and the intensely pink bird’s-eye primrose. That intense pink, incidentally, comes from the very rock itself. Most of the mountains in Switzerland are not limestone, or calcareous. They are mostly made up of lime-free substrate on igneous or granite rock formations – hence the colour.

And of course, alpinists don’t have to be useful. They can just be miniature miracles in their own right, valued simply for existing. Karen cites the Turk’s cap lily (*Lilium martagon*) as one of her favourites. “It has no value - apart from its beauty. You’re not used to seeing something so structured and beautiful growing there in the middle of a forest. It grows right around Aiglon, every spring in the same place, by the road around my house. It’s a very rare flower, so that feels special. But they are all special. The more you start studying something, the more detail you see. And the more you love it.”



Sweet woodruff (*Asperula odorata*)

“Alpines can just be miniature miracles in their own right, valued simply for existing.”

Karen Sandri
Advancement
Assistant



“I like to think about the mothers and grandmothers who treated their children with these plants.”

Nicole Rogenmoser
Mid-mountain guide



“Every spring, I am so happy and amazed to rediscover what nature is able to craft.”

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A knife's tale

*The Swiss Army Knife is more than a century old and yet continues to be essential kit for anyone who spends time out of doors. **William Ham Bevan** examines its appeal.*

*Photographs
MARCUS GINNS*

When each new intake of students convenes for its induction session with **Mr Tim Milner**, Head of Junior School Expeditions, one question always crops up. "They ask, 'Are we allowed knives on our expeditions?'," he says. "I take the line that using a Swiss Army Knife is a good aspect of outdoor life. They're certainly essential on the weekends when we do activities such as shelter building, or creative woodland crafts."

Using a pocket knife safely and confidently is a skill that Mr Milner takes time to teach every upcoming group. "I tell them about safe working practices – what I like and don't like to see. I make sure they don't walk around with the blade open, and always cut away from themselves. And if I see anyone resting wood on themselves while cutting, that's something I stamp out straight away."

It is not just the students who rely on Swiss Army Knives during expeditions and outdoor activities. "I have one myself, a multi-tool with pliers," he says. "It comes in very handy in all sort of situations – if tent pegs need straightening or a pole snaps, or something gets stuck in the ground. Or with the kids' rucksacks if something breaks or needs to be adjusted."

Its usefulness is beyond argument, at Aiglon and in the wider world; but the Swiss Army Knife is more than just a tool. It's a globally acknowledged emblem of Switzerland, a timeless design classic and a totem of ingenuity and smart engineering. It has found its way into orbit on board the Space

Shuttle; into the world's top galleries and design institutions, including New York's Museum of Modern Art; and to the roof of the world on Chris Bonington's Himalayan expeditions.

What's more, it has become part of the English language's stock of metaphors, lending its name to any item that is seen to combine a range of uses in a compact package. To take one example, when the British Army unveiled its new Terrier combat vehicle last year – which combines the functions of a bulldozer, crane and mine clearer – it was immediately nicknamed the "Swiss Army Knife".

Professor Miles Pennington, who heads up the Innovation Design Engineering programme at the Royal College of Art in London, believes that a whole range of factors come into play in explaining our ongoing love affair with the knife. He says: "The magic of a Swiss Army Knife's engagement with its users is that delight in finding a solution to a problem you didn't know you were going to have. And there's a mystery about it, in finding all those little tools and thinking, I have no idea what these are for. Plus, there's the amazing engineering of being able to fit so much in a tight spot."

This was not always the case. The first Swiss Army Knife had just a blade, awl, screwdriver and tin opener, housed in an assembly with a wooden handle. They were commissioned in the late 1880s after quartermasters in the Swiss Army decided it would be advantageous for every soldier to have a tool that could be used for opening tinned food as well as stripping and



assembling the standard service rifle. Worse yet, the very first knives were not even Swiss. The Army's initial order was placed with a German cutler; but this prompted a certain Karl Elsener of Canton Schwyz to decide he could manufacture them better domestically, and he duly won the contract in 1891.

The ever-inventive Elsener, whose company's main activity until then was making surgical sharps, is the true father of the Swiss Army Knife. His greatest innovation came when he found a way of adding tools on both side of the knife handle, held in place by the same spring. This technique made possible the addition of a corkscrew and second blade to the *Schweizer Offiziersmesser* – Swiss officer's knife – which was patented in 1897. Its success almost certainly saved Elsener from bankruptcy.

However, while many Swiss Army Knife enthusiasts quote the comedy routine in which Robin Williams asked: "How can you trust an army that has a wine opener on its knife?", the joke is sadly based on a misconception: the knife supplied by the Army to all its personnel – officers and other ranks alike – has never had a corkscrew. Those wanting the better appointed *Offiziersmesser* have always had to pay for it out of their own pockets.

The officer's knife began its journey from military kit to global icon after the second world war, when many American servicemen bought them in European army surplus stores and carried them back to the USA. By this time, not all were made by Elsener's firm, which had taken the name of Victorinox. Since 1908, the Swiss forces had split their bulk order 50-50 between Victorinox and Wenger, a cutler based in the present-day Canton of Jura. In a characteristically Swiss compromise, the former agreed to brand its version as 'the original Swiss Army Knife'; the latter, 'the genuine Swiss Army Knife'.

This state of affairs continued for many years, until the market for pocket knives was devastated by an event no one could have predicted. The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, prompted a total rethink of airline security procedure. Purchases in duty-free shops and on board aeroplanes were suddenly made impossible, which slashed overall sales of Swiss army knives by almost 40%. Wenger, by far the smaller of the official knife producers, faced ruin. To ensure the company remained in Swiss hands, its rival agreed to a buy-out.

Wenger was allowed to maintain its separate branding until last year. In 2014, for the first time, all true Swiss Army Knives are being produced under the Victorinox brand. The current range is vast, with an astounding number of functions available. There are knives with altimeters, barometers and USB data storage, and a growing number of specialised models for different professions and interest groups – such as a rescue services' model with a window hammer, glass saw and seat-belt cutter.

Urs Wyss, marketing director at Victorinox, explains that new products are developed in three ways. There are internal brainstorming sessions

where staff from different departments sit down and suggest innovations – a process that has delivered ideas including the popular memory-stick models. Then there are unsolicited ideas sent in by knife users, a select few of which make it to production. The third source of innovation is via approaches from third-party companies looking for specialised knives for a particular role.

Yet for all this, it is the simpler knives that have sustained the greatest demand. He says: "There are four best sellers and they've been around for 40 years. There's the Classic model, which is the small one to put on a key ring, with a small blade, nail file, toothpick and tweezers. Then there's the standard model, the Spartan, which is functionally the same knife as our founder invented in 1897, and another version with an additional saw and scissors. The biggest one of our best sellers is the SwissChamp, which has 32 functions."

When recommending knives for his students, Tim Milner suggests keeping it basic. "For the age range I work with, I think there's great value in the simplicity of just the small knife, longer knife and can opener – there's less room for complications and injury than with the all-singing, all-dancing ones. Some of the kids do have ones with magnifying glasses, and that's useful for nature investigations. They can look at different things close-up, like tree bark and leaf patterns."

Nevertheless, the success of the original Swiss Army Knife is not just down to its multi-functionality, elegant design and clever engineering. There is another unique selling point that has proved every bit as important in maintaining its market share against the constant tide of rivals and copies. If well cared for, the durability of a Swiss Army Knife is legendary: its makers describe it as a "companion for life".

This is something that Mr Milner is keen to stress when teaching knifecraft. "It's a personal piece of kit, and it'll go on for ever if you look after it," he says. "I talk about cleaning and maintenance as part of the introduction to knives. I tell the children that after every time they use one, they should make sure the blade is dry and clean – then it's ready for when they use it the next time. It's basic care for your equipment."

Professor Pennington agrees. "It's often a lifetime's special purchase, or a gift from someone important. I'm a big fan of the Swiss Army Knife, and had one for 20 years. Unfortunately, I lost it at airport security this year – I put it in my hand luggage by mistake. At the X-ray machine, I got pulled up and asked if I had any sharp objects in my bags. I said no, and they pulled it out and said 'What's this, then?'"

That unfortunate incident has not prompted the professor to consider a different brand of multi-tool when he comes to replace his pride and joy. "It has been designed to be a beautiful handheld object and at the same time to have this dense functionality to it, but there are no extra complications for their own sake. The Swiss Army Knife has a simple beauty – and a beauty in its simplicity."

Top left:
The first Elsener Swiss Soldier's Knife (1891). In 1890, the Swiss government decided to issue a knife to Army recruits. Karl Elsener's bid brought together a number of cutlers, creating the Swiss Cutlers' Association. An offer by a German company to undercut Elsener's bid resulted in support from his fellow cutlers falling away. The backing of friends and family enabled Elsener to put his knife into production.

Top right:
First Swiss Army Officer's Knife (1897). Elsener had the idea of producing a more elegant version of the knife for officers. This more compact design included an additional small blade and a corkscrew, in a design that for the first time incorporated tools into the handle's back edge. Despite the army not taking up the idea, Elsener made them available for private purchase.

Bottom left:
Swiss Army Officer's Knife (1946). Taken to the USA by returning GIs, the popularity of the Swiss Army Knife spread. Around this time a new patented can opener tool was added. From 1937 handles made of plastic were introduced. This model carries the Victorinox emblem which Karl Elsener adopted in 1909.

Bottom right:
Swiss Soldier's Knife (1965). Rivets were now hidden under the handle, which in this model was made from aluminium. This was emblazoned with the official Swiss emblem.





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TA I

- 41 Hello Aiglon!
- 43 Why I love...
- 44 Behind the scenes
- 46 Sports
- 48 Hitched

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Hello Aiglon! Istanbul

Siman Aksoy (Alpina, 2003)



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Why I love... Wednesdays



Manuel Crespo Delgado

(Belvedere, Lower sixth)

Photograph:
MARCUS GINNS

Manuel Crespo Delgado says that Wednesday evening is one of his favourite things about Aiglon.

The Head Master was clear. "The IB is a demanding academic programme," he told us, a group of new lower sixth students on our first day at Aiglon College. I had always been rather good in academic terms and was determined to keep my marks high at Aiglon. But it would be a lie to say that on that day I didn't hugely underestimate Mr McDonald's words.

In fact, I could have never imagined how many hours of sleep and 'spare' time the IB would cost me, as besides academics, to our dismay, we students also have to take care of other business: personal relationships; sleeping for a few minutes

every month; or reclaiming some clothes that didn't return from the laundry room last Thursday. Joking aside, what I mean is that the life of an Aiglonian is challenging and exciting but far from easy. I do like this, as all my life I've enjoyed the feeling of being challenged. However, some afternoons I feel exhausted and overwhelmed, and this is why I love Wednesday evenings.

On Wednesday evenings, sixth formers are allowed to leave their respective houses and go to Villars, or to other houses, or just stay in their beds listening to music without any meetings or classes to attend. There is no dress code and no rules about how we ought to spend our time. From 7.30pm to 9.30pm every Wednesday we are free, which is an extremely rare feeling for Aiglon students.

But for me the highlight of Wednesday evenings is not what happens in those two short hours before lights out. Rather, it is the priceless feeling of checking my watch at 7.29 and realising that prep time is finally over: we have worked hard and done our part, now life has to give us some joy in return, that's the deal. And in the 20 minutes between being in your room during prep and walking towards Villars, all your desires of being swallowed by the ground have disappeared. And we students can finally do what, after all, corresponds to a person of our age: having fun.



41 years of memories

Maria-Teresa Lopez Vilar has been offering a friendly smile and kind word to the students of Alpina for more than four decades.



Words: SANDRA HAURANT



Maria-Teresa Lopez Vilar, better known at Aiglon simply as Teresa, retired from her job as a cleaner at Alpina this Spring. She was one of the longest-serving members of staff at Aiglon, and she leaves as many happy memories behind as she takes with her. She began work at the school when founder John Corlette was still at the helm, and has been working tirelessly at Alpina since that very first day.

Teresa's time at Aiglon spanned more than four decades, and by the end she was part of the fabric of the school, a familiar smiling face with a kind word for everyone. However, she says that in the early days, she may not have been quite so chatty. "I started working at Aiglon in January 1972," she recalls. "When I started I was just 22, and I used to be nervous going into people's rooms. I was small and young and didn't look much older than the students. Now it's like they are my children."

Teresa has seen the school change considerably over the years, as practices and approaches adjust and develop. She has comforted homesick children, tidied not-quite made beds and made expedition picnics. She has watched as the students grow and the school evolves. "Of course, it has changed enormously while I have been working at Aiglon," she says. "Everybody used to eat together in the house and the children had to wear a tie. It's more relaxed today, I think it is better now."

Over the decades, she has also seen different generations of students come and go, arriving as children and leaving, all grown up, ready to move on to start new lives in other parts of the world. Each year, Teresa has had to see Alpina's graduates leave, and, she says, even after decades of saying goodbye, it has never got any easier: "It's like a big family. You spend eight years with the children, so when they go, it's very moving. I got to know them all very well, and it always made me so sad to see them go."

Aiglon has played a big part in Teresa's non-working life too, which makes moving on particularly emotional for her. She and her husband, both originally from Spain, met through the school and now have two sons and a granddaughter, four-year-old Abigail. "I lived my whole life at Aiglon," she says. "I met my husband there, I had my own family. The staff are like a big family too. I know lots of people and have seen a lot come and go. I am the oldest saucepan!"

Staff and students past and present will recall Teresa's positive attitude and contribution to the school community.

Former teacher **Bibi Parsons**, whose husband **Philip Parsons** was Head Master between 1976 and 1994, remembers: "She was excellent – very motherly and kind, especially for boys who were homesick. They loved to go the kitchen and chat to her. She was always pleasant and dedicated to her job". And another well-remembered teacher, **Rosemary Hopkins** says: "She really is a very nice person. She will be missed."

Tom and Kathrin Krueger, the current house parents at Alpina, have been at Aiglon for almost three years, and have had the chance to get to know Teresa during that time. "She is one of the nicest ladies you could meet," says Mr Krueger. "Always smiling, and she could cry too. Nothing is ever too much trouble. I remember when we arrived, our children didn't speak French. She was really very kind to them, always had a nice word to say, making them feel welcome."

When someone as special as Teresa leaves, it seems appropriate to give them something special to say thank you. Which is why Alpina house got together to choose a farewell gift she would remember long after she retires. "We knew Teresa had always wanted to go to London, but that she was worried as she didn't speak English," says Mr Krueger. "We explained to the boys that they would have to give up a week's pocket money to put towards the present – and they all said yes, absolutely, without hesitation, which just shows how much they appreciate her."

The house paid for Teresa and her husband to stay in a central London hotel, and Tom accompanied the couple as their tour guide. Teresa was positively delighted with her gift. "I wouldn't have dared to go alone. But we had our own guide to show us around. It was wonderful!"

Teresa has already begun a new chapter of her life in Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain, and, she says, it will take a while to get used to the change: "I've never worked anywhere else, it's as though I'm emigrating all over again, in a way." She will be back to see her family and friends, though, and plans to stay in touch with the school.

And while Aiglon will miss Teresa, she too says it will be hard to fill the gap left behind by Aiglon. "I've been really very happy here," she says. "It's marvellous working with young people, I love laughing with them, having fun. I think it keeps you young."



Alpina is like a big family. You spend eight years with the children, so when they go, it's very moving.



Ian GC White

Sports Roundup



New meets old

Confident, happy, enjoying the outdoor life... some things never change among Aiglon students. But how do the footballers in this 1956 snap compare with today's version?

"The guys at Aiglon are better looking today!" says current student **Chloe Teal**. Chloe is this year's overall winner of the Aiglon Ski Race Challenge for girls, alongside **Calixte Mestelan** in the boys' competition. "I much prefer today's football kit," says Calixte. "That kit just looks so dated compared to what we wear now. They must have got really hot in it."

Aiglon sports in numbers

1st place at the British Schoolboy's Ski Championships at Meiringen-Hasliberg in Switzerland

2 years in a row that doubles partners Yulia Sholomitskaya and Marina Filina have won the SGIS* tennis senior title

3rd place at the SGIS* girls volleyball tournament, with the B team winning their competition

9 medals won at the SGIS* ski championship

126 schools competing in the Interschool Ski Competition in Les Houches – Aiglon came first overall

136 points scored by Tijana Sucarov for the senior girls basketball team in the 2013/14 season.

4,900 metres covered by Oliver Patrick in a single SGIS* meeting, to win three medals (3,000m gold, 1,500m and 4x400m relay bronzes) – a day after he'd competed in the Patrouilles des Jeunes ski mountaineering race

Sports report

Michael Thompson
Head of Sport

Summer is here and, at last, a chance for students to even out the helmet tans. Those tans were hard-earned as our ski-racers had one of the best years I can remember in my time as Head of Sport.

There is amazing talent in ski racing throughout the school, and it was great to storm into so many championships and ski off with a truly remarkable haul of medals. More than 80 students have been involved in races, and in every competition, trophies and medals came our way. **Calixte Mestelan**, **Mizuki Ohara**, **Hugo Ng**, **Nanoha Yoshioka** and **Chloe Teal**, to name but a few, were stars of the ski team, but in many events the exceptional team results are what pleased me the most.

I've also been impressed, despite the odd spectacular crash and the occasional medical helicopter flight, by the winning mentality shown by our students, something that I believe sets us apart from other schools. I cannot tell you how proud I've been of every single one of our competitors, individually and also as a team.

The positive, modest and sportsmanlike way we've conducted ourselves has been fantastic, for instance at the British Schoolboys when we initially thought we had finished second and it later emerged we had won. The entire boys' team showed graciousness and maturity in accepting their second place only to be told shortly after that they had in fact retained the title of best overall school. This is now the third year in a row Aiglon has achieved this.

And although we have now swapped skis and poles for shorts, spikes and tennis rackets, I see no reason why the success won't continue. The standard was set at the very first tennis event of the year in May when our tennis superstars, **Yulia Sholomitskaya** and **Marina Filina**, retained the SGIS* senior doubles that they first won in 2013.

In my position as Head of Sport I'm constantly reminded what a unique place this really is, and of course the outstanding facilities in the Tony Jashanmal Sports Centre only add to what is an already incredible and inspiring outdoor environment. We'd love to see as many alumni faces and as many members of the Aiglon community as possible at any of our events.

* Swiss Group of International Schools

Go to www.aiglonlife.ch for the latest Aiglon sports fixtures.



Top left: **Alice Masquelier-Page** (La Casa, first form)

Top right: **Louis Masquelier-Page** (La Baita, Prep form 2)

Bottom left: (left to right) **Marina Filina** (Le Cerf, fifth form), **Michael Thompson** (Head of Sport), **Yulia Sholomitskaya** (Le Cerf, fifth form).



Siddharth Singh Garha (Alpina, 2001) and his wife, **Madhurika Ghatge**, married on 8 December 2013 in Kolhapur, India. Siddharth says that Madhurika, who studied patisserie with Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, feeds him the 'best food in the world'.



Siddharth Singh Garha & Madhurika Ghatge

(Alpina, 2001)

I A Hitched

Interview:
ANNE WOLLENBERG



After a chance meeting with Madhurika's family in 2010, Siddharth realised he had met his perfect match when a close friend of his father-in-law observed that they were made for each other. "We were sitting by a campfire in the African rain forest close to the Congo border and he said: "I'll be going to your wedding," Siddharth remembers.

As per tradition, the wedding festivities took place in Madhurika's hometown. They started on 1 December and lasted for nine days, with some truly riotous

celebrations. A total of 15 Aiglonians were among the 3,500 guests, some bringing their partners or parents along too.

"Aiglonians came from almost every continent. That was such a joy," says Siddharth, who owns a real estate company. "They helped set up the arrangements, which was really touching for me. They had previously come for my brother Abhimanyu's (Alpina, 1999) wedding as well. When you see friends from Aiglon, you don't feel like you've been apart."

The newlyweds travelled to

Switzerland after the wedding and visited Villars, as well as honeymooning in Bora Bora and the USA. "My wife loved visiting Aiglon," says Siddharth. "She didn't believe I'd been house captain until she saw it on the board!"

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We are always delighted to hear about Aiglonian lives. Update classmates and friends at www.aiglonlife.ch or to feature in Hitched please email advancement@aiglon.ch

Whether it's a 2003 Château Laroque with its intense berry fruit, a buttery Meursault or the most distinctive Champagnes, our sommeliers ensure we only serve the finest wines from around the world. Our pleasure is sharing delicious discoveries whenever you fly with us. Are our efforts worth it? We think so. After all, you are our guest.

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