

Dear Lycée Friends

2011 was not the best of years, but then who knows what will come in the future and how we will see it? *Carpe Diem*. Some of us are more judgmental than others. I thought I'd come here say hello, and as I know we don't forget one another, I enjoy reading your stories and having an idea of what has become of our acquaintances and friends many years after Lycée days and a few already since our reunion in New York.

2011 saw the financial crisis spread from country to country like a virus. I admire those who are untouched by the nervousness or the hype, let alone the *portefeuille*...for me it meant that my 401ks which I was beginning to look at with glee dropped me to lower expectations. Business didn't help either; it took me a while to realize that big translation contracts are often sent abroad or won to more competitive pricing that I can't afford, given how I pay my wonderful translators. So I find myself at square one and a half businesswise --underemployed I call myself. Semiretired sounds better, according to my friend Emy, and speaking of her, she actually has retired after many years at Merck, and happily so! Maybe I should too, but I like what I do, we still have very sensitive and important press releases to do in several languages, a few other things, with my government and international clients as well as the locals with the occasional challenge. An example: finding an Albanian interpreter for a Social Security hearing, which was actually fairly easy, thanks to the Albanian church one town over from me! No wonder...

I still like to offer some help to musicians when I can, having studied piano myself, and recently I recommended a Cuban-born pianist who played at my house, to a Foundation that supports Cuban Arts in Cuba and outside as well, based in New York. At first it was communicated to me that he was not really famous and that there was no clear program that could embrace him. Guess what?: A week later he is nominated for a Latin Grammy, and off he goes to Las Vegas, plus I get an invitation to join the board of the Foundation, which I accepted. Now I would like to promote a more genuine exchange with Cuba, where people are not subsidized doubly, once by the state there and again by us here, but on a more even basis. I guess Cuba will never leave me but then again I think that's how Hemingway felt about Paris.

So without meaning to dwell too long on your patient reading, I bid my Lycée friends bye for now and announce my next scheduled trip to Europe in August 2012 for my godson's wedding. As to my own family, next year I will be the proud uncle of two nieces and a nephew all living in New York City and starting their careers, as we did: One niece is at the Frick Museum, her brother at a company and living downtown, and the other niece, who is graduating from Swarthmore in the honors program this year, a hopeful candidate for an internship at the New Yorker or something in the publishing world. "*Sous le pont Mirabeau coule la Seine...*"

BTW I am enjoying a great season at the Metropolitan Opera and a quiet(er) life in New Jersey...feel free to reach out.

Rafael Rodriguez ('71)  
Montclair, New Jersey



### **RAFAEL VG RODRIGUEZ**

Studied economics and social science at Montclair State University and Seton Hall University and received a Masters degree in 1977. After working for American Express in New York City he went to Brussels where he worked as an intern in the European Union in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Ambassadors Group.) He came back to New York as a Programme Officer with the United Nations, where he worked on world conferences and in the founding of the United Nations University and its first campus at Escazú, Costa Rica. He established Pan International Conference and Language Services in the New York area. Over time the client list has been comprised of government and industry and assignments have been as diverse as Social Services, a National Political Convention, Miss Universe, and many others. In 2006 he published a short story on smoking (One way to Quit, Bookcraft, NJ) and he is a regular contributor to Ex Tempore, the United Nations Society of Writers review, where he has translated poems and published some of his own, as well as music that he wrote for chamber ensemble. More recently he published his mother's Cuban Diary and some of her heretofore unpublished work (Carmela Valdés-Gallol de Rodríguez: My Diary/Mi Diario, 2009.) He remains a consultant to the United Nations, the US Department of Health and Human Services, and other clients, while continuing to pursue interests in music, literature, and diplomacy.