

**1971**

**CIS constructs a new building - the barracks**

I have many wonderful remembrances of my year - fellow students, teachers and the experience of attending CIS. One particular event from that time comes to mind.

It was 1971. I was a senior that year, and it was during the period of time when the school was still having to use temporary mobile units for some of their classes while the new, permanent buildings were being built. These temporary units were practical; but for larger classes, they were a little less than comfortable.

At the Talent Show that year, some students put on a skit which took a good-natured shot at the seeming lack of progress on the construction of the new rooms and the inordinate amount of time it seemed to be taking to finish them. Some fellow classmates played workers, who always appeared to be on a permanent break. I was dragooned into filling the role of a fair Danish maiden, all dressed up for the part in fancy female attire and parading around the perennially distracted Danish carpenters - who were also enjoying their Carlsberg a little too much. And because I had a "hippie haircut" at the time, a wig was the only thing I didn't have to don for the part! Of course, a photo of these antics had to appear in the 1971 yearbook, as well.

It was all in good fun, and a small part of a very happy and memorable time.

**David Howarth**



**1972**

**An eventful trip.....**

I was a senior student in 1972 and part of a close-knit group at that time who, amongst other things, enjoyed Jim Keson's pioneering film-making classes using a 8mm cine camera and manual editing kit! A good friend was Ernan Gallagher: he and I edited an early CIS literary publication called 'Soup' (do copies still exist..?)

I had obtained a motorcycle licence but rather than get an old Danish Nimbus or an old British bike, I invested in a 1957 Heinkel 'bubblecar', powered by a 250cc air-cooled engine. It was hopelessly unreliable, but great fun when it ran! Anyway, Ernan and I **decided** in early '72 that we would drive the Heinkel to Holland to see some girls we had met on the CIS trip to the Model UN Conference in Amsterdam, earlier that year.



Planning was negligible, money was almost non-existent and the car was rubbish. No surprises then that the drive to Holland was pretty much a disaster from start to finish!

We decided to sleep overnight in a lay-by off the German Autobahn, which was bad enough, but made worse when Ernan, asleep in his seat, accidentally 'popped out' the plastic side window during the night - and we froze! The next day the gearbox failed in Holland and for remainder of the journey we only had second and third gear, with no clutch! We had to be pushed onto a ferry by the car behind and eventually limped home. BUT, we did have fun whilst we were there!

This is one of my memories from two eventful years I had at CIS from 1970 to 1972, at the Soeborg site. Thanks to Ernan's initiative, he and I met up again in London last Autumn for the first contact in 35 years. The years rolled back.....'

## **Ian Sommerschild**

**1973**

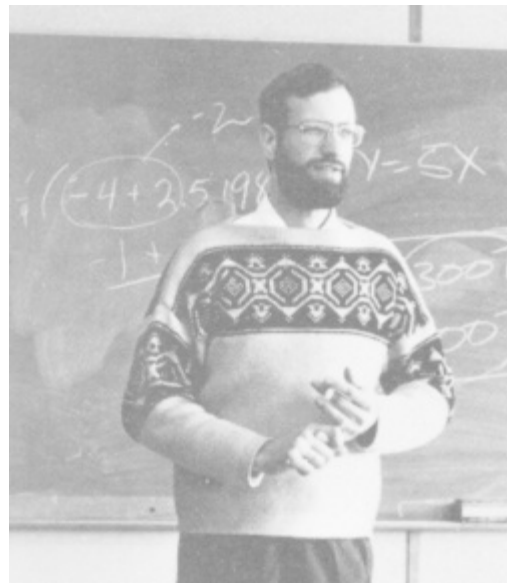
### **The longest ten seconds in my career**

They say that when you are in an auto accident or similar life-threatening situation that time slows down and things seem to slide irresistibly towards disaster with the force of an avalanche. Fortunately I have never witnessed a crash, but there was a moment in an algebra class some 35 years ago that I can still picture, second by second.

I was teaching a senior mathematics class in the barracks in Høje Gladsaxe. Now, I am bound by the oath given at my teacher certification to maintain that while in the classroom, a professional's attention never, ever, drifts off the subject at hand and the task of conveying it to eager young students.

Well, there I am, explaining for the hundredth time how to solve an equation by completing the square, when I glance out the window and catch sight of a student on his free period, who had wandered over to the church about 50 meters away. The church was having its roof fixed and there was an extensive scaffolding around it along with a rope and pulley arrangement for hoisting things up to the top. The student was fooling around with the rope, it was a nice, fat, well-worn rope that went up four stories, over a pulley wheel, and down to the ground again. It was a beautiful day, the student was probably teaching himself some physics, so I went back to my "take the coefficient of the x term, halve it and blah, blah, blah . . ."

Out of the corner of my eye, I notice that the student has discovered a loop in the end of the rope and is about to put his foot into it. My blood runs cold. This is something I know from experience. On another continent, a generation earlier, I had found a rope and pulley in a hayloft. It seemed obvious that if I put my feet into the loop and pulled on the other end of the rope, I would be able to hoist myself, smoothly and securely to the top of the



barn. Mathematically flawless, in practice as soon as my feet got off the ground, I lurched to the side and as I fell, in one swift motion I managed to hoist my feet into the air and dump myself face down into the hay.

And this was going to happen again. The window was closed so I couldn't shout, the student standing on a concrete sidewalk, and I knew that there was no way he could be stopped. My students followed my stunned gaze. They watched breathlessly while the student outside pulled the rope until it was taut, made sure that his foot was securely within the loop and lifted with all his strength. Sure enough, when his foot was off the ground, he tilted off balance, and in falling, succeeded in lifting his foot over his head and cartwheeling himself into the bushes. A moment later he stood up, brushed himself off, and looked around to see whether anyone had witnessed his mishap.

I waved, and the math class did too.

I never found out whether he had realized that putting only one foot into the loop would be safer than risking both feet, or whether it was just plain luck, in any case he provided a memorable lesson for a fascinated class of mathematics students and their teacher.

### **Jim Keson**

**1974**

#### **The day I decided to tell the truth**

Well I was going to talk about stink bombing Mr. Keson's math class ( it didn't work the timing mechanism failed and it went off during Mr.Heidorn's class , servers him right, the man had a unnatural hatred for the ping-pong table and stereo in the student lounge) but after Milton's little chalkboard story (see below) it just seems a little pubescent.

Upstaged by my big brother once again.

So I'd like to talk about Mrs. Metz or better said, skipping Mrs. Metz's class.

Not only had I skipped her class the day before ,but was fool enough to come in late the next day.She said well where were you yesterday ( now understand at the time I would have lied to the pope if I thought it would get me out of trouble ), but not to Mrs.Metz. I just hung my head and said I'm sorry I was skipping.

To my surprise she smiled and said, Oh you Hurst boys, you're both such fine southern gentlemen or some such nonsense like that. Come in and take your seat, a light bulb went off in my head , I thought well I'll be damned the truth works or at least with her, She was a jewel.

**Doug Hurst (Milton's little brother)**

**1975**

#### **A teacher without a blackboard**

I remember an April fools joke that went south in a hurry. It was during my senior year (74-75).....man that's a long time ago, any, there were a few of us that actually were early to class that day, Math class. We were trying to come up with some date appropriate prank to pull on our Math teacher, who, by the way, all know very well. Our school building at the time was considered “temporary”, and, I guess that went for the chalk boards too. Even though they were about fifteen to twenty feet wide, they were hung on the wall like a picture i.e. removable. So Ralph Massey, Stan Sydenham and I, ....come to think of it, I'm Sure Greg Thompson was involved as well, he usually was. Anyway,

we decided to remove the chalk board and hide it in the Student's Lounge, then set back, naturally acting like nothing had happened and see how our always calm and cool Math teacher, Mr. Keson, would respond. We may have been disappointed but not surprised. Mr. Keson walked into class, never broke stride, never flinched. Walked right passed the missing chalk board, set his books on his desk, looked up to the class and said, "I had every intension of going over some new, difficult material today, that would be very beneficial to your understanding tonight's homework assignment, however, it seems I will not be able to do that today due to technical difficulties, the assignment "is" still due, tomorrow." We all spoke up at about the same time. "Ah, Mr. Keson, we may have an idea how to solve this problem." He then replied, "I thought you might." We scrambled out the door, to the Student's Lounge, retrieved the board, re-hung the board, and, as legend has it, he was writing on the board before we had even taken our seats. Never could get anything past that guy.

**David (Milton) Hurst**

**1975**

### **A little jaunt through East Germany**

When the CIS German classes decided to visit West Berlin in the 1970's, flying was too expensive and even trains didn't fit into the school's budget. But a local bus company, whose driver had never been to West Berlin and, as it turned out, hadn't thought to buy a map, provided a sturdy vehicle and off we went - 25 students, two teachers, and five student teachers. The trip was planned to head toward Gedser, go onto the car ferry and then zoom straight down through East Germany on the official transit roads, roads with prominent signs threatening dire consequences if drivers left them to dally in the East German countryside.



Driving off the ferry in Warnemünde it all seemed perfectly clear. We passed groups of Soviet tanks parked in the forests, but we were on the official corridor, we were safe. But sometime around dusk we must have made a wrong turn, since the signposts for Berlin had unaccountably disappeared. Actually, there weren't any roadsigns of any kind – which one of the students, a son of the West German Military Attache, explained was a actually a cunning plan to ensure that any invaders from the West would be hopeless lost.

Well, it seemed to be working, as we drove down the unlit roads toward a dim glow in the distance which just might be West Berlin. At some point a couple of fighter jets buzzed the bus, but it seemed to be more of a manoeuvre than a confrontation, or so we reassured the students. But still we didn't see any signs pointing to the authorized checkpoint – the only entry point we were allowed to use. So we kept driving, we were running a bit low on gas now, until finally about two hours later we saw an illuminated sign in the distance. Chugging up to it we read the words "Warschau – 189 km" Warsaw! We had used our dwindling supply of petrol to go three quarters of the way around Berlin

rather than straight into it. At this point the students associated with various NATO powers (and a teacher who for some reason had decided to bring a handgun) began to sense the trouble we were in.

Using the traditional strategy of “Don't look back, we'll hang a right and it's got to be right there” we kept on blundering clockwise around Berlin, until, with the petrol tank reading lower than zero, we suddenly found ourselves in the searchlights of the southern checkpoint to West Berlin. Broad roads, big cars, neon signs - never had the symbols of western decadence looked so welcome!

**1978**

**Skipping class to grab a beer**

As with most classes, our 11th grade English class with Mr Brown in 1978 was rather small - so when several of us decided to ditch class and go on up to the "pub" area of the shopping center and order some beers - we didn't expect another small group of our classmates to show up there too! We were all laughing wondering who might be left in our classroom. Suddenly Mr Brown appeared, looking for all his students . . . and there we all were looking rather guilty. If my memory serves correctly we all sheepishly returned to the classroom following our devoted teacher who acted like it was just another regular day at CIS. I don't remember him getting angry really - but I do recall that I never pulled that stunt again!

**Tina Wasserfall**

**1978**

**Taking the door off its hinges**



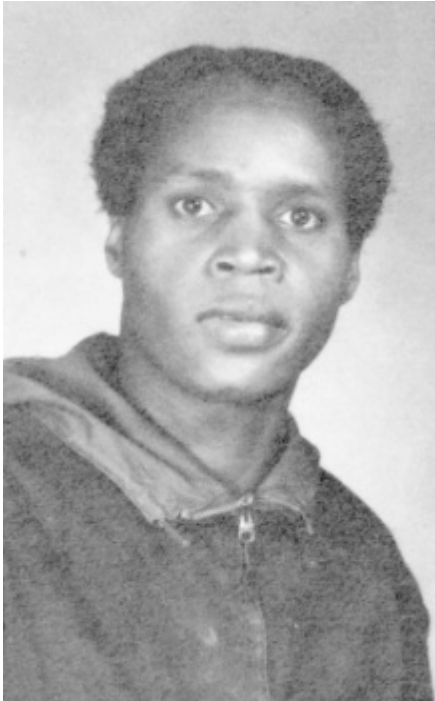
Do you recall the time the kids unscrewed the English door from its hinges? I think it might have been my brother Tim and his cohorts. Mr Brown went to open the door from inside the classroom and there it went - fell flat on the floor. Mr Brown walked right onto and over the door and out into the hallway without batting an eye - and we were all in stitches. That was very, very funny, What ever happened to Mr Brown. He was the best teacher I ever had. He really inspired me to write.

**Tina Wasserfall**

**1979**

### **CIS harbours an illegal alien**

Now that 20 years passed, the statute of limitations must render the school immune to prosecution for harbouring an illegal alien. It all started when the Father Superior of the Catholic Church - who provided the facilities for CIS and was a member of our school board – asked whether a young fellow who needed an education could attend a few classes. That was no problem – the school always had a few extra chairs in the classrooms, so Martin, a tall, polite, 18 year-old Kenyan joined the school. On a temporary basis, you understand – until his residency permit was granted by the Danish authorities.



He proved to be a keen student who loved history, but was very shy and found it difficult to mix with the other students. Since he didn't have a place to stay, we fixed him up with a little room on the fourth floor, and the Catholic fathers let him eat his meals with them.

Months passed without any letter from the Danish Fremmedpoliti (Alien Police) and Martin began to fear that his case worker wouldn't have good news for him. One day he happened to meet the caseworker on Vesterbrogade. Martin went up to him and told him that he felt very awkward without his papers in order. The caseworker told him that if he insisted on getting an answer, he would be told to go back to Kenya, so the caseworker's unofficial advice was to avoid any contact with the office. These were the old days when a refugee was a relatively rare thing and apparently caseworkers had a fair amount of leeway. Martin was upset by being placed in this

kind of bureaucratic limbo, but he stayed at the school until he graduated two years later, and went off to university to study.

That was the last I heard from Martin, until about ten years later I was riding a tram one evening in Munich Germany, when outside I spotted him waiting for a tram in the opposite direction. I banged on the window, he spotted me, and my tram zoomed off. But Martin was a Kenyan who could run like the wind. He loped alongside my tram until the next stop where we threw our arms around each other and had a long chat about what had happened in the past years.

**Wiebke Keson, German, ESL teacher**

**1979**

**My start at CIS**

I remember ... starting out at CIJS with nary a word of English at my command, without a single friend, acquaintance or known entity after I had moved to Denmark.

Nada. Zip. Zilch.

[fast forward]

One evening out at Klampenborg, one year later. In attendance, at G's [name withheld] place were literally two rooms full of friends I had found in the comparatively little time I had spent at CIJS and - shortly thereafter - CIS. We had just been promoted, had moved across that upper-level playground at CIJS (Gammel Kongevej) into the adjacent building that was the mystery of CIS, the place where all the seniors hung out. Yes, I had to get beaten up with a positively huge pillow by M. [name withheld], 11th grader ... and Texan, in what was supposed to be a student lounge, and I had to withstand all the other lesser or more awkward tests and in-jokes that would eventually make me a member of my slightly older peers.

I had passed.

Something that had never happened to me before in my life.

[snip]

That evening in Klampenborg, a wonderfully warm evening with a star-lit sky and a stunning sea-breeze wavering in from up north, we all decided that we would grab what we had to eat and drink, pack it up and head into Dyrehavn, that fenced-off area that - at night - seemed to have been reserved for the royal family's retreat smack-dab-in-the middle of the park, guarded by two absolutely ferocious Dobermans.

As we made our way across the fence - I climbed over it to open it from the other side only to be upstaged by D. [name withheld] who simply pushed it open and, in a gravelly voice, said: "Hey man, it's open!", swung the gate wide and almost made me fall off the top, several meters above the ground.

We proceeded to head into the park, lugging all our belongings on our backs, stumbling through the dark, conversing in an international language that today - to my ears - would probably sound like what it was ... pretty darn good English, lightyears away from what many of us could have uttered just days, weeks or months previously.

On our way we talked about "deep stuff"; you know, about what we might possibly be able to achieve one day, what we would do with a trillion dollars (if we had any), who the prettiest girl in the group was. That kind of stuff.

On a moonlit plain next to the "Ermitage", the aforementioned royal residence, we played "Red Rover", water-skated through puddles, did outrageous stunts and altogether behaved like teenagers without a worry in the world.

It was a grand night ...

... which didn't end until the sun rose, until after we had a run-in with the aforementioned Dobermans (ferocious is an understatement), until we had exhausted every possible topic one could talk about at that age, until we had eaten every scrap available to us, ... until we were too tired to stand up.

[snip]

In my mind, Stephen King's best quote, to leap from real to literary memories, has always been the following one:

“The most important things are the hardest things to say. They are the things you get ashamed of because words diminish your feelings - words shrink things that seem timeless when they are in your head to no more than living size when they are brought out.”

You know, Jim (and all you present and past CIS'ers), the Copenhagen International School was (and I hope is) a school, that was always much more than simply a place of education. I can only speak for myself, but those old and musty walls that held the people therein in check, the close to dilapidated foundations that sometimes got "made up" for PTA meetings (but only to the first, at most the second floor) were the one place where I became what I am today.

I don't know if things have changed since the late 70s and early 80s (they probably have), the time at which I attended and literally soaked up what the international community at CIJS and CIS had to offer, but in my case (and I know this was true for others as well), the new environment, the new educational experience, the individuals - both teachers and students - a different life style, and, most importantly, a large dedicated group of friends, turned me from a part-time misfit, a terrible student and a distrusting fellow into an achiever. Yes, the latter took some time, but I'm indebted to all the people at CIJS and CIS who made my grade average rise from abysmal in all subjects to stellar and some and - in my eyes - pretty good in others (aside from Maths and Biology).

I'm positive that I would have never made it to university (my final yearbook entry still states, embarrassingly "Too thick for university"), that I would have never discovered my path in life and that I would never have assembled such a spectacular group of friends whom - thanks to the Internet, social networks and electronic communication altogether - I'm still in touch with on and off today.

snip]

As I'm, sitting here and writing this, three of the friends who went into the park with me are dead. The others went on to good, great or just "average" careers, but they all have that "spark" that I think distinguishes us from the vast group of others. It's a special perspective we have preserved and - in many ways - it still today is a tightly-knit group of completely diverse characters who once climbed a fence to spend an entire night in a park together.



**Volkher Hoffmann**

