

Celeste Schenck

AUP Founder Lloyd DeLamater Memorial Service

May 21, 2010

Although I did not have the honor of knowing Dr. Lloyd DeLamater personally, as so many of you in this sanctuary have, I have been connected to him spiritually for many years. He stands at one end of the half century in which our college, then our university, has flourished, as I stand at the other, receiving from him the baton we both have held so dear.

As I prepared for my inauguration as the twelfth president of AUP, I reread closely the memoir Dr. DeLamater had written about his founding of The American College in Paris, and I was inspired, then as now, by the tenaciousness of his vision, by his indefatigable energy, and by the prescience of his vision about the international. I will come back to those ideas in a few moments.

As you all know, the American College in Paris, now AUP, has a past worthy of celebration as the first university in Europe based on the American model of education, a past that began here, on this very spot, in the years leading up to its founding in 1962, within the walls and rented rooms of the American Church in Paris, in partnership with The American Library of Paris which served as the College's first library. The 7th arrondissement has, for many decades, housed this trio of mutually supportive American institutions. Many of you sitting in this sanctuary remember that over the years ACP and AUP held your classes here, your freshmen orientations here, ceremonies and celebrations. Nearly fifty years ago, the vision of one man, Lloyd DeLamater, The American College in Paris was founded on this site. It is the right place for us to be today as we remember the man, the husband and father, and the founder of our university.

Dr. DeLamater writes movingly in his memoir, of his own "coming to the vision of an American college in Paris," citing the postwar devastation of Europe, his marriage to Marie, a French national who was in the US on a Rockefeller when he met her, his stint as a professor teaching at US military installations all over Europe, his appointment as senior economist to NATO in Paris, his position as a Foreign Service Officer in the State Department. The American College of Paris was founded largely, he writes, to "de-provincialize" the minds of "fine, young American students." Convinced as he was that the education and career preparation of internationally minded Americans should take place at least in part in Europe, he founded—sans funding, sans government support—a campus in Paris with the express mission of broadening the cultural, intellectual, and political horizons of American students. Negotiating agreements with prestigious liberal arts

colleges in the States, Dr. DeLamater's brilliant idea was to send these transformed students back to finish their college experiences in the US.

I have always sensed a congruence of mission between the founding spirit of ACP and our global commitments at AUP today. As did Dr. DeLamater, I too wish our students to experience firsthand, and hopefully a little uncomfortably, the feeling of being "not at home," of being "in the home of another" so that they can stretch themselves into new ways of thinking, new ways of being in the world, new ways of resolving the inevitable tensions between human beings different from one another in a complex world. This is the equipment for living that Dr. DeLamater hoped to give the very first class of Americans he "called" to Paris by the force of his personality and the ardency of his belief in the educational experiment he had embarked upon. It is the same transformative education we hope to give AUP students today. Only those of us educating on the frontier of the international know how overrated tolerance can be—it takes empathy, curiosity, the experience of having lived and learned together, and very good negotiation skills to bridge everything that divides us from one another. That was an intangible but essential part of the curriculum, then as now.

Rereading Dr. DeLamater's memoir this past week, I saw ideas I had not noticed at a first reading, ideas that suggest his vision went far beyond the founding years, ideas I would like to share with you today. Clearly, he had a passionate stake in the importance of international education, a vision that had not yet had its time when he embarked on the founding of the College. He traces to his first year of knowing Marie, when they were still students together at Columbia University, conversations comparing cultures and value systems, exchanges that led to the question: "how might one bridge the gap of narrow nationalism?" Even while weighed down with the minutia of desks and classrooms, and imported English books, and inscriptions and publicity, he saw beyond the present moment to the day when the ACP would be a "complete university and even have centers in Rome, London and Madrid." He reasoned even then that that our world would require increasing numbers of international exchanges in all fields, ranging from the diplomacy and business to science and even tourism. He knew even then that a student at the well known Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Washington would be less experienced in what he called international understanding than those he could educate in Paris. I would argue that, in words different from the ones we use today, Dr. DeLamater was envisioning the rapid globalization that has overtaken our world and the pressing need for cultural translators who can bridge cultures and value systems with ease and aplomb. He had a clear-eyed vision even then—amidst the stress of the founding years—of where the world, and consequently the college, would be going.

One cannot help but be struck, somewhat ruefully I admit, reading this founding memoir, by the extent to which some aspects of AUP's culture have remained the same since our inception—

our scrappiness, our staunch survivability, our exuberance at having come through, somewhat more darkly put, our “enduring precariousness.” I felt such kindred spirits with him, reading of his financial sacrifices and struggles to bring the College into being. Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose, except that there are important differences between then and now.

For our founder’s vision has also come to be. AUP is likely the most international university on the planet. We have created a consortia of 22 American universities across Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. We have evolved from a college to a four-year comprehensive university to what Carnegie classifies as a Master’s university, small. We welcome students from over a hundred different nationalities, have taken our *assise* in eight buildings across the 7th arrondissement, and have a mission and student and faculty constituencies that are unique in the world. We graduate students every year who return to transform the cities, countries and civil societies they go back to after their American University of Paris years. The model of sending and receiving American students that inspired Dr. DeLamater has been replaced today by the diverse demography he envisioned and we have become.

When he lifted a glass, at the College’s first Orientation, “to the inaugural class and symbolically to all classes to come,” Lloyd DeLamater was gesturing toward us, fifty years later, with a sense of purpose and belief, and we will lift a glass gratefully to him, back through the years, at our own reception following the ceremony. As AUP’s twelfth president, it is my great honor to take Dr. DeLamater’s vision forward into the university’s second half century. I hope he would be proud that today we have 14 majors and nine graduate programs, a fine reputation for interdisciplinary faculty research and academic convocation, and own three of our eight buildings. I know he would encourage me to keep a watchful eye—always—on academic quality and rigor. Although many things have changed, some things have not changed at all, and that is just the way that he, and we and you would want it.