

What years/grades did you attend JIS? Were you in Jakarta for long before/after your years at JIS?

I was born in Jakarta in 1972 so I was already 'at home' when I started kindergarten in Mrs. Besmehn's and Mrs. Edwards' combined class in 1976. I had a blissful experience at JIS. After graduating in 1990, I earned my degree in dance from Portland State University in Oregon. Tina Ardie, Rosabelle des Tombe and me boast being the lone graduates of JIS's original class of 1990!

Have you been back to visit since graduation?

In 1992 I went back to Jakarta with my fiancé for our wedding. It was a beautiful occasion attended by many JIS students and faculty. Rashid Carre, my elementary art teacher and 'uncle,' gave a moving speech and his son, Rashad, a brother to me, beautifully designed the seating and floral arrangements and photographed. Dr. Haskin, a Presbyterian minister and long time family friend, married us. The wedding was half Javanese with the ladies wearing *kain kabaya* and the men in suits and ties! (I loved seeing the pictures of Tina Ardie and Josh Howard's Balinese wedding on the JIS alum website!)

In 1995 my husband and I and our then toddler visited my parents. This trip was about showing my husband my roots. It was important to me that he understood where I came from because even though we are both Americans, I have adopted much of the Indonesian culture and this explains who I am and *why*. My last trip back was in 2001. The smells, the foods, the sounds, even the pollution were calling me. Unable to afford airline tickets for the whole family, I just took my fourth child, Bella, who was a one-year-old. We were, as always, embraced, no, squeezed, all over with love and pride, by my former maids, (who are family). We were welcomed into their homes in their *kampung*. Paryanti, who '*gendong*-ed' me as a baby, is now living in a brick house with tiled flooring, running water and electricity! She and others fought over taking care of Bella while I spent the day gallivanting around Jakarta! My daughter's hair has never been so well combed nor her little dresses better pressed! This gave me a glimpse at just how early my training into a prima donna began!

3. What kind of student were you - how would you describe yourself?

Mrs. Ranu Dally, my IB English teacher once told my mother half-jokingly that she didn't think I "took after my father" (an Oxford University English literature and languages graduate), and that the B- she gave me should have been a C+ but that I "wasn't going to be in academia anyway!" I think she knew that I was 'somewhere else' not because I didn't care to do well in her class, but because I had a 'predisposition' to not seeing the point! She knew I was a performer at heart and that was validation coming from a person I truly respected.

Describe myself back then? I was friendly, artistic, dreamy. Performing with Joint Sound, dance productions, plays and musicals, band, the Jakarta Players and Indonesian ballet companies made me feel most alive.

4. What are your strongest memories from JIS?

There are too many but I'll just list a few randomly without chronology: I remember the fabulous peanut butter cookies that came in packages of four and the alphabet erasers that could be bought at the student store. I remember vividly eating lunch outside Ms. Rech's classroom with a group of girls in sixth grade and Vincent, Wouter, Frank and Julio popping their lunch bags on our heads. I remember often riding home from school in a *becak*! I remember how grateful I felt at rest time in Mrs. Woeryanto's first grade class. I remember the school fire and how upset Lynne Thomas and my mother were about the lost music and instruments. As a kid I remember being awestruck by Laura Blainy's and Lincoln Myerson's performances in *My Fair Lady* and also by Laura (Rosana) Schutte's brilliant Maria in *West Side Story*! I remember Kelly Corwin's cheer leading and 'feathered hair' - she was like one of Charlie's Angels to us kids! I remember a most joyful and loving presence from our swimming teacher, Mas Rame, who seemed to balance out the unreasonable demands of the lead swim teachers. I remember the hard rains and how cold it would get in the fine arts building when it was raining outside. I remember singing in the Sunshine and Cricket choirs. I remember watching the archery practices on the front green before the FAT was built! I remember assemblies, talent shows and sweaty Junior High dances in the elementary 'covered area'. I remember the many rehearsals and productions and post-rehearsal/post-performance celebrations over a 'black cow' with 'Auntie Lynne' and her boys, Kelly and Sean Thomas, and running around and under tables being naughty little children during Madrigal dinners etc. I remember the Southeast Asian Cultural Conventions of 1988 and 1990 and how we JIS students got the highest scores in everything. Oh, I remember my mother performing a Philippino bamboo dance and the terror of noticing her wrap-around batik skirt slowly unraveling, of course unbeknownst to her! I remember kissing a boy and hoping my mother wasn't coming around the corner! I remember playing tether ball and hop scotch and bouncing those big red rubbery balls in P.E. I remember Rashid Carre's wonderful whistling. And sneaking cha-chas in French class! And I could go on and on....

5. Who were some of your favorite teachers over the years and why?

One I'd like to acknowledge is Beth Dinlocker, my ever-patient dance productions teacher. I was temperamental and exacting and she took my passionate outbursts admirably. She was graceful and gracious and always wore a smile. Often she would announce that she had 'dreamed' some choreography the night before which I thought was nuts, but now, I do the same thing! She and her husband attended my wedding which meant a lot to me.

Mrs. Dally, my twelfth grade English teacher was a great teacher. She was a no-nonsense type, with a brilliant mind and strong convictions and a softy for anything

good. I loved the cultural evening she hosted in her home which exemplified everything beautiful about Indian art - the cooking, the music, the poetry, the instruments etc. Although I was never involved with Tolong Anak Anak, I admired her many contributions to helping the poor, the sick, the disabled Indonesian children.

I loved my second grade teacher, Mrs. Klein, very much. Her outrageous red hair and long finger nails were a novelty every day and she was so excitable and was always making us laugh! I slept on my dinosaur pillow, which we made in her class, until after I was already married! My husband decided it needed a wash and ruined it! I was overcome with dismay from the loss, for that pillow had been through so much with me! Maybe it was time to grow up!?

Halimah Brugger, known affectionately as 'Mrs. B', or just 'mom', was the teacher that made the greatest impact on me perhaps because she was my K-12 music teacher. I loved her for her boundless energy and enthusiasm, her spunky and charming personality, her ability to focus - really getting down to business when push came to shove, her fairness, her sense of humor, her spontaneity, and for being her uninhibited self. Those of us who had her as a teacher, perhaps especially Joint Sounders, trusted her judgment because she knew music, knew how to put on a good show, and knew how to have a good time! Every period bubbled over with energy and activity. Sure, being my mother, she embarrassed the heck out of me at times, but I never dreaded her class!

My senior year she took the Joint Sound on tour to Sydney, Australia, and raised money for an Indonesian orphanage. (She was always thinking of the Indonesian people). We sang madrigals, show tunes, western and Indonesian pop songs for schools but also sang spontaneously in the streets, in the airports, on the ferry in the Sydney harbor overlooking the Sydney Opera House. That experience is one of my fondest, most cherished moments as a student at JIS and of my life.

My sixth grade teacher, the late Ms. Rech, taught me, amongst many things, the word 'tolerate'. In that first day of class, she must have said, 'I will NOT tolerate' 50 times. I wasn't quite sure what she meant only that I'd better find out quick! The 100 page report on Japan was to prepare us for seventh grade, but it prepared us for *life*! Thank you Ms. Rech!

Other very special teachers to me were: Mrs. Boltong, my fourth grade teacher, who was poised, refined, yet down-to-earth, and taught us much more than about ant colonies, bees and the haiku! Mrs. Hilgert and Mrs. Paul were my third grade teachers. I admired Mrs. Hilgert for her motherly qualities which made the classroom feel so safe and cozy. Mrs. Paul was great for her fiery charismatic personality. (She had a nervous habit of shaking her foot and chewing her pencil which sometimes distracted me!) Mrs. Jones, my fifth grade teacher, I liked for reading us *Where the Red Fern Grows*, playing fun math contests/games and having such pretty feet! (the things we remember!) Of course I appreciated my *bahasa* teachers, Ibu Sastro and Ibu Wid, without whom I'd be the most embarrassing speaker of the Indonesian language! They

expected me to know better Indonesian than the kids new to Jakarta, but mine was full of slang - the *kampung* talk, learned from the maids, so I don't think I was much help!

Last but not least, the ballet teacher who inspired in me a life-long love of dance. I don't remember her name, unfortunately, but she was the real thing. She came from the Royal Danish Ballet and my first class, at age six, held in my mother's elementary music class, had me hooked. She did the choreography for *My Fair Lady* and as a child leaning on the piano as my mother played for rehearsals I studied the steps, learned them, and lead my friends at home in a rehearsal of my own. She was special.

6. What are you up to now?

Now, I am mostly up to my ears with little girls! Matthew, my husband of twelve years, and I have five daughters: Mahallia is 11, Madelyn, 9, Rohima, 6, Bella, 4 and Alexis, 2. I've spent the last decade of my life pregnant, nursing, changing diapers, cleaning up 'messes', chauffeuring kids to and from dance, music and girl scouts etc. (Most certainly the resulting karma for how rotten I was to my maids growing up!) In addition to being a full-time mom, I've always taught dance part-time and for four years also danced professionally in a dance theatre company and 'guested' for a ballet company.

I'm currently thinking about graduate school or dancing professionally again. It's a challenge balancing the home life, but it's time. My husband, an environmental engineer, is in the interviewing stage for a transition in his work so at this point, we don't know where we'll end up, but it's an exciting, adventurous time.

7. Is JIS still a part of your life in any way today? Are you still in touch with some alumni?

I've kept best in touch with the JIS friends who lived with me in Wisma Subud. Those friends (I'll leave out married names) are: Rosadah and Illias Carre, Rosabelle, Matt, and Rodrick des Tombe, Rashidah and Bustami Pollard, Isabella Mitchell, Alicia Lerrigo, Stuart Horthy, Sety Pope, Luzita Francis and of course, my sister, Riz Brugger. I've also had the pleasure of making contact several times with JIS stars, Rosanna (Laura) Schutte and Lincoln Meyerson. Recently I've also been in touch with Erika Carducci, Tina Seay, Frank Brown, Karen Schuster, Kelland (Kelly) and Sean Thomas, Tonya Aarts and Beth Owen!

I am fortunate to be living in the same city as former JIS theatre faculty (1974-82), Latifah (Myerson) Taormina, who I see on a weekly basis. Latifah formed a chapter of the Thesbian Society in Jakarta and along with Lynne Thomas and John Gibson put into motion the Southeast Cultural Convention. She also lobbied for the building of the FAT which, at the time, seemed unnecessary to others - JIS was a small school and the general consensus was that it wouldn't be used. But Latifah felt the school needed a 'heart', or 'center' for people to come together. She was a vital presence back then, and is

still as active in her work today! Today, she is striving tirelessly to fund the arts in Austin, TX working as executive director for Austin Circle of Theatres. She still performs and was terrific in her last two performances which I was so happy to attend.

I've also had the extraordinary pleasure of reuniting with the founder of Joint Sound, Lynne Thomas, or 'Auntie Lynne', last year. At JIS, Lynne was another artist with huge presence. Her energy, her talent and that infectious laughter touched others. You couldn't help but love her. I am so grateful to have witnessed the electric energy that charged the rehearsals that she, Latifah and my mother lead - when three fiery, passionate, hard-working and honest artists get together to put on a show, the students feel inspired. Today, my Auntie Lynne is gorgeous as ever and has fixed up an old three story Victorian house as only she is capable of! She is the principal at a school in Sullivan, Indiana and making a huge difference in people's lives there. No surprise!

8. How do you think being at JIS for (almost) your entire primary and secondary education has contributed to who you are today?

I look at my mere thirty-three years of age and see a rich life for one so young. My experience at JIS is partly responsible for that richness. But back then, it was a privilege I took for granted. I was spoiled. As soon as I went to college, however, and saw the puny fine arts theatre, I appreciated where I had come from. Being at JIS gave me a standard for excellence in education so that now as a mother, I painstakingly investigate the best schools based on my own criteria, and that's where my kids go to school!

9. Would you recommend JIS to your friends? Why?

Yes, I'd recommend JIS because it provides an excellent comprehensive education and provides a pristine environment for learning. The concept, that JIS is a school for intelligent, talented and exceptional young people from all over the world is great.

10. If you could give a Class of 2005 JIS graduate one piece of advice, what would it be?

If it isn't already your habit to do so, get some perspective. In other words, witness the culture of the people with whom you share their glorious island(s). Be courteous always, mindful and generous. You at JIS are amongst the most privileged youth in world. Show respect toward and interest in those less fortunate. And then go out into the world and share your perspective of Indonesia and its peoples. The western nations are 'developed' in some ways, but in others, (as is evidenced the current world affairs), simply backward and down-right wrong!