

blues notes

JANUARY 2008

An Urban Alumni Newsletter

This newsletter was sent to all Urban alums for whom we have email addresses. To remove yourself from this list, please contact alumni@urbanschool.org. If you know of someone who did not receive a copy, please forward us their email address.

Your Fond Memories of Urban

The following memories were culled from the recent Urban alumni survey. We hope you enjoy them!

Never knowing what would be on the other side.

Meeting the person who is to this day my best friend.

Trying to sneak into the school office for Senior prank...and getting busted by Carl Munger! Geesh!

Sappy as this is, I think my favorite memories of Urban are of getting to know my now wife.

Winning the Basketball Championship for Urban in 1985.

I loved circus class with Wendy! (Learning to juggle and dressing up like a clown for academic credit? Nice!)

My first day of class as a freshman. Joana's Spanish class. Scared to be in high school, but feeling at home at Urban. All of the all school trips. Being cold, tired, hungry, forced to paint the most foul latrine I've ever set foot in, and having the best time of my life being with friends. Project month in Mexico. All project months for that matter. All school meetings.

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Dear Urban Alumni:

Happy New Year from all of us at The Urban School, and welcome to our second edition of Blues Notes, our e-newsletter for alumni.

I am especially happy to announce that we recently re-ignited Urban's Alumni Council, which I am honored to chair. A great group of alums convened in October 2007 to discuss the results of our Alumni Survey (thanks to those of you who filled it out!) and help strengthen and improve the school's efforts to connect, inform and engage alums. The Council has been busy meeting and making plans for future events for alums – happy hours, summer BBQs and more; fundraising opportunities; and improved outreach and communications. We hope you are as excited as we are about these changes and enhancements.

Hopefully you have also seen Urban's new website and registered on the new Online Alumni Community (kudos to the more than 300 of you who have so far!). If you have not yet joined the Online Alumni Community, we encourage you to contact the Development Office at alumni@urbanschool.org or 415 593 9540 to get your login ID and password, and stay in touch with your classmates and teachers.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy reading some of our alums' favorite memories of Urban, why Dan Murphy still loves Urban, and what upcoming reunions and activities we have in store for you!

We invite you to keep in touch. We'd love to hear from you and hope to see you at an Urban alumni event soon.

Sincerely,



Steven Dinkelspiel ('74)
President, Alumni Council
Board of Trustees

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More Fond Memories

I got the best possible education for my learning style, got inspired to learn and about subjects in ways that continue into my career today, had teachers who set a pretty impossible milestone for my college professors to follow, and have friends who still support and inspire me.

Here's a few: 1) Saving a penalty kick in a soccer game against University High School; 2) Composing the music for an original Urban theatre production; 3) Coming out in front of the whole school by performing an original song of mine at a Tuesday morning assembly.

I have a few! I was at Urban for only one year, my senior year. My parents worked hard to give me this great gift. They wanted to get me out of the racially violent atmosphere of the public school system. The building on Washington St. was a welcome change from Galileo HS. I LOVED music with Laura Webber - what a gem she was! Also student trips to the Exploratorium, putting together the set design for "A Midsummer Night's Dream," building a giant plaster owl in the back yard (which later melted in the rain).

It was about Thanksgiving during my sophomore year when my mother took me to visit Urban, ostensibly because she was looking for a school for my sister. It had never occurred to me not to go to Berkeley High School. But I was positively flabbergasted when Bob Wilder began by talking to me rather than to my mother. I was being treated, not as a kid, but as a human being with my own concerns and interests. I decided that that was the sort of place I wanted to go to school and a few days later I became a student at Urban.

Faculty Spotlight: Dan Murphy

Dan Murphy, who has taught at Urban since 1968, recently shared his experiences at Urban with Director of Development Brisen Brady about teaching here for 40 years, similarities and differences between students in 1968 and 2008, and the trials and tribulations of college counseling.

Brisen: You've taught at Urban for many years.

Dan: I started in 1968. I came in the third year after Urban had been founded, but it went from 45 to 90 students the year I started. So I'm finishing my 40th year? That's an astounding number. That's really absurd when I think about it. [Laughs.]

Brisen: Well, time flies by and you still have so much energy and vitality. Tell about some of your favorite memories as you look back over the past 40 years. Are there certain Urban moments that stand out?

Dan: I have to say that the odd thing about being here for so long is that I haven't deeply reflected on it. I always feel like I'm so involved in what I'm doing in the moment that I stumble on from one year to the next. When I hear that number it really does seem absurd and yet it doesn't feel like it's been that



long. I still find the students are fresh, fun, interesting, lively and involved, so that whatever I'm doing that is familiar to me is new to them. There is a certain kind of vitality that comes with working with high school students that keeps you from thinking "another year done."

In the early years I think I did have a sense of the precariousness of the school and whether or not it would survive, or whether I would survive along with it and all that. And then Urban really did achieve independent growth status. In those early years there was a sense that we were involved in something that was new, but I think we had a hard time defining all the elements. Certainly some of the founders had a vision in their head that Urban would be a model for other educators. During the last 15 years or so, that vision has been realized in a meaning-

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Register Online for the Alumni Community

Urban's new website includes an expanded Online Alumni Community. All alums were sent a letter in October with your login ID and password and a follow-up email. Please email alumni@urbanschool.org or call 415 593 9540 if you need your information again. We encourage everyone to sign up and enjoy the benefits of connecting with your classmates and teachers.

Class Notes

Please feel free to drop us a line and let Urban know what's new with you. Class Notes and photos are published bi-annually in our *Urban Community* magazines and daily on the Online Alumni Community. Class Notes can be written through the Online Alumni Community or sent via email to your Class Correspondents or alumni@urbanschool.org. Don't forget a photo, too! We hope to hear from you soon.

Urban Yearbooks Needed!

Do you have an extra copy of an Urban yearbook from 1979, 1980, 1981, 1983 or 1985? If so, we need yearbooks from those years to complete our collection at the school. If you are interested in donating your yearbook, or letting us borrow it to scan and return to you, please email alumni@urbanschool.org or call 415 593 9540. Thanks!

Upcoming Events & Reunions: Reconnect with Classmates & Faculty!

New York City Reunion: February 28, 2008

Please join LeRoy Votto, Jonathan Howland, Charlotte Worsley, Howard Levin, Suzanne Forrest and Mark Salkind for a very special alumni gathering on February 28, 2008, from 6-8 p.m. at The Modern, located at 9 West 53rd Street in Manhattan. An Evite was recently emailed to alums in the area. If you did not receive your invitation, please contact Alison Brand at 415 593 9540 or abrand@urbanschool.org or RSVP online at www.urbanschool.org/rsvp.

10-Year Reunion: May 3, 2008

Class of 1998 – it's time for your 10-year reunion! Lock Bingham ('98) and Ezra Berman ('98) are organizing a fun afternoon and evening. Please contact them at wrbingham@gmail.com or ezraberman@hotmail.com if you would like to get involved.

30-Year Reunion: May 17, 2008

Class of 1978 – mark your calendar for your 30-year reunion! Jim Henderson ('78) is helping to plan this memorable day, which will include a gathering with faculty at Urban in the afternoon, followed by a no-host dinner and an invitation to see Urban students' One Acts in Gumption Theater. If you are interested in helping, please email Jim at jhenderson@techlighting.com.

20-Year Reunion: Date TBD

Class of 1988 - Molly Dunn ('88) and Shannon Latta ('88) are putting together your 20-year reunion to be held sometime during 2008, and they would love your ideas! We hope everyone will come and please feel free to bring your families. Molly and Shannon can be reached at medunn70@msn.com and shannonlatta@yahoo.com respectively, and they welcome your help in planning a special day.

2007-08 Alumni Council

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Steven Dinkelspiel ('74), President | R. Durelle Rosen Schacter ('81) |
| Lock Bingham ('98) | Lauren Scott ('01) |
| Will Hammond ('87) | Justin Schwartz ('81) |
| Jim Henderson ('78) | Anne Chapin Shepler ('74) |
| Annik Hirshen ('88) | Andrea Greenberg Shippy ('86) |
| Jordan Kivelstadt ('00) | Tirien Steinbach ('88) |
| Erika Lenkert ('85) | Egon Terplan ('92) |
| Leah Meakin ('87) | Michael Sean Tierney ('81) |
| Amy Hethcoat Pearson ('92) | Aisha Lowe Toney ('95) |
| David Shamszad ('00) | Tara Wilson ('95) |

Arts Alive at Urban

Mark your calendar for these upcoming music, art and theater events:

Winter Art Show

February 14, 2008
3:30 p.m.
Second Floor Art Studios

Winter Production: Iphigenia 2.0

by Charles Mee and the Cast of Winter Production
Directed by Frances Evens
Gumption Theatre @ The Urban School
Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008, 4:30 p.m.
Thursday - Saturday, Feb. 21 - 23, 2008, 7:30 p.m.
\$7 General Admission, \$5 Student

Circus Performance

Thursday, February 28, 2008
3:15 p.m.
Gumption Theater
Free

Spring Concert

Thursday, April 10, 2008
7 p.m.
Herbst Theater (401 Van Ness Avenue at McAllister)
Tickets are \$5 and available at the door

One Act Play Festival

Thursday - Saturday, May 15-17, 2008
Thursday - Saturday, May 22-24, 2008
Gumption Theater
\$7 General Admission, \$5 Student

Alum Spotlight: Steven Dinkelspiel ('74)

Brisen Brady, Urban's Director of Development, sat down with Steven Dinkelspiel ('74) for a candid conversation about his experiences as a student, alum, parent, trustee and now President of the new Alumni Council at Urban.

Brisen: What was your time at Urban like when you were a student in the 70s?

Steven: First of all, Urban was a very different place in the 70s. It was on Washington Street and there were 86 kids in the whole school when I started. The world was a different place when I started at Urban in 1970. I was a pretty square, competitive, driven kid from Town School for boys. I walked into an environment that was very foreign to me - people had long hair and wore peasant dresses and went barefoot and had a very laid back demeanor, which was quite unfamiliar to me. I always liked school and the teachers were superb. Even though I didn't feel very similar to the other kids, I felt that the learning environment was very exciting. And luckily Urban softened many of my edges and turned me into a much rounder, fuller person. It's one of the reasons why I love Urban so.

Brisen: Can you give me some examples of how it shaped you and what elements from Urban you continue to carry with you?

Steven: One thing about Urban that was very unusual at the time was this spirit
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Go Blues Alums!

On Saturday, November 24, Urban hosted its second annual Boys Varsity vs. Alumni Basketball Game in St. Agnes. Fourteen alums comprised a great team and lead the way in the first quarter, but the Varsity team pulled ahead in the second half to win 64 to 51. A pizza party for all followed, and congratulations were given to the winning students. Last year the alums won, so next year will be the tie-breaker!

Alums are welcome at all athletics games. For a full schedule, please visit our website and click on the Athletics Calendar. We hope you will join us to cheer on the Blues!





Urban's Big Night at Bimbo's: Auction and Celebration

Please save the date for Saturday, March 29, 2008, for Urban's BIG NIGHT at Bimbo's – our fun and entertaining auction at Bimbo's 365 Club in North Beach in San Francisco. The festive evening will include cocktails and a delicious sit-down dinner, super silent auction, live auction and fabulous entertainment by Urban's talented students and the Unauthorized Rolling Stones. Don't miss this opportunity to join the party and support Urban's Financial Aid Program!

NEW THIS YEAR: We are pleased to offer half-priced tickets to alums. Please note: you must be 21 years old to attend. Invitations will be sent in February.

If you are interested in volunteering for the auction or contributing to the event, please contact Alison Brand, Assistant Director of Development, at 415 593 9540 or abrand@urbanschool.org.

Alumni Survey Results

Thank you to everyone who filled out our online survey! By the time we closed the survey on January 25, 2008, 214 alums had completed the survey. Your input and feedback has been invaluable as we build our Alumni Relations program and plan new activities and programs for alumni.

Here are some highlights from the survey:

- 97 percent are proud or very proud to be an Urban alum.
- 56 percent feel connected or very connected to Urban.
- 99 percent answered that Urban's academic quality was satisfactory, good or excellent.
- 100 percent answered that Urban's faculty were satisfactory, good or excellent.
- 61 percent of alums would like to have alumni gatherings off-campus. In second place at 38 percent was mentoring or helping Urban students and in third place at 37 percent was attending Urban events (e.g., athletics games, drama productions).
- 87 percent would like their reunions to include a class above and below (or more).
- Although most alums hadn't attended a recent reunion, 93 percent of those who had rated the overall experience satisfactory or better.
- The most popular response to what is most important to support at Urban was Financial Aid (50 percent). In close second place was ensuring a diverse community of students, faculty and staff (47 percent) and next were faculty support (44 percent) and endowment (43 percent).
- 79 percent of respondents have spoken with a fellow Urban alum in the past 12 months; 67 percent have read an article in an Urban publication; and 55 percent have recommended Urban to someone else.
- 81 percent keep in touch with alums and faculty the old-fashioned way – phone, personal visits, mail, email etc.; 32 percent now use Facebook.com as well.

We also very much appreciated your responses to our questions about supporting Urban (or your reasons for not supporting our school), our reunion program, how Urban can help you professionally or personally, and what our Alumni Relations program might do to connect you more with Urban. Your honesty, candor and helpful responses are much appreciated!

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ful way – such as through the Center for Innovative Teaching. Teachers from Urban are much more involved in taking the ideas and the practices of Urban outside where people are paying attention to it.

One of the things I have told people is that I think that Urban has changed with a sense of gain – unlike some students who look at Urban’s change with a sense of loss. It’s not like the Preamble to the Constitution forming a more perfect union. Urban has become a better school for more people. It was always a wonderful school for some students, but it wasn’t necessarily a great school for all students. I think we are much more conscious of what we do and how we do it and indicating what we are doing better to other people. That’s very exciting. I love the fact that when I bump into people on the outside that they have heard of Urban and say “that’s a wonderful school.” And I do take some real pride in that for having been here for so long. One of the things that has kept me here for so long is because it has stayed fresh.

Brisen: You must have taught Mark Salkind. What was he like as a student?

Mark was an eager and vigorous intellect and we would shove books at each other. We were hugely excited when the collection of Orwell came out. I still remember handwriting his college recommendation letter to Yale during Christmas break. I was sitting at my desk filling out a little yellow form...

Brisen: Do you have any other favorite memories or Urban moments?

Dan: When I teach Constitutional Law I have lots of Urban moments. When we are talking with lawyers, district attorneys or judges they will often say how impressive Urban kids are. It makes me really proud to be associated with the school, because the kids are themselves, connected and engaged. They have real questions and aren’t afraid to ask them.

There is a flexibility and fluidity that defines Urban in certain ways, that when I talk with people from other schools they seem stilted and rigid. Here you have connections – characteristic with a small school – with students inside and outside of class that keeps it vital and lively. One of the things that I’ve always been struck by when writing letters for kids’ college applications is what their education has been – the number of places they have gone to and the kind of work they have done – there is really a rich deep meaningful learning going on.

I’ve said that every teacher in a variety of ways is very thoughtful about what they are doing in the classroom. There are opportunities here for teachers to think really hard about their classes and it pays off really well for their students. I’m always amazed that no matter what the discipline is there are amazing things going on. Going back to my Urban moment it’s not necessarily distinctive for one class or my class but for lots of classes. That’s the real key for making this rewarding over a long period of time. At faculty meetings when departments are describing what they are doing my mouth always drops in positive ways.

Finally, I guess I would add that I’ve always been a student. And Urban has allowed me to study. I think hard about what I’m reading and what we’re reading in class. I’m interested in it, I’m excited by it. It’s allowed me to read books over a long number of years. And, well, I’m still teaching and I’m still trying to develop assignments and grading papers and all that. It’s a place that keeps me alive intellectually and that’s communicated to kids, too: that lots of teachers have vital intellectual interests. We’re not just slogging through a curriculum.

Brisen: Your sons attended Urban too (Aaron (’85), Patrick (’88) and Brian (’91)). Do you feel that Urban had a significant influence on their lives or had a transformational impact on who they became as adults?

Dan: Well, I very much liked the fact that they came here. Consciously or not we had independent lives. One of the things that made it possible for them to be here at a small school is that they took the bus and I rode my bike. I think I would have gone crazy if I had been waiting in a car for them, or one of them, to get ready. I don’t think I was looking over their shoulders to see what work they were doing. I was confident about the hands into which they had been placed.

My sense is that Urban served them extremely well for what they were eventually doing in college. It gave them a healthy stance toward education that you could be independent and that you could keep learning in a number of different ways.

Brisen: You’ve been teaching history at Urban since you started. What’s changed?

Dan: That depends a bit on the class. I’ve been doing Constitutional Law for a long time. What’s changed is there is more access to material in dramatically different ways. Basically with the internet, we have a law library now. We can read cases and see links between cases in very different ways. It also allows a kind of flexibility – if a class seems to be interested in

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one theme more than another it's easy to make adjustments. It opens it up in amazing ways. Sometimes you get cues from a class about what's working better for them versus a different class. With the class size and connections we have with the kids there's a healthy flexibility.

I think that sometimes what I'm teaching is how to read. And it doesn't matter that that's what we're doing. You do it all your life. You learn to analyze and ask questions and step back and get perspective and not let things slip by. Lots of people do that here. After taking Con Law the happy thing is that students do pay more attention, they have heard certain things and are alert. Even as seniors they will stop me in the halls and say, "I heard something about this case or that case..." They've had their world enlarged.

Brisen: You also stepped down this year as Director of College Counseling. Any favorite stories? How has the college application process changed, hopefully for the better?

Dan: When Urban posted its position for its first-ever part-time college counselor, I believe 25 years ago, my coworker Susan Oscherwitz and I sort of mutually said, "That's not so hard; we can do that." And in fact it wasn't so hard and we could do that.

Now it's changed for the worse. It hasn't changed for the better. I'm not just an old guy saying that. But the anxiety and the pressures and – it's hard to say – there are so many things that have gone wrong and are out of balance.

For a very long time most families who were thoughtful about their kids could be thoughtful about the college process. There was a kind of balance there. We could provide some information and ideas of different schools. Very good kids could look at a number of very good schools and we could say, "We don't know which ones you are going to get into but you'll probably get into one or two of them." They just applied to college and would see what happened. And that worked out. The numbers were reasonable. The chances were 1-3 not 1-10. Probably about 10 years ago something tipped in a really, really dramatic way. The paradox is that while there are lots of really wonderful schools, kids are looking at lists of ever-more competitive schools. Unfortunately name-brand schools dominate the field.

I hate to see these independent, wonderful, resourceful kids – it's like they've been frozen or turned into zombies and all their critical faculties have gone out the window when they're doing the college admissions process. They've invested all their self-worth with what some college admissions officer who doesn't even know them is going to say. Most kids will come out on the other side and be fine. They realize that there are numerous schools with smart engaged kids. You don't have to go to one of these five schools to be a success. Instead they should be asking, "What school will serve me well?" The kid should be the constant in the equation.

That's a long answer – the teaching in classes has gotten much better at Urban! The pressures of college are very much at odds with the rest of the educational process kids are getting here. But when I talk with people at other schools we are still in a more healthy and balanced situation.

Brisen: If you could change anything about this college application process what would you recommend?

Dan: Well, that's one complicated question. There are interlocking things that have driven it. If I could change one thing it would be for colleges to say we're interested in what high school the student is from and what that kid has done in high school rather than what their SATs are. The biggest correlation with SAT test scores is family income. The SAT may tell you something about a student's work their first year in college, but they are lousy predictors for anything beyond that. Colleges know this and yet a huge amount of money and energy is wasted on test preparation. Kids think their scores need to be at a certain level to get them into a ring.

I would get rid of early decision which has gotten completely out of whack. No matter what people say, they are looking at it as an odds-enhancing technique.

I would discourage families from shopping for a summer experience that will look good to a college, which is all backwards.

I'd like to put the kid back at the center of the process. Lots of students do what they're interested in and that will come through. I'd like to restore faith that the crucial ingredient in college is what the student is doing. You can accomplish wonderful things and get a wonderful education at all kinds of places. If there was some way that students could have

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confidence in that...

(Dan Murphy recently wrote a wonderful and funny article, *Carmel to Cambria*, comparing the college admissions process to that of a bike ride. To read the full article, visit www.urbanschool.org/collegecounseling.)

Brisen: Describe your first year at Urban. How would you compare the students from when you started in 1968 to today?

Dan: When I came in 1968 I had taught for a year at a boarding school in Connecticut where the boys wore blazers. And what I was immediately struck by at Urban was that there were boys and girls. They weren't wearing blazers, and actually they were vital and lively. I never had the sense that they were jumping through hoops. There was something quite real about what was going on in the classrooms at Urban. We won't get into the grading policy here, but I think that it has great impact on lots of things. Any teacher would tell you they can remember their first classes and I can see those kids and remember their names. I think that students come to the school with the same sense of discovery and enthusiasm that a lot of them had in the beginning at Urban, yet are actually more trusting of their teachers.

In 1968 there was a sense of Urban as an alternative school and anti-school. But Urban never was a free school – in the sense that we always had books, we always had teachers, we always had classes, and ideas were always taken seriously. That has been retained to this day. Students today have the same sense of inquiry but I think they actually have more discipline in pursuing the inquiry. We always had a critical mass of very good students. There were always some who were much more ambivalent about the nature of school. Everyone who's here now is really here and present.

I find our students as interesting and as delightful as when I first saw Urban on a sunny spring day in 1968, and – I would add with all of the changes – how wonderful it is now to have sports, chorus, jazz and chamber music, and a lively school paper. And we still have Circus and the Physics class studying motion on the trapeze. That seems to be quintessentially Urban.

I like the fact that we have a number of children whose parents were here in the 1960s and 70s. I think that those parents would say they had a really good education and that their kids are excited in a way that they were excited. So in that respect, we have somehow retained a spark that was informative and shaping. Those parents would acknowledge that lots of the changes have been good and positive to make a better, stronger school that's still a positive place. Kids have changed and the school has changed and yet the underlying foundation is still here. That is very heartening to me. I went to a recent Open House and saw prospective parents who were alums at Urban. That is very exciting to me.

You can reach Dan at dmurphy@urbanschool.org. He'd love to hear from you!



Cal Studies Job!

Urban is hiring an Intern for the spring '08 Cal Studies class (students will learn about food production). The primary responsibility of the intern would be driving a third vehicle with students throughout the entirety of the course, along with other tasks from time to time. It is an opportunity to be a part of the learning, growth and fun of Cal Studies from the perspective of an instructor. Applicants should possess a valid California drivers license with a clean record, be at least 25 years old, and available from April 24 - June 6. If interested, contact Derek Harwell at 415-593-9515 or dharwell@urbanschool.org

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year, I started a class called The Bible as Literature with Bill Meyer as teacher. We put a sign-up sheet on the board and got eight kids and took the class.

I remember that I was definitely a square peg in a round hole. I used to wear my white tennis sweaters to Urban and that was my dressing down. I don't want to say that everyone at Urban was hippy, because there were a bunch of kids from MCDS and Town School and wherever, but it was definitely a different vibe from Town School.

I remember that Bill Meyer was my English teacher and very good friend of mine (he introduced Mark Salkind to me). He went on to teach college in Vermont and when I was at Yale I went to his house every year at Thanksgiving and then he came out and lived with me in San Francisco. He's the one who said, "Mark Salkind has dropped off the face of this earth; go find him for me." I tracked Mark down at a bookstore near Ghiradelli Square and said, "Bill Meyer wants you to write to him," which he did and which eventually transpired to Mark becoming Urban's Director of Development. Coming full circle, Mark and Carl [Munger, Urban's Head of School] wrote me and asked me to join the Board.

I remember there was a class taught by Ray Rafael called Sociology of Contemporary Society. I don't know what we really studied per se but it was sociology of the current world class. One of the things that we did during class time was picket outside Safeway in support of Cesar Chavez and the poor conditions of the grape pickers. I remember the whole school got out to go to an anti-war rally. School was officially closed to go to this peace rally.

I remember another time where Ray wanted us to experience what it was like to panhandle and to understand the dynamic. So we went downtown and asked strangers for money to see what it felt like. And of course me, because I've always been kind of clean cut and kind of outgoing, had absolutely no problem doing this.

Brisen: What did you learn from that experience?

Steven: I learned probably how to do my first solicitation on behalf of The Urban School! But I don't know how much I learned as a clean cut young man going up to people and saying "I've lost my bus money." I do remember that I went with Mark Zimmerman who had longer hair and back then he looked a little scruffier and that he was very surprised by how confident and comfortable I was at approaching strangers for money. Mark went on to become a district attorney, as did I. So the school was quite different at the time.

You asked earlier what qualities have I carried with me? At the time it was a freely, loosely structured time for the institution. I used to hang out in the office and talk with Ann Reder (former Admissions Director) and got very involved. I used to interview prospective students and give them tours. You know we used to vote on who got into school, so the kids used to be just as influential as the faculty. We used to have a meeting after the visits, and would vote on whether someone got in or not. There was no student government but I got involved in the institutional organization. Another anecdote I can share was that Mark Sudarsky ('72D) stood up in front of the Old Library with most of the school and said, "Listen, you apply for college and they ask what class offices have you filled. And we have none, and this is unfair. So I am assigning myself to be President." And he went around the room and assigned every senior a class officer.

Oh, another huge difference is that when I went to Urban there were no sports. No sports whatsoever. I started the very first Urban sports team. It was the soccer team my senior year. We tried to join the California League of Independ-

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dent Schools but they rejected us because we had girls on the team and you weren't allowed to have girls then. So instead we scheduled two games: one against Athenian and one against Marin Academy, which had just opened. Those were the first two Urban school official games. Lost both games, thank you!

What is similar is the influence that teachers had on me then, and I think that they are very powerfully influential still. I did a senior self-study class with Dan Murphy and Bill Stanisich, both of whom had gone to Yale, and they introduced me to Vincent Scully who had written a book called *American Architecture and Urbanism*. I probably did a not very impressive job reading about urban development in San Francisco and doing a study of the city for class. Ultimately I ended up going to Yale and taking Vincent Scully's classes and majoring in American Urbanism. Later I went into government as a consequence of having a passion that got ignited by Bill and Dan.

It's always hard to know how influences will reflect themselves as outcomes, but definitely Urban was the first place outside from my family where I felt a sense of communal responsibility and empowerment to contribute to the growth of something new and to create something special. I had an unusual amount of involvement in the institution as a kid, and I think that fooled me into thinking that if you work hard and express yourself well that you can have influence in almost any circumstance. And it turns out that half the time, that's true.

Brisen: Your daughter Emma ('07) is also now an alum (attending the University of Chicago). Did you talk with her about any comparisons or contrasts between her experience and yours?

Steven: We didn't talk about it much. I was so involved with Urban for so long that I stayed away from the school institutionally. I felt that I have been very present at the school in various times of my own life, and I wanted Emma to have her own experience with the school. Emma really loved it. She thinks it was the perfect school for her.

I love Urban but I recognize that 2003 (the year Emma started) is not 1970 and that Emma is not me. I wanted her to go but didn't want to push it too hard. She chose to go there and she loved Urban completely. The great thing for me is that she had a very different experience. She found the school to be incredibly inviting socially, politically and personally; she found the teachers to be really bright, encouraging and stimulating; she felt that the school had a political sensibility that was inspiring and enlightening; and she thought it was lot of fun and it allowed her to pursue things she was most interested in. Emma came out a huge advocate of what Urban can do.

Brisen: That is inspiring. You have also served on Urban's Board of Trustees in the past as well as now – and have also Chaired the Board – can you talk briefly about the different strategic issues or leadership decisions that the Board has faced?

Steven: The current Board has a very different set of issues facing it. When I was first on the Board Urban had just moved into its new home on Haight Street and was still a fledging institution. It had no building, no endowment (still doesn't), had been through several leaders in recent years, and there was an unhappy separation with one of its early leaders which left the school a little fractured. So there was a lot of healing going on. The early Board had a task of moving the school from infancy into adolescence and adulthood. There were other competing schools out there -- University and Marin Academy had just started and Lick had gone co-ed. There were more public school alternatives and Urban had to do a better job of educating its kids and being accountable. And to have more institutional practices – that was a big challenge of the early Board.

Now, Urban is a very well put-together institution. The challenge now is to maintain its commitment to its core values that have always been present about educational independence and innovation, responsibility for the students, diversity of experience and population, and how to maintain its uniqueness at a time when everything is much more expensive and much more challenging to accomplish. Now I think the school is in its late young adulthood, if you will. It needs to decide what kind of long-term institution it wants to be. And like all of us, try and keep the joy and spirit of our youth and figure out all of our potential.

Brisen: You have also graciously agreed to lead our new Alumni Council. What are your goals?

Steven: I love Urban and it has had an enormous impact on me and my family. My brother went there, my sister went there, my stepsister went there, my mom was on the Board, my daughter went there, and if I'm lucky enough and he fits in, I hope my son will go there. I think Urban is a phenomenal institution and a lot of my peers and the students and people whom I have encountered in my many years at Urban feel the same way. But I think the school has made a mistake in letting alumni drift away and not helping the alumni remember that time in their life that was really pretty special. We also lost an opportunity to turn to our alumni to support us and help make this school equally important for the new students. I thought this was a great way to try and accomplish those two goals.

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At our first Alumni Council meeting in October everyone shared their goals and they were very consistent with each other: to create more opportunities for alumni to be in touch with Urban and with their peers from Urban; to create an opportunity to contribute to Urban personally and financially; and in many different ways to support the students and the institution such as mentoring students with college choices or careers.

Brisen: Is there anything else you would like to share with our alumni?

Steven: The only thing I find constant and reassuring is that when you talk with alums, particularly recent alums from five-six years out you typically hear, "Urban has changed and has become more conventional and less interesting or special in some way." And I think that I'm living proof that the school can be a completely different environment and yet retain its same position relative to the community around it.

In 2008, it's not going to be the same school as it was in 1970. But compared to other schools and how the students are treated, the level of respect that they are given as members of the school community and the level of independence they are given about determining core issues that affect their school life and beyond, and the kind of relationship that exist with teachers and the students and the kind of efforts that the faculty make to try different ways of teaching to engage students more deeply and go way beyond the pages of a textbook – those elements are still there and are as powerful as they were 40 years ago.

I saw that with my daughter. I talked with her peer group about their experiences at other schools. It makes me proud that Urban stayed committed to its dedication to innovation, independence and community service in a way that keeps it a special place, even if it's not the same day-to-day environment that some alums so fondly remember.

And I predict that six years from now, my daughter will complain that Urban is no longer the place it was when she went there. Because it won't be, of course, but it will have the same values and be doing something equally exciting that will be inspiring the students who attend it then.