



The Most Interesting Man: An Interview with Mr. Dillon

Kathleen Alexandrou, Freshman
Reporter

Robert Dillon teaches English to freshmen and seniors at Marblehead High School. I have not had Mr. Dillon as a teacher myself, but I have friends who have, and his stories are legendary. On Friday afternoon, May 1st, I sat down with Mr. Dillon and asked him a few questions about his life.

Q: Where did you grow up?

A: I grew up in many places. I was born in Taipei, and then went to Puerto la Cruz in Venezuela. I was very young [when I moved out of Taipei]; I was one and a half. You know, I have many memories – many early memories – but not of Taiwan. I went back there later when my parents were living in Malaysia, but that was nineteen years later. Puerto la Cruz is a coastal town. Now it's a big resort area, then it was not; it was just a place where there was an oil line that ran into the sea, and ships came to get the oil from Venezuela.

Q: Growing up, where did you live? And where did you go school?

A: We were in Venezuela for a few years, then we went and lived in York Princeton for a couple years, while my father was in grad school. Then we were in Izmir and Ankara, then we were back in the U.S. So, I went to a boarding school in Pennsylvania; I went to a boarding school in Rome; I went to a boarding school in Ankara; and then I went to a boarding school for half a year in Turkey. This school was actually an NSA listening base and we were evacuated there. The NSA are the people who are spying on everyone now--National Security Agency. Now they do it all on electronic satellites, but back then they had these giant things called elephant cages, which were antennae. They didn't look like [the normal] kind of antennae. Instead, they looked like a football stadium built with an erector set, and it was huge, in fact it was just a giant antenna that could listen to anything in the world. They had one in Japan and they had one in Turkey. My school was on that base for four or five months. Boy, was that miserable. But I could go into Istanbul on weekends, which was okay.

Q: There was a coup in Venezuela while you were there, so there was a lot of fighting and that was when you were a little kid. Do you think that seeing all the fighting when you were so young affected you at all, or changed you from who you might have been?

A: I've never been able to answer that question. There are plenty of kids here who've seen things that they don't talk about, and there are some teachers here who have seen things when they were young that would make your eyes bug out, and they don't talk about it either. And has it scarred them? Maybe – probably. **Do you think that all the people in this building have had a life like yours?** Well, most of them haven't. Some of them have. But you can never answer that

question. You know, my parents were in Lebanon during the civil war, during the fighting, and you know you had all these people like you who had just grown up with it. Did it make them crazy? It didn't seem to, but you're never sure because it seemed normal to them.

Q: Does that make you think about how sheltered a lot of the kids in Marblehead are?

A: Yeah, but, you know, when I taught down in Boston there wasn't a kid who didn't have a friend who'd been killed. And you know, when somebody was killed, you would be shocked how many people knew him or her. And did that affect their lives? Yeah. On the other hand, you guys live with a lot of fear, too. You do! You come to school every day and you feel the pressures of school and of succeeding, and that's pretty scary.

Q: Do you think that having a fear of school and of the pressures of school is a legitimate thing to be afraid of?

A: Sure! That's how kids who see their friends gunned down on the street act too. [These fears] are not the same, but they're both legitimate. But when people say that kids in Marblehead have had it so easy, I don't believe that. I believe that there are some wonderful things here. I believe that yeah, sometimes we're a little too insulated, but do I want you to go out and see something terrible happen in some country? No. My niece, Chloe, is going to Nepal in about a month – she's in high school. Is she probably going to see some things that her dad – my brother – doesn't want her to see, working in Kathmandu where everyone's been killed? Yeah, but that's a chance he's going to take. And my niece is going to take it, and she's up for it.

Q: To wrap things up, what's some advice you would give your former self?

A: I would say to have more faith in yourself and in others. I lived through times when I didn't think the world would last, and now I do. I believe that most of us are better than we think, despite the fact that we get puffed up we're really better than we think. And so are other people. But it's hard to believe in that.

As I'm sure you can see from this interview, Mr. Dillon is a man who has seen a lot and learned from it. If you ever have the chance, talk to him for a couple minutes. You will undoubtedly come away from the conversation with a better sense of the world (and probably a late pass to your next class).

SENIORS! Prom tix are on sale right now! Tickets can be bought before and after school and during lunches from May 11-15. Tickets are \$30 and can only be purchased after permission slips are signed!!

Happy Mother's Day, Anna Jarvis

Julia Stockwell, Junior
Reporter

Though mothers have been around since the dawn of time, Mother's Day, surprisingly, has only been celebrated as an official holiday in America for 101 years. Anna Jarvis, the mother of Mother's Day, thought of the idea in 1908, and five years later everyone in America was celebrating it as well. As some of us may have noticed, much hype has been placed around Mother's Day. Because of this, Jarvis ironically "spent the latter part of her life trying to remove [Mother's Day] from the calendar" (history.com). Thankfully, her efforts were unsuccessful and we continue to thank our mothers on the second Sunday of May each year. But before there was Anna Jarvis, there were the Greeks and the Romans.

In the spring, the Greeks celebrate the goddess Rhea, who is the mother of many gods such as Zeus and Demeter. The Romans celebrate their motherly goddess, Cybele, in the spring as well. After the Greeks and the Romans had been celebrating their Mother's Day for thousands of years, the British started as well.

In the 1600s, young workers were able to take a day off of their busy, dedicated schedules and visit their churches and their mothers. This day was named "mothering day" (mothersdaycelebration.com). About a thousand miles away from the United Kingdom, Italy celebrates Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May like we do. According to Italian native, and Marblehead high school student, Luca Fiori, Mother's Day in Italy is "nothing big" compared to Mother's Day here, though he says they do "go out to dinner." The reason he claims that Mother's Day is not as big as in America is due to the fact that "almost every meal is a big meal in Italy." Therefore, their Mother's Day dinner is the size of a typical dinner, while our Mother's Day feast tends to be much more extravagant than a typical meal.

As I stated previously, much hype has been set around this holiday. The media makes us believe that all mothers want beautiful gifts, such as jewelry and a vacation. Though these gifts are wonderful, I believe nothing is more special than a self-made card along with a bouquet of the colorful and sweet smelling children of Earth. For some mothers, even this is too much! One of the best gifts that a mother can receive is to see happiness in her child.

Mother's Day is the special day of the year to thank our gracious and loving mothers for all of the difficult decisions they have made, and the selfless actions they have done for their children and family. But as children, we should be just as thankful for our mothers today and tomorrow as we were this past Sunday. Happy belated Mother's Day to all of the mothers in the world and also to all of the fathers who act as both

Why You Should (or Shouldn't) Hug Your Favorite Teacher (Part I)

Kyra Veprek, Sophomore
Reporter

Let's face it; teachers are not the most huggable people. Ever since graduating from elementary school, teachers have not been there to coddle you, but to challenge and drive you to become the hardest working student possible. That being said, having your teacher forcefully shove you out of your comfort zone is a bit like being ripped out of a warm bed on a cold winter's morning: uncomfortable, shocking, and certainly not welcome. This detachment from your safe zone can breed bad feelings toward the educators that push you. However, it is for these challenging moments that we must hug our teachers.

As I transitioned into higher levels of education (well, from 6th grade to 7th grade), I began to notice a disconnect between my teachers and myself. No longer were teachers straining to become my best friend and learn all about my favorite colors and

animals; teachers were becoming estranged mediators who worked to better my understanding of mandated material. For one of the first times in my life, my school began to expect things from me and, much like most middle schoolers, I was not pleased. It was not until the final semester of my eighth grade year that I began to reflect and appreciate all that my educators had done for me.

It hit me while I prepared to take my high school math placement test. I had never considered myself to have a knack for math, but I entered the exam with a feeling of utter confidence. It was not until I received my placement in Honors Geometry for Freshman year that I realized the source of this confidence. Prior to eighth grade, I had always considered myself to be "stupid," nothing came naturally to me. Teachers had never placed me in the advanced reading groups or extra credit math groups because I simply could not keep up with the natural ability of my peers. Subconsciously, I developed crippling doubts about my learning capacity and chained myself to the word "stupid" when thinking of my student career. This all changed, however, in the eighth grade when I entered (to my surprise) advanced math with Mrs. Smith. She and I never became close friends, but due to her conspicuous intelligence and witty sense of humor, I began to push myself to prove that I belonged in that class.

Check back next to week and read how Kyra persevered and thanked her teacher.

Headlight Staff 2014 - 15

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