Remarks from Brigitte at the 30th Anniversary Celebration:

"Good evening,

Tonight we all came together to celebrate a great achievement in the history of Bertschi School, which is the creation of this spectacular Bertschi Center.

First I want to thank our Board of Trustees who had the vision of taking the task at hand and moving forward to build the Bertschi Center. Not only did the Board have the vision to create this incredible learning space for our children but also made an important and wise decision and statement to apply for the gold-level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.

I want to thank a small group of board members who were the leading force to help the Bertschi Center become true:

David Thyer, Chair of the Board who strategized, guided, inspired us, and always had a way to analyze and examine situations in a balanced way, reassuring us all that we can and will move forward and that we will succeed.

[ continues on page 2 ]
Udo Reich, Chair of the Facility Committee, who spent hours and hours at school assisting and overseeing the project. He helped problem-solve, had always a positive way to look at issues and come to productive conclusions, and kept us going.

Tom Barton, Past Board Chair, who was the person who had the trust and vision for Bertschi’s future, who asked the hard questions and was “the negotiator” and “brain” behind helping the school acquiring the properties needed to realize our dream.

Dennis McLean our legal advisor, involved at so many different levels during this challenging project. His perspective and advice as well as his sense of humor were invaluable.

Mark Callaghan, Board Treasurer, who was instrumental with our bond financing transaction and who explained the insides of the business in his calm, reassuring and clear way for all of us to understand.

Another important person was Julie Barwick, Chair of the Capital Campaign Steering Committee who was a strong and creative leader. She had a good pulse of our constituency and knew exactly what was the right thing to do. We appreciated her kind and caring, yet very direct approach.

It is very special to have several past Board Chairs with us to night and I want to thank Deb Saxon, Ron Hosogi and Kevin Callaghan for coming to celebrate with us.

Two more people who were absolutely instrumental to make this project so successful. Tracy Nordhoff, Director of Admission and School Relations and Stan Richardson Director of Technology and Campus Planning. Tracy with her great spirit and her exceptional skills just was incredible in putting this campaign together, making it to be an inclusive experience for all. She was able to reach our goal of $3.3 million on time with an excess of $45,000 more.

Stan, who was so knowledgeable about every little detail on the project, made sure everything turned out correct and beautiful. He was the major watchdog looking out for our LEED points. He also was the liaison and direct person to work with our attorneys throughout the litigation process. Stan’s amazing and total commitment to the job was incredible and super impressive.

Another person I want to thank is my husband Peter Erickson who helped me realize my dream. I asked him once why he thought I was a good teacher and why he ever believed that I could start a school in a foreign country, not knowing anything about the educational system and barely speaking the language. He said that he saw the passion I have for children and education and that I was a strong willed person – not always that easy to live with! He not only fully trusted me in my endeavor but he was the one who greatly assisted me and the school for the first 8-10 years and still is supporting me today in believing that we can make a difference in how we raise our children today.

Last I want to give a huge thank you to everyone here who helped make the Bertschi Center happen and who stretched and strived toward a gold-level LEED certified building. At times we had a rough road, but also some great times. Our spirits prevailed and we succeeded. Today I want to say how proud I am to be part of such a great community, who took the leap to go further and build an educational place for our children, to learn and practice about sustainability and responsibility.

I was asked to highlight a little of the history of the last 30 years and am happy to share some of it.

When I first came to this country my English was far from being fluent and to tell you the truth when my husband Peter helped me find a space to start my dream, the school, I was amazed to find parents who trusted me and sent their children to Bertschi. In my first year I had 17 bright-eyed children ready to learn, play and have fun.

Teaching was always my passion. I loved watching the children discover, explore and putting pieces together, synthesizing, analyzing and problem solving. The kids found it was funny that their teacher could not pronounce
some words correctly or spell them, so they became my teachers.

So the school grew and thanks to my husband we found our present location, the Schoolhouse. We grew from one classroom to three. At the end of the year we were broke and our small board decided to start the first auction. Some brave parents volunteered their house for this function; we re-covered our finances and from there on our operating budget was never again in the red.

We had only one summer to remodel the schoolhouse, a very short window. We were ready on time for school to open and the classrooms were set up beautifully for the first day of school. We had only one last thing to do and that was to test the sprinkler system.

One year I had a child in my class who never talked to me. She smiled, and if I was lucky she nodded her head for a yes and no. She was always in my closest proximity. She followed all activities very closely, was bright and interested in everything. I used to take great walks with my class around the neighborhood and at times the neighbors would come and talk to us. One beautiful spring walk I heard a voice next to me which I never heard before and a little hand moved into my hand and yes it was the voice of that little girl. She talked up a storm and I was so amazed to listen to all that she had to say and felt that this was a real gift. I just got. Those are moments of pure happiness in a teacher’s life; I know they are for me.

refreshments. We were very excited having the extra space available for our celebration and to hold the event in the church. The evening of our performance was a typical Seattle very rainy winter day and we were ready to start our festivities. I will never forget the sight of our audience. Everyone was sitting on the old church pews with their umbrellas open and the water was just pouring through the roof. In spite of this everyone seemed it great spirits the kids did a wonderful job and we were glad to move next door to the warm schoolhouse for refreshments.

While applying for the Master Use Plan for the church we learned that there was one neighbor who was trying to stop the school from growing and developing the church building and

To our great dismay the sprinkler heads leaked and we were doused with tons of water. That was the only time we were not able to open the school on time and of course I was devastated and in tears and thought that everyone will go to another school. Little did I know how forgiving our community was. It was then that I realized what it means to work together and to become part of a caring community.

A few years later the school was in need of more space and another building. It so happened that the church next to the school house was up for sale and we were able to purchase it. Again it was my husband who took a leap of faith to take that risk.

Every year instead of the art show case in spring we had a winter festival where the children performed and we got together afterwards for so we ended up in litigation. At that time my class raised chickens and our parents built a great little chicken hut. We loved our chickens but the roosters woke up our neighbors and we had to give them to the farmers, but the hen named Sali, we kept. She loved the children and was so excited when they were at school. She laid an egg under my desk everyday and the children took turns taking the egg home. Getting the egg home in one piece was another
story. The interesting part was that the chicken did not lay an egg when
the children were not at school. So the sad story was that the chicken was not
liked by some neighbors, even though she never made any extra noise, was
so sweet, loved, and produced an egg
every day. Finally our attorney got very
stern with me and said, “You know
we cannot have another hearing just
because of that chicken”. I thought
that was an easy
thing to say for a
lawyer but what
was I supposed
to tell the
children?

In 1985 we formed our long-term lease
with the Hsu family. We remodeled the
house and moved the main office and
another classroom in the building and
again we went through a conditional
use permit process and learned from
the previous year to get a good
attorney right from the very beginning.
While we were growing we learned so
much, further developed our school
program and technology became part
of an educational environment. Do
you remember those huge cumbersome
Apple computers? We had one in each
classroom and each week we carried all
those computers into the “lab” which
just was the lab for that day and were
able to conduct classes there. We also
retrofitted. We spent all year planning
and fundraising through a “major gifts
program” and raised $1.4 million in
just six months. That project included
a total remodel of the whole Church
building, including seismic work, with
a small expansion to the west. The
fun part of this project was that we
involved the 4th graders in the design
work of the 5th grade classrooms and
they had much input which we still
treasure today. We had one summer to
do the work and were fully ready in fall
of 2000 to enjoy the renovated spaces.

At our school the children are the most
important clients. Yes, the parents pay
the bills, which is an important detail,
so the educational programming, the
school environment and the learning
experiences of each child are most
important. 30 years ago my dream
included that we could serve students
with a diverse range of learning
abilities. Over time we were able to
build our Learning Service program
and achieved bringing the program
fully in-house with its own spaces and
developed an excellent support system.

You all know that we want lessons
that keep everyone, child and
teacher, engaged and interested. The

The church remodel took us a summer.
I think we worked day and night and
opened school in fall 1981 on time.
The church at that time had just the
ground floor and the little mezzanine
upstairs. We had a total of six
classrooms between the two buildings.
The church classrooms were ready but
the desks and chairs did not arrive
on time and our teachers took this
opportunity to use this situation as a
teachable moment. We had books, pens
developed our science program and
were in desperate need to get a space
for the hands on, rich and challenging
science program. Just then the Lynn
Street house became vacant and we
bought it. That building housed the
science lab for a while and a classroom
and offices upstairs.

In 1999 the school had the need for an
enlarged 5th grade classroom and the
church building needed to be seismicly
integration, cross-disciplinary and collaborative learning is the heart of the school. Respecting others, having a voice and practicing tolerance is as important. The drama, music and visual art as well as sciences/technology, and physical education and outdoor experiences are crucial for the development of each child and so is the space to enhance those disciplines. Academics are a must and I know pretty much where every student stands. Each year I attend every single drama performance to learn more about the students. Often I am so amazed what I observe, it allows me to get to know each student in a very different way and it is exciting to learn more about each child, and the same with other disciplines. Those programs can truly open the doors for incredible learning allowing the children to become self-confident.

We want to encourage our students to pursue topics that interest and motivate them, by allowing them to be powerful and useful. We believe that as tomorrow’s leaders our students will make decisions that can make a difference in their world. It was so much fun to watch our KG students together with a parent plant the little wildlife garden this week. They discovered every little bug, egg, and structure of a leaf, digging in the dirt and learning about the plants.

When we were in the planning stage of the Bertschi Center the 4th graders were hard at work figuring out how much water they use at home and how much water we use at school. They did excellent research and wrote me a proposal for water usage for the new building in how to recapture rainwater and how best to reuse it for watering the plants and flushing the toilets. It was great fun to thank the students for their input and share with them that their proposal was exactly what we had in mind. They were excited and fully embraced the plan.

We can do little things everyday, which make a difference. As educators we know how important it is to “walk the talk” to model the values and practices that we would like our students to embrace themselves.

It is wonderful to be here with you tonight. Thank you!

Brigitte Bertschi
LIANE NOLAN

*Her first year at Bertschi:* 1980. Liane’s relocation from California coincided with layoffs at Seattle Public Schools. She thought she’d try Bertschi for a year, and...

*Her career at Bertschi:* At Bertschi, Liane has taught grades 1 through 4. Taking her entire career into consideration, Liane has taught kindergarten through 8th grade, but, interestingly, never 5th grade.

*Memories:* “When the school started there were only four teachers. I came when we added first grade. The curriculum included things like a half-day swimming or skiing. Art was a large part of the curriculum, and we taught three languages: German, French and Spanish.” The classrooms she and Peter currently occupy had a removable wall in between, and this was where the all-school meetings were held.

*What has changed:* “The size of the school, of course. At first we only had preschool and kindergarten, then added first, second and third grades. Many years later 4th and 5th were added. The direction of the school changed too, becoming more academic and well-rounded.”

*What remains the same:* “The spirit of the school and Brigitte’s vision, the great staff and parents, and super kids!”

Looking Back: Some Things Never Change
JANE LUNDIN

Her first year at Bertschi: 1984. Before that, Jane was a Bertschi parent when her children attended from 1978 to 1983.

Her career at Bertschi: Jane began teaching computer classes. “Many of the computer classes I took at the University of Washington were given through the Library School. I enrolled in the School of Library and Information Services in 1989, getting my MLS in 1991. I continued as the computer teacher and librarian for another year, and when it became time to have two people to wear the two hats, I chose to devote myself to the library.”

Memories: “In those early days, I carried seven Apple IIs and monitors from the classrooms to the computer room three days a week and brought my Commodore 128 to the school each day so we would have eight CPUs! When I became the librarian, I spent a summer entering each book into the library computer database and was relieved we only had 3,000 books in our holdings! I remember a winter festival held the December after we acquired the church building; we all sat in pews.”

What has changed: “Bertschi has grown—from four classrooms of pre-k and kindergarten to more than 200 students and a campus accommodating their needs.”

What remains the same: “The teachers’ energy, spirit, and dedication to inspiring the best in each child. As a parent in the early days, I recall Debbi, Anne, Len, Sarah, and Liane. As a faculty member, I see my colleagues as exceptional teachers. It has been an honor to work with them.”

JULIE BLYSTAD

Her first year at Bertschi: 1985. Julie taught science “very part time,” and recalls her job “increased each year until it became full time.” Prior to working at Bertschi, Julie taught gifted first and second graders in the Kent School District before she took time off to raise her own children (who attended Bertschi briefly).

Her career at Bertschi: “I have the best job in the whole school. All kids come in loving science—I don’t have to do a thing.”

Memories: “I remember some of my crickets escaped, and they made their way around the corner to the bathroom and started multiplying. I also carried a tarantula in my hand to each classroom, and its hairy bristles gave me a rash.” Julie learned—the hard way—that feeding fish food to hissing cockroaches makes them reproduce at a higher rate.

What has changed: Her space...this is the third classroom she’s had, and each one has increased in size.

What remains the same: “The teachers’ deep commitment to quality education for students at every level. It’s their first priority and something they highly value.”
**PETER JAMES**

**His first year at Bertschi:** Peter “first stepped over the Bertschi threshold,” as he put it, in 1988 when looking for work as a substitute (he didn’t get any) while he and his wife were in Seattle on an extended working holiday. A year later, they returned to Seattle from London (with their recently adopted twin daughters) and Peter worked at Spruce Street School. Finally, in 1991, “Brigitte offered me a job. So we packed up, sold up and moved here.”

**His career at Bertschi:** “Had anyone told me I’d be here for 16 years I would not have believed them, but I have. It’s been a blast.”

**Memories:** “I started teaching 3rd grade and had the eastern most third of Randy’s current room, which had been the choir changing room when the building was still a church. I loved that room and had only 12 kids, but even that felt tight for space. The following summer the upper floor of the church building was constructed and I came back to a gorgeous new, big room, which I occupied for the next two years. I still consider that to be my room, but Randy has employed countless lawyers to deny my rightful legacy. After two or three years my class morphed into a 3rd and 4th grade mixed class, and eventually became a straight 4th as the school enrollment increased. My current room is my fifth home at Bertschi.”

**What has changed:** “So much has changed. Obvious things are the buildings and facilities. The north play court was wood chip and Jane used to carry Apple 2e’s from class to class or her tech lessons. As the school expanded it became harder to know all the kids and to even connect with all the adults on site.”

**What remains the same:** “Much of the core feel of the place is the same. Kids enjoy being here and are keen to learn. Respect for others is still the norm and I still get to laugh many times a day with kids, parents and colleagues. Soon I’ll be off on my sabbatical travels and am excited to have that opportunity to renew my batteries and see different perspectives on life. I will be keeping a blog and will let the school know the address once it is set up. Then in 08 I’ll be back for lots more of the same. Keep this place safe for me!”
RANDY KATZ

His first year at Bertschi: The fall of 1987—the same year his son Will was born. “I worked for a week, then took a week of paternity leave.” (Will also attended Bertschi from kindergarten to 3rd grade). Before Bertschi, Randy taught at The Evergreen School for a year and (what is now) UCDS for at least seven years.

His career at Bertschi: For his first eight years at Bertschi, Randy taught either a combination 4th and 5th grade or 5th grade. Since then, he’s been faithful to third grade.

Memories: “Dan Roberts [former music teacher] and I were the first ones to begin demolition of the Lynn house. We took sledgehammers to the walls in what is now Brenda’s classroom.” Randy also recalls taking kids to Friday Harbor to study the town’s local history. “The kids would walk around town and interview people. The Sheriff let the kids go into the jail and sit in the patrol car with the lights flashing.” His classes also did volunteer work cleaning artifacts at the East Sound Historical Society Museum.

What has changed: “The number of students has probably doubled since I started.” Along with that is what he calls “dramatic changes in the physical space”—half of Randy’s current classroom used to be the choir loft of the church building, and that small narrow space was also where he taught 5th grade. Another difference—his hair color. “Gray hair has given me more credibility,” he claims.

What remains the same: Randy believes the school’s basic philosophy is much the same as when he started. “We continue to give students an academic foundation while providing interesting ways to develop skills and learning.” Randy also appreciates his “great colleagues, and opportunities for collaboration with other teachers,” as well as the “interesting and fun” students. “I like that we have an informal relationship with them and get to know them well.”

EMILY ALSOP

Her first year at Bertschi: 1990. Emily’s career has spanned across the entire United States—she’s taught in Virginia Beach, Va., Des Moines, Iowa, Dallas, Newbury Park, Calif., and Honolulu.

Her career at Bertschi: Emily has taught 4th grade (for six years) and 5th (for 11 years) at Bertschi. Now celebrating her 17th year here, this is the school she’s worked the longest.

Memories: Her 4th grade classroom is now Anna’s classroom, but it looked different then. “It was a great room. It had wraparound windows and a big deck. We used to slap paint all over the deck when we were making scenery for plays.” Emily had her class learn about an “Artist of the Month,” and when studying Georgia O’Keefe, she and Len (the art teacher at the time), dressed in desert attire and straw hats, and served “cactus juice” to the class while the students sketched a typical O’Keefe desert still life Emily and Len had set up.

What has changed: “There used to be more nooks and crannies around the campus, and everything was much smaller. I wasn’t used to working with computers then, and I relied on Jane for help—she was the technology teacher at the time.”

What remains the same: “The cohesiveness of the faculty and administrative support staff, who really support each other. And the richness of the education the kids get. The expertise of the resource teachers enhances the curriculum and is extremely valuable in accommodating the special interests and talents of the students.”
We are all walking together at Bertschi, through twisting trails. Sometimes they are beautiful and full of wondrous worlds and sometimes they are hard to walk with mountains to climb and streams to cross. I want to thank you children for this wonderful year and to tell you how proud I am of how you walk the trails.

Brigitte.
We are grateful for the generous contributions from parents, grandparents, alumni families and friends, which totaled over $3,345,000. Thank you!

Leila and David Kirke
Donna Bouldin and Jeffrey Kodaseet
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Washington Mutual
Julie and Rogers Weed
Kelley and Gary Western
Kathleen and Timothy Weyand
Maria Barrientos and Ron Wright
Mary Ann and Fred Youmans
Asha and Jeff Youmans
Tania Zapata-Garcia
News of Rob Randolph (1975-77) and Isham Randolph (1981-82) comes from their mother, Nina. “After graduating from Duke University, Rob spent seven years in Mexico working as a journalist. He returned to the U.S. and graduated from University of Virginia in law and is practicing tax law in New York City.” Isham also graduated from Duke, and as Fulbright scholar made a documentary film on the influx of Americans moving their residences to Mexico. “He stayed in Mexico for four years,” his mother writes, “then came back to work for National Geographic Society as an assistant TV producer. He’s now working at the Smithsonian Institute as an assistant producer of ‘In the Vaults,’ which will be available through Showtime on Demand.”

“I was in the first kindergarten class ever at the school, the 1976-77 school year,” e-mailed Charles Burns Reich. “I probably would have attended longer, but all the school offered was preschool and kindergarten. My mother volunteered during art projects and at lunch. I will always remember the field trip to Brigitte’s houseboat.” He went on to attend Bishop Blanchet High School and Washington State University.

After attending Bertschi, Natascha Snellman (1982-85) moved abroad to the Netherlands. She returned to the U.S., graduated from Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, and last December received her MFA from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif. She’s living in Los Angeles, plans to continue to exhibit her art work and recently had a collection of interviews with artists, “I Heart Darkness,” published by 2nd Cannons Publications.

James and Fiona Connor, class of 1991 and 1992 respectively, spent six weeks over Christmas break traveling around Central America. “Jamie completed his BSc in Computer Science and three years ago started a radio station which you can read about and hear at www.fleetfm.co.nz. He is also hosting a weekly slot on ALT (Alternative) T.V.,” said his mother, Jo, in a letter. Fiona graduated from university with both a BFA and BA, studied for a semester at Barcelona University and has been exhibiting as an artist for three years. “Neither are pulling in megabucks as lawyers or bankers,” writes Jo, “but they are enjoying life, and are quite creative and busy.”

Zachary Collings, class of 1994, is working for a land developer who’s planning a large project on the beach in Nicaragua, according to his mother, Anita. “Zach minor in Spanish and has wanted to keep up his language skills. He lived in Buenos Aires for six months teaching ESL. Then he sold high-rise condominiums (mainly in Trump Tower) for a real estate broker in Panama City for another six months. His present plan is to work in Nicaragua until he’s ready to come home and go to grad school. As you may guess, he’s becoming quite the young businessman.”

Erin Ikeda, class of 1997, graduated from SAAS and is working toward a physical education degree at Seattle Central Community College. She has been very active in karate.

The Jarris family just graduated their youngest, Emmy, from Bertschi in June. Meanwhile, her sister, Jessica Jarris, class of 1999, will be a sophomore at Lewis & Clark College in Portland; brother Chris Jarris, class of 2001, is entering his senior year at Garfield.

Nina Hartman, class of 2003, just finished 9th grade at SAAS, where she is “very happy. In March I received my black belt in tae kwon do after five-and-a-half years of training two to three times a week!”

Nadja Redmond, class of 2006, reports she’s getting good grades at St. Therese School. “I’m still playing sports with Bertschi friends!”

Former faculty member Barb Clagett (who most recently subbed for both Brenda Cram and Jill Corsi during the 2005-06 school year) is working as Interim Director of Admissions at Seattle Country Day School. “My work at SCDS is certainly taking a lot of my time and energy!” she writes. “I’m enjoying the new learning and challenges and find myself eager to talk to prospective parents.”
Looking Ahead...

First Day of School
September 5

All School Picnic
September 14

Parent Education Night
September 25

Back to School Night
October 11

Middle School Forum
October 9

Second Grade Market
October 25-26

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Brigitte Bertschi, Director

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For more information about these and other events, check www.bertschi.org