



THE VISIONARY of SCHOLAR LANE

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK

CAROLYN GOODMAN IS A WOMAN OF STRENGTH, PASSION AND CONVICTION, A TIRELESS FUND-RAISER, COMMUNITY ACTIVIST, AND, OF COURSE, THE MAYOR'S WIFE. HOWEVER, SHE IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A MOTHER OF FOUR, GRANDMOTHER OF SIX, AND THE MATRIARCH OF A FAMILY WHO VALUES EDUCATION UPPERMOST.

While we know the impact she's had on our fair city, the marriage between Carolyn Goodman and Las Vegas nearly didn't happen. Lucky for us, fate intervened on more than one occasion.

Goodman was raised in a traditional family in New York City, the daughter of a doctor and a highly-educated mother. She attended The Brearley School in Manhattan, an all-girls prep school. From her parents' perspective, she would attend college, and then at some point, marry a man with an established career. A good plan, but sometimes things just don't go that way.

The real story of Carolyn Goodman as we know her begins in college, when two well-educated students first set eyes on each other, and fell in love, she at Bryn Mawr and he at Haverford College. Her parents weren't keen on the romance at all, for he had three

years at the University of Pennsylvania Law School ahead, and no means of support. Her parents actually made the two lovebirds wait a year before formalizing their relationship. "How will you live? He's still in school!" her parents protested.

Not to worry. She would attend a secretarial school so she could earn a living, and once the year passed, they were wed with her parents' tentative blessing. After a 10-week honeymoon in Europe, Goodman declares they were "penniless!" but anxious nonetheless to build their lives together.

The couple made a home in Philadelphia, Oscar working in the District Attorney's office for Arlen Specter, a future U.S. senator from Pennsylvania. "It paid one dollar per hour, and it kept Oscar from having to ask me for money," said Goodman.

Fate stepped in after a dinner between her



husband and two law enforcement officials from Las Vegas. "He woke me in the middle of the night and asked if I wanted to move to the land of milk and honey," said Goodman. "I asked him, 'We're moving to Israel?'"

When morning dawned, she better understood he was referring to Las Vegas. She agreed, as long as in the near future he would buy her a horse. They arrived at Railroad Pass on August 21, 1964. It was 120 degrees, and you could see absolutely nothing for miles. "I looked around at the sparseness and thought, my parents were right. I never should have married him! What am I doing here?" said Goodman.

But we're talking about a love story and every time she mentions her husband's name, or thinks of him, her face lights up and her eyes twinkle, even after 40 plus years of marriage.

Goodman first worked in the advertising and marketing department at the Riviera, then became secretary to the president and head of Caesars Palace, while her husband started his journey into history via the DA's office. He kept his promise, and within months, Carolyn had her horse which she enjoyed riding through the desert.

In short order, children were on the



Aerial view of Summerlin campus in 1988.

Aerial view of Summerlin campus in 2008.

docket, four arriving quickly, much to their parents' delight. Three sons, one daughter, six very happy people.

Every mother has a favorite picture of her children, and Goodman shows me a small silver frame with a faded color photo of her four toddlers in the bathtub. "It's the only way I could get them to take a bath, or to know where they all were at one time!" she smiles.

Those four bathing beauties would send her down a path that would significantly impact her life for years to come.

While tending to the children, Goodman also tended to her education, earning a masters degree in counseling from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She worked for the U.S. Department of Labor, Concentrated Employment Program, counseling residents on employment, drug use, family and marriage.

When it was time for the children to begin school, Goodman was concerned with the quality of education in Las Vegas and didn't know where she would send her kids. "I wanted at least what we had back East. I told Oscar, we have to move! I just don't see the right type of schooling for us here in Las Vegas," Goodman said.

But a friend told her about one school in town that was worth checking into. "I've seen a miracle," her friend said, referring to George E. Harris Elementary School which was led by principal Dr. LeOre Cobbley. Goodman applied for one of over 400 zone variance requests. Her children were in, but the seed for something bigger was planted.

THE BIRTH OF A LEGACY

Goodman approached the 69-year-old Cobbley about the type of school she envisioned here in Las Vegas, one similar to East Coast college prep schools, focused on strong academics for gifted and able students. Turns out, the two shared a similar dream. Within a few years, the school was up and running in portables located on Meadows Lane.

"It was based on the principle that buildings don't teach, teachers teach," said Goodman. "The key is to have the absolute best teachers in each classroom, making learning relevant and exciting. The students also have to be ambitious, and want to learn. We teach to the top level in each class, not the bottom. Achievement builds confidence and that, in turn, builds happiness."

Although Goodman is often credited with

founding The Meadows School, she is quick to point out that without the constant hard work and support of hundreds of others, it simply would not be.

Lawrence Epstein, chairman of the board of trustees of The Meadows School, concurs. "Being involved is not like putting your name on the dinner committee. Every group is a working group because we all care so much."

"It takes excellent people to create the educational environment that she has, and Carolyn attracts the best," said Janet Kofkin Buchanan, secretary of the board of trustees. "Aside from all her other abilities to raise money and her love of education – people love her! A testament to her skill is that many teachers have been there since the beginning."

Goodman could see the need to expand the school, to create the campus of opportunity and education in an environment she and teachers, parents, students and administrators desired. Here again, fate played a major role.

Now playing tennis in place of her beloved horseback riding, she discovered that her partner was the wife of Howard Hughes' nephew. He was developing a little place on the west side of the valley eventually to be

Oscar and Carolyn Goodman pictured with their children.



called Summerlin. Would she like to meet the nephew? Of course!

In 1985 William R. Lummis, nephew of Howard Hughes and then Chairman of the Board of Summa Corporation (Howard Hughes Properties parent company), agreed to donate land for The Meadows School permanent campus in Summerlin.

With a coveted 40 acres in hand, and a two-year wait for infrastructure improvements in an area that was remote by most Las Vegas standards, The Meadows School began to take shape in its present location near Lake Mead and Rampart.

“For academically ambitious students, The Meadows is probably the best fit in Las Vegas – it’s a terrific choice,” said Buchanan. “When you have a small school, you have an opportunity to try so many different things and be exposed to so much. Although it’s small, it’s not an elitist school. We have a wonderful scholarship program, athletic champions and a strong arts program as well. It’s open to ambitious students from all walks of life.”

As the school celebrates its silver anniversary, it is known not only in Las Vegas, but beyond our country’s shores as a center of quality education and personal development. The campus now boasts pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, and over 900 students. With a total of 767 Meadows School graduates through May 2008, 100 percent of the students attend university upon graduation.

“Carolyn started at ground zero, and she’s done an incredible job, helping to create such a great education program in our own back yard,” said Epstein.

Susan Simmons, mother of an alum, agrees. “I feel very strongly that because of the education my daughter had, it opened up a lot of other educational doors that might not have opened otherwise, thus affecting her future and our future as well. The Meadows is very well known thanks to Carolyn’s work. She loves to counsel and she’s excellent at it, helping kids to get into better schools around the country.”

Goodman remains president of the school, co-handling day-to-day operations, with Henry Chanin who has been installed as headmaster. Chanin is a former investment banker with a second career in teaching. He heard about an opening in the English Department at The Meadows School, and after two weeks on board, he felt like, “I had died and gone to educational heaven,” he said. “The students are bright, motivated, with supportive parents and all the resources a teacher could need, and they were paying me! This is a very special place.”

In addition to his role as headmaster, Chanin still teaches English classes because, “It’s the most important thing we do here – teach.”

While he appreciates his good fortune to influence the lives of so many as headmaster, he admits, “None of us would be here without Carolyn. She can take an insubstantial dream and make it reality. She won’t take ‘no’ for an answer. She doesn’t want to hear that you can’t do something. She poured all the love of her heart into the school. It’s an extraordinary gift she’s given us.”

“Carolyn is extremely savvy and talented,” said Epstein. “If she wasn’t running the school, she’d easily be running a multi-national corporation.”

So, what does the future hold?



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"We're not done here, so we continue to implement according to plan," said Goodman. Although the board of trustees has received several requests to build satellite campuses, the plan is to remain a single-campus school.

"The idea is to get better, not bigger," said Chanin. "We don't intend to branch out, and we probably won't ever have more than 1,000 students."

"We're not finished building out our existing campus," said Epstein. "We are adding to our athletic facilities, classroom upgrades, an administration building, infrastructure. We also want to build a very significant endowment for the school. Every great institution has one thing in common, a strong financial position with endowment. It will bring us greater security."

"Most of all, we are making sure that we stick to our core values, a rigorous prep school academic experience enhanced by the best extracurricular activities like sports, art, debate. We are creating great, smart people who will come back to Las Vegas or Nevada, and make it a better place," continued Epstein.

SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

2009 has been a particularly special year for the school, impacting the community for a quarter

of a century. Abby Geyer has been working overtime as director of the 25th anniversary activities. The calendar of celebrations began in September 2008, and culminates with a gala on school grounds this month.

"It's our way to celebrate history and to use the anniversary to move into the next 25 years in a more united way," said Geyer. "We're reaching out to parents, alums, students and the community, and the response has been fantastic. Parent support has been particularly astounding."

The kick-off event began on September 12, 2008, just prior to a varsity football game. It was followed by a Thanksgiving tailgate for alumni and alumni parents. A few years ago, a group of alums started an annual tradition of a Thanksgiving tailgate, so the school capitalized on the chance to reach out to alums in a relaxed environment.

"An Intellectual Feast for the Mind" took place this past February. It was an academic day for parents, similar to lecture series at schools back East. It showcased the strengths of the faculty, while offering parents an immersion day of learning.

March 28 was an art extravaganza, featuring music, fine art, dance and drama

performances for parents. Besides the champagne reception, the Suzuki Strings and Meadows Singers entertained the crowd.

The big event is the Tavern on the Green style fundraiser on May 28. In addition to food and frolic, the founders, board of trustees and Carolyn Goodman will be honored for their hard work and dedication. Geyer compiled the Walk Down Scholar Lane, a photo history of the school and its countless achievements. Wolfgang Puck Restaurants will supply the food, accompanied by school-driven entertainment. A fitting end to a fabulous year of celebration.

Simmons is grateful her daughter had the experience of attending The Meadows School. "I'm not sure that when kids are in Lower School that the parents recognize the impact this education will have on their children. I came to respect Carolyn and enjoy working with her. She's a wonderful person. Everyone who works with her wants to help. She's good about telling you her thoughts and letting you go and take care of it. The proof is in how many people in that school have helped over the years. When you add it up, it's thousand of hours. Carolyn radiates her love of the school to other people, and that's why it has become the success it is today." □



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