

The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times, with the generous assistance of the sponsors whose names appear below.

Ms. West retires after 15 years

BY IZZIE ANTHONY, PICKLE EVILE, AND PENNY HADDAD

When she is not teaching, telling stories, or cracking jokes with her students, Spanish teacher Cindy West, who is retiring after 15 years at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS), enjoys spending time with her family, playing with her dog, and — as always — traveling.

Over the course of her life, Ms. West has spent extended time in a number of Spanish-speaking countries, including Costa Rica, Paraguay, Argentina, El Salvador, and Spain, and has brought her passion for language and culture into the classroom, where she helps students to see how language can broad-

en one's perspective.

Ms. West's teaching career began in California, where she taught English to Mexican farm workers. "That's when I fell in love with Latin culture," she said. "These farm workers were living in poverty — two families in a house the size of a classroom — but they would never let me leave empty-handed. I always had a big bag of tamales. They were unbelievably generous, despite not having a lot to share."

"California is an easy place to get excited about learning Spanish, because it's everywhere," she continued. Adopting her youngest son from Paraguay further inspired her to learn Spanish. "I went and lived down there for almost six months

in the process of adopting him," she said.

"When I first learned Spanish, I was so intrigued with the idea that you could create a whole new way of being in the world through a new language, and I wanted other people to experience that too. I still marvel at that," she said. "I feel like when I'm in Spain I'm a different person, when I'm in South America, for sure, I'm a different person. I think maybe I was Latina in a previous life, and so when I go visit my best friend in Argentina, it's like coming home for me. It's a funny thing."

A highlight of Ms. West's time at MVRHS was taking students to El Salvador for three weeks as part of a State Department trip. "It was an amazing trip. El Salvador is a

fairly dangerous place, and I was surprised they let us go, but I think it was an exceptional experience for everybody. I was really happy to be a part of that," she said.

Ms. West also advised the Model U.N. Club for 10 years, where she accompanied stu-

dents to the United Nations in New York City each spring to take part in the annual Model U.N. conference. Prior to the trip, she would coach students on public speaking and negotiation skills every week for months on end, as they prepared to represent their assigned

country and take an informed position on a topic of international importance. "Every year it was exceptional, every year it was awesome," she said.

Freshman Katie Becker has been a student in Ms. West's honors Spanish II class this year. "I am really glad to have had Ms. West as my Spanish teacher in her last year

here. It was really inspiring to hear about her life experiences, and she is a talented Spanish speaker," she said.

Henry Kyburg-Abbott has taken Spanish with Ms. West for the past two years. "She is quite lighthearted and funny," he said. "She definitely makes classes fun and engaging."

When asked what she will most miss about being in the classroom, Ms. West said she's going to miss knowing about the current slang. "My grown children think I'm almost cool again, because I know what 'lit' and 'cap' mean," she said.

Most of all, Ms. West will miss her students, and is sad to be leaving. She knows, however, that she will continue to run into old faces. "Living on Martha's Vineyard, there are plenty of opportunities to see students again," she said. "I just have to go to the supermarket." **HSV**



ISA MERRIAM

Notes from the road: Living and learning on school break

BY JULIA SAYRE

Over spring break, I ventured to Grand Canyon National Park for a week of hiking, camping, and getting out of my comfort zone. I traveled with two of my closest friends, and met with one of my friend's cousins, who is a park ranger in the Grand Canyon.

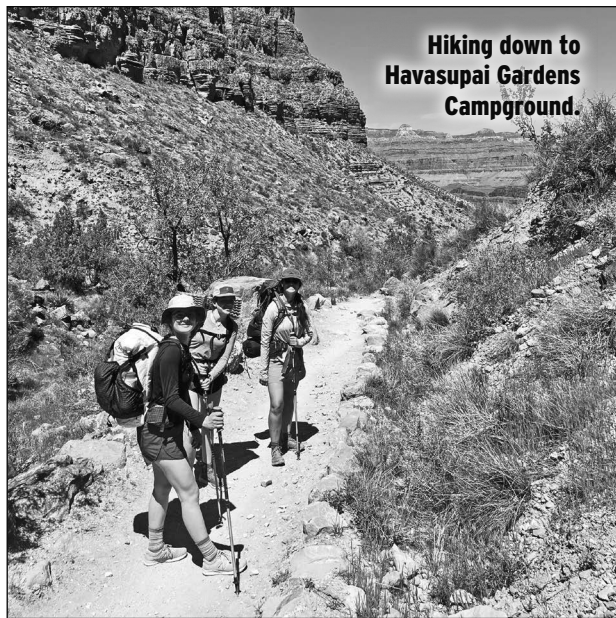
We spent the first night at a casino-hotel in Boulder City, Nev. Coming from the relative quiet of spring on Martha's Vineyard, the hotel seemed overstimulating. In our room that smelled like cigarette smoke, we discussed the next day's adventure: a drive to Arizona in our rental minivan that we had enthusiastically named Paula.

Our second night was spent at Mather Campground in Grand Canyon Village, Ariz. Having never camped before, I was pleasantly surprised at how comfortable I was while

sharing a tent with three other people. My full-scale initiation into tent life involved eating dehydrated stew for dinner, instant oatmeal for breakfast, and waking up to the sound of coyotes howling before dawn.

The next morning, we hiked 4½ miles down Bright Angel Trail in order to stay at Havasupai Gardens, a campground located toward the bottom of the Grand Canyon. When we reached our destination, my calves were shaking from traversing so many switchbacks. My body wasn't used to this terrain — and still wasn't on the hike back up, two days later.

Havasupai Gardens provided the perfect locale to experience a "break" — the supposed purpose of us having a week off from school. Our campsite was enclosed by flowering redbud trees, and deer walked past our



CEILI BRENNAN

tents in the morning. Lying in a hammock, I couldn't help but feel a pleasant smallness as the canyon walls rose around me, the vastness making me feel dizzy.

Over our two days in the canyon, we had no cell service

or Internet, the digital tools which allow me to both complete schoolwork and scroll social media. Instead, we took day hikes to waterfalls, and played what felt like every card game ever invented. One night, the park ranger at the

campsite held a "sky show" — tracing constellations in the dark and teaching us the history that lay behind them.

After coming to terms with the fact that we would eventually have to leave the canyon, we hiked out in order to drive to Cameron, Ariz., a small town in the Navajo Nation. We stayed at the historic Cameron Trading Post, a combined restaurant-hotel where we took what felt like the best showers of our lives and filled up on traditional Navajo fry bread. The Little Colorado River was visible from the window of our hotel room.

After leaving Cameron, we drove to Lee's Ferry to begin our kayak trip. Ours was the only tent in the campground; most of our neighbors were older folks who had been traveling around the U.S. in RVs. Strolling back from the bathroom with my red-light headlamp, I stopped to

marvel at the stickered maps affixed to some of the RVs, used to commemorate sites and states the drivers had already visited.

On Friday, we wrapped up the trip with a 10-mile kayak adventure down the Colorado River, launching at Lee's Ferry. Although the water was flat for some of the trip, there were speedboats that produced wake too big for us to handle. By the time we pulled our kayaks out of the river, we were soaked and ready for ice cream. We spent the final night in Kanab, Utah, eating ice cream cones and reflecting on the week.

Throughout the trip, my friend's cousin, the park ranger, talked animatedly about the geography of the region and the history of the indigenous communities that originated there. She encouraged us to read plaques, be mindful not to leave a trace, and process our experiences after we returned. We may have returned Paula to the dealership, but I have a feeling I'll be back. **HSV**

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