

USF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS CHAIR EXPLAINS US-IRANIAN AFFAIRS

Dr. Mohsen Milani, the Chair of the Department of Government and International Affairs at the University of South Florida, held the auspiciously large audience spellbound at our first speaker's luncheon of the season at Marina Jack. Born and raised in Iran only a five-minute walk from the US Embassy that was the scene of the horrific 1979

kidnapping of embassy personnel, Dr. Milani was sent by his father to California at an early age. He obtained his Doctorate from the University of Southern California and has spent the past twenty years at USF with stints at Oxford and Harvard.

Both Peter French, who introduced him, and Dr. Milani described his job as one of the more difficult around, since political science professors are difficult to control. Or, as Dr. Milani described it, the only difference between terrorists and political science professors is that terrorists are sometimes willing to negotiate.

Dr. Milani began with the observation that, in order to understand the world, it is important to understand how others view it. He stated that President-Elect Obama's background has given him the ability to empathize, which is crucial to being able to understand the views of others.

Dr. Milani described the origins of the present conflict between the U.S. and Iran. He noted that, prior to the 1979 revolution, Iran was the largest purchaser of

U.S. weapons. Approximately 50,000 Americans were in Iran, and a similar number of Iranians were in the U.S. He portrayed Ayatollah Khomeini's overthrow of a monarchy of 2,500 years to create a Moslem republic as the most popular revolution of all time. The action of a group of rash students in taking embassy

employees hostage created intense distrust and enmity among Americans. In fact, the U.S. and Iran have since then had no formal diplomatic relations for the past 30 years.

Dr. Milani then explained the Iranians' grievances against the U.S. and how Americans look at Iran. He stated that Iranians resent the U.S. for meddling

in their affairs and in playing off Iran and Iraq during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, supporting whichever side the U.S. felt did not have the upper hand rather than supporting a cessation of hostilities. The Iranians also resent the freezing of the Iranian government's assets in the U.S. Part of the dispute is over just how much of such assets there are. He noted that the Iranians have been selling carpets for 2,000 years. His comment promoted a recollection of George Ball, who over thirty years ago commented to Suzanne and me that the Shah was little more than a carpet trader. The most important issue to Dr. Milani



**President Brian Kelly presents gift to speaker,
Dr. Mohsen Milani**

is the perception in Iran that the U.S. Government is pushing for regime change in Iran. Iranians think that the U.S. was moving to take action in Iran right after the pacification of Iraq and was delayed only by the Sunni insurgency in Iraq. He pointed to Congress' appropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars for the overthrow of the Iranian government and our government's funding of groups opposed to the Iranian government as inflammatory actions.

American concerns include viewing Iran as the main sponsor of international terrorism through providing logistical and financial support to terrorist organizations and Muktada Al-Sadr's militia and resentment over Iran's derailing the peace process sponsored by the U.S. in the Middle East. Americans also view Iran as a theocracy oppressing its opponents, constantly violating basic human rights of its own citizens. The most important American gripe, however, is the perception that Iran is building a nuclear weapon. Iran takes the position that enriching uranium is an inalienable right of any nation in today's world. Iran claims that the U.S. has double standards: Its friends (including India, Pakistan, Israel and Russia) may have nuclear weapons, but Iran may not. The U.S. realizes that a nuclear Iran is going to change the balance of power in the Middle East for decades. Dr. Milani thinks that Iran does not necessarily want to build and own a nuclear bomb but rather the infrastructure and knowledge to build a bomb in case they want to. He views this as a policy of deterrence.

While he would not want to live under the leadership of Iran's Islamic Republic, Dr. Milani stated that he does not think that Iran's leaders are much different from the leaders of other countries. He pointed to a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate that presented two conclusions based on the consensus of 16 intelligence

agencies: (1) Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003, and (2) the decision to halt the program was based on a cost and benefit appraisal. He pointed to other Iranian actions that reflected the cost-benefit approach, namely, support of the overthrow of the Taliban in 2003, support of the current government of Iraq and support of the Orthodox Christian Armenians against the Shiite Azeris of Azerbaijan.

Dr. Milani posited that President Bush's actions in getting rid of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and driving out the Taliban from Afghanistan had done for Iran what it could not do for itself. The result of these actions is a much stronger Iran today than eight years ago. It is now a powerful player in Afghanistan and Iraq, and its investment in Lebanon has paid off handsomely.

Dr. Milani insisted that it is essential for the U.S. and Iran to talk without preconditions. He stated that we cannot change the regime and must recognize that Iran is an Islamic republic, Islamic being the operative word. The Ayatollah is the most powerful leader, but his principal task of maintaining a political balance of the many factions within Iran is not easy.

This thoughtful presentation was a truly auspicious inauguration of what promises to be a very exciting season of luncheon speakers.

Oliver Janney



Dr. Mohsen Milani delivered a timely view of US and Iranian relations at the Club's first meeting of the season

***bluELInes* is the official newsletter of the Yale Club of the Suncoast**
Editor: Elizabeth A. Troutman
Phone: (941) 751-0962

YCS INAUGURAL KICK-OFF PARTY A GRAND SUCCESS

Sixty-three Elis had a smashing good time at the Yale Club of the Suncoast's inaugural Kick-off Party to usher in the 2008-2009 season. The affair was held at the New College of Florida's College Hall, which originally was the bayside stone mansion of Charles Ringling, brother of John Ringling. The party began at 5pm and many were still enjoying the great food treats and beverages of Sundance Catering long after the alleged 7pm closing.

Just before sundown, President Brian T. Kelly addressed the throng. He stated that the purpose of the party was to thank the faithful members for their support of the Club and replace a traditionally thinly attended October season opening luncheon with a kick-off party. Obviously the result was a dramatic increase in attendance and camaraderie. While the majority of attendees were year-round members there were those who purposely returned to the area just to meet old Yale friends. Among those were Dyer and Beverley Wadsworth who cut short their summer stay at their northern home in Maine.

Kelly also underlined the strong array of monthly speakers for the coming season as well as the two Special Events. The event is a specially arranged guided tour on December 15 at 10:30 at the Ringling Museum of Art to view and understand the outstanding Brooklyn Museum's collection "To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures" followed by a gourmet luncheon at the Treviso Restaurant. Kelly reminded the gathering that it was important to notify Frank or Marsha Samponaro for reservations as soon as possible.

He also announced the second Special Event, which will be a gala dinner on March 15 at Marina Jack featuring Yale's premier female a cappella group The New Blue. Kelly advised that members mark their calendars for both dates.



Susan Kelly checks the sumptuous buffet before members arrive

Sundance Catering had arranged a centerpiece of stacked wooden wine crates with a delicious selection of cheeses and fresh fruits adorned with flowers, market vegetables and dips and sliced baguettes. Other items to soothe the palate included antipasto skewers, hot shrimp and artichoke dip, mini chicken cordon bleu and relish trays. Servers and

bartenders assured that no one went without proper Kick-off Party care.

With the sun bouncing off Sarasota Bay and streaming through the windows of the mansion's music room and and with conversation and laughter resonating as members bonded after a long summer, it was easy to summarize that this party had achieved the very best wishes of its designers. As sundown brought the party towards its end everyone seemed quite a bit richer in feelings of good old Yale spirit.

Calendar Notes !

**December 15, at 10:30 AM, at
The Ringling Museum of Art**

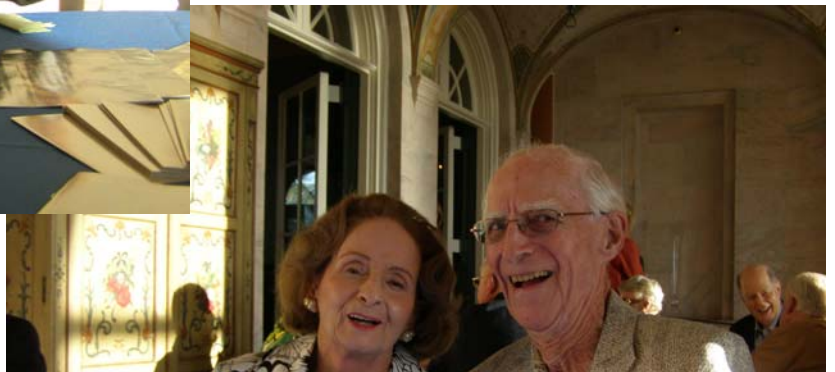
**March 15th at Marina Jack for
dinner -- The New Blue -- Yale
singers, entertain**

Yale Club of the Suncoast Kick-off Party

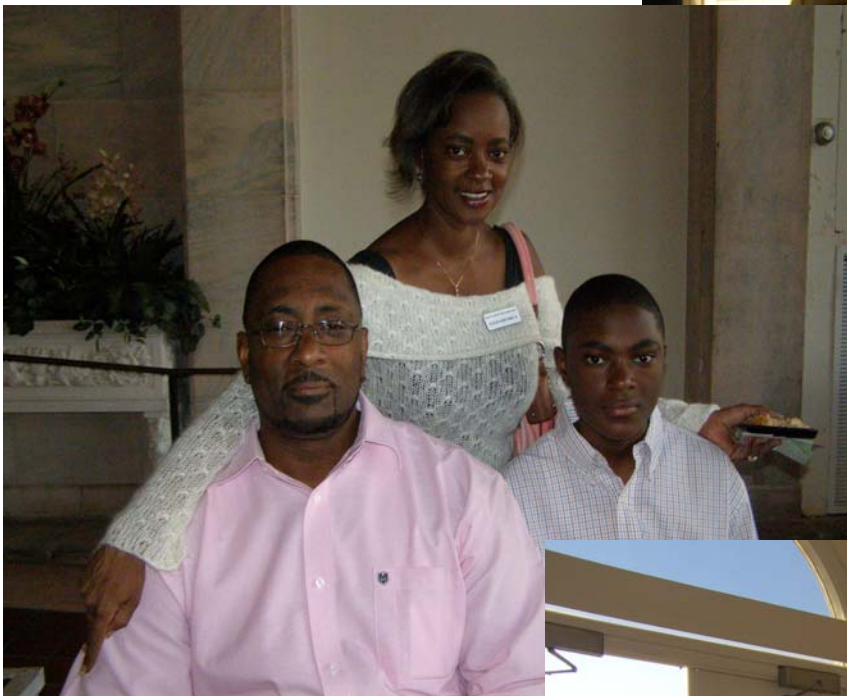
A sunny corner for an engrossing discussion in the late afternoon sun at the Charles Ringling Mansion.



Who has more fun than Marcy and Bill Doyle?



KyleeliseHolmesThomas, her husband Terry and son Toussaint enjoy the gathering of Yale friends.



Meandering about, both inside and out, on a perfect day at sunset. It doesn't get much better than this.



Alumni Schools Committee Breakfast



On October 17th, the Alumni Schools Committee hosted a breakfast for guidance counselors and teachers in advanced placement and international baccalaureate programs at high schools in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Nineteen guests were welcomed by Club President Brian Kelly and ASC Chair Peter French. Wes Finer, Oliver Janney and Liz Troutman were also

Alfie Daniels, Yale Admissions Office presence to insure that we had a Club representative at each table. Representing the Yale Admissions Office was Alfie Daniels who covers Yale admissions in the southeastern US. She gave a vivid presentation of undergraduate life at Yale today.

That presentation was followed by a general discussion on ways to encourage the best young people to consider applying to Yale. It was suggested that having younger alumni visit high schools even for an hour has a very substantial impact on promoting student interest. The Club was also encouraged to consider inviting two-three students and their to a



reception in June based on recommendations from teachers who believe such young people would be most competitive in seeking to gain admission to Yale College.

All who attended thought the time spent was worthwhile and would be happy to attend another breakfast next fall.

Gathering of thoughtful and effective educators

Peter French



Marsha Samponaro would have hidden her face behind the brochure she's holding if the photographer had been a nano-second slower. See the great opportunity below!

Members of the Yale Club of the Suncoast and their guests are invited to enjoy a tour of the Ringling Museum of Art's special exhibit 'To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures' on Monday, December 15 at 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch at noon in the museum's Treviso restaurant.

Presenting over one hundred objects from the Brooklyn Museum's world-renowned collections of ancient Egyptian art—including mummies, coffins, stone sculptures, gold jewelry, precious amulets, and sacred vessels—To Live Forever is a special and rare opportunity to view priceless treasures from one of history's most intriguing civilizations, inviting all to explore the ways in which the Egyptians approached the most momentous and mysterious of events: death. For this exhibition each gallery in the Ringling Museum's Sering Wing has a distinctive theme. The pieces within tell a story, and all relate to one aspect of belief in the afterlife of ancient Egyptians.

The cost of the tour and lunch is \$25.00 per person. Those wishing to attend should send a check payable to the Yale Club of the Suncoast to Frank and Marsha Samponaro, 9409 Forest Hills Circle, Sarasota, FL 34238. Please indicate a choice of entrée for each person. The choices are: spinach salad, poached bay scallops, or Italian BLT. The deadline for the receipt of checks is Thursday, December 11. Anyone with questions about this special event should call the Samponaros at 941-966-9115.

Coming Full Circle— Out to Africa Once Again

Friends,

Retirement proved to be a leisurely time to relax and contemplate new ways to remain active. Now, after five months, an opportunity has crystallized that engages the mind and will permit application of skills developed over years of practical experience. Actually, the initial overture came two days after my retirement in May, and Grace's initial reaction was, "Well, we'll have to get our passports renewed!"

A half century ago I did my initial readings on Africa with a focus on the then newly independent country of Ghana. If a summer in Kenya in 1962 had not intervened, my dissertation would most likely have been about that West African land that I learned to know well and then abandoned. Now I will rediscover those interests and be absorbed by Ghana as it progresses to new successes after half a century of freedom that had its share of turbulence.

I have accepted an invitation to serve as Consultant to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana in Accra. The assignment is to evaluate the broad range of academic practices, policies and procedures and make recommendations on how the University can improve its academic operations and more effectively deliver programs. A substantial assignment will involve the various Schools and faculty, deans and chairs in will occur. The University is of renewal and growth as recent appointment of General Kofi Annan as the particular project working in Office will last fifteen funded by the Carnegie

I depart on a preliminary 12th that will last until be back in Sarasota to fulfill oversee all the details of the



Past President, Dr. Peter L. French

its academic part of the working directly with Colleges to assist the transitions that committed to a time evidenced by the retired UN Secretary new Chancellor. This the Vice-Chancellor's months and has been Endowment. visit on November December 10th. I will obligations and Perlman Winter

Residency Music Program that lasts into the early days of the new year. Then, in mid-January, Grace and I will go out to Africa once again for the year. We are excited! Messages from the once dark continent will be shared. Messages from home will be welcome. The e-mail address will still be drplfrench@aol.com,

At this time of life, for "an old Africa hand" it is satisfying to be sought out and invited back to a part of the world that has so shaped my life. When we return, there will be stories to tell.

I will miss everyone in the Yale Club and the congeniality of good conversation over good food. To everyone I send my *salaams* with all the good memories of days past and anticipation of gatherings to come beginning again in early 2010.

Cordially,
Peter

Our Members Make News

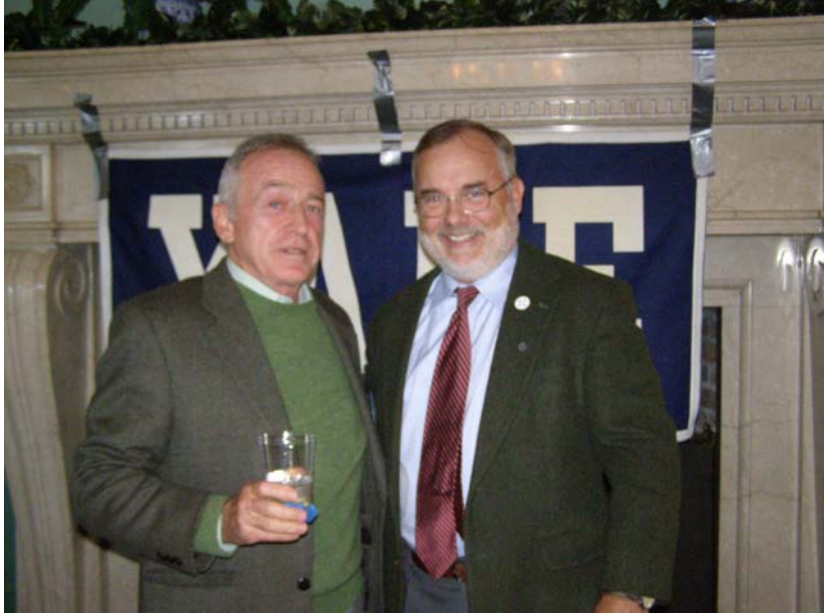
From time to time, we learn of the events and exploits in the lives of our members. Your editor would like to share some of these. Please keep us informed as you hear of noteworthy activities of your fellow Yale Club members.

At our Kick-off Party, **Carl Abbott**, renowned architect, who graduated from Ft. Myers H.S. in 1954, attended the University of Florida, and received a master's degree in architecture from Yale in '62 talked to friends about his then upcoming trip to Yale. Abbot was invited to take part in the rededication of the Art and Architecture building as the Paul Rudolph Hall following completion of the restoration and renovation that commenced in June of 2007.

Carl said he was especially honored to be on a panel at Yale, in November, with two of his close friends and classmates, Lord Norman Foster and Lord Richard Rogers, both Pritzker Prize winners (the Nobel Prize of architecture.)

Upon asking about this panel appointment, it was mentioned that their long friendship was key; he said, "I'm referring to it as 'two lords and an Abbott.'" Note that our own **Mike Michalson**, on the right of Carl Abbott in the above picture, President of The New College of Florida, will be our speaker in January.

For much more information, go to Google and read any of the 158,000 references to Carl Abbott therein. Then try Gordon E. Michalson, New College, FL.



The Sarasota Herald Tribune edition of November 12, 2008 contains an article by our own **Mike Lasche** '91 MBA, guest columnist for that date, writing in support of roundabouts for accessibility. Mike is Executive Director of Bicycle/Pedestrian/Trail Advisory

In his thoughtful and well-documented article, Mike says shown to dramatically reduce speeds, increase traffic flow, accidents for all road users, reduce fuel efficiency. Roundabouts roadside, u-turn, and head-on motorist makes is a right turn." is provided by the article, and people who believe in Sarasota." Again, Google can provide further information.



Pedestrian Advocates. He began working on issues of bicycle and pedestrian safety in Sarasota in 1985. Lasche now serves as chairman of the Sarasota County Committee.

documented article, Mike says shown to dramatically reduce speeds, increase traffic flow, accidents for all road users, reduce fuel efficiency. Roundabouts roadside, u-turn, and head-on motorist makes is a right turn." is provided by the article, and people who believe in Sarasota."

The Prez Sez:

On October 28th our Yale Club of the Suncoast held its first-ever season Kick-off Party and 63 fellow Elis enjoyed a night filled with good food, good cheer and Yale fellowship. The party was a very appropriate way to initiate the 2008-2009 YCS season highlights outstanding speakers with highly topical presentations in a superbly convivial atmosphere. By the time this edition of bluELines is published we will have heard Dr. Mohsen Milani's extraordinarily timely presentation "U.S. Relations with Iran Post Bush."

December 9 Monthly Luncheon at Marina Jack -Our speaker will be the inimitable Tom Tryon, Opinion Editor of the Sarasota Herald Tribune. **There will be much to learn of our Sarasota environment from every aspect through his address, as well as the question and answer period. This master newsman has observed Sarasota/Manatee developments for many years and is not to be missed.**

December 15 (Monday) Special Event: Special Guided Tour of the Ringling Museum of Art Exhibit "To Live Forever; Egyptian Treasures" **followed by a gourmet luncheon at Ringling's Treviso Restaurant. Here is an opportunity to view one of the finest exhibits ever presented by Ringling Museum with selected top docents, with the warm company of your Yale Club associates, with a finishing flourish of a sumptuous luncheon at the top rated Treviso Restaurant on the Ringling grounds. The cost of the tour complete with luncheon is \$25 per person. Please send checks payable to the Yale Club of the Suncoast to Frank and Marsha Samponaro, 9409 Forest Hills Circle, Sarasota, FL 34238. There is also a choice of luncheon which the Samponaros would be more than happy to explain with a call to them at 941-966-9115. Make reservations as soon as possible, as this promises to be a very rewarding event.**

January 13 Monthly Luncheon at Marina Jack – YCS's own Gordon "Mike" Michalson, Y'70, President of The New College of Florida, will present his field of expertise with "Philosophy of Religion/ Modern Christian Thought." Mike says he will sprinkle appropriate amounts of humor for seasoning!

March 15 (Sunday from 5-7pm) Special Event - Gala Dinner at Marina Jack featuring Yale's premiere female a cappella group *The New Blue*. **Mark your calendars as this is the social highlight of our 2008-2009 YCS Season! Consider it a command performance.**

Membership Renewals/YCS Directory: **We have reached the 100 mark of renewed 2008-2009 membership in the Yale Club of the Suncoast. We appeal to those who have not yet sent in their renewal form and check to do so. We wish to publish the new YCS Membership Directory but are awaiting the final renewals. Please help us in this important renewal task. Thank you.**

Support Your YCS Club Program of Events: **We are making every effort to ensure that this is a truly exciting, enriching season of events designed to provide you with many hours of camaraderie, intellectual stimulation and good old fashioned Eli spirit. In return we ask the small favor of your support and participation for these great events. We have, and will continue, to insist on minimal cost associated with our luncheons and special events to offer the very best Club value for you Elis. Please keep your YCS Season Bookmark within easy viewing and mark your date books with all the events and plan ahead to be with your fellow Yale people throughout the YCS Season. We will never cease trying to improve your Yale Club for your total satisfaction!**

Brian Thomas Kelly,