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Elizabeth Marincola

Elizabeth Mark Marincola might have become a doctor like her father. This was definitely her plan when she was thirteen. But happily for the ASCB, she instead became a student of psychology, then a student of Italian literature, then a student of American capitalism, and finally a student of the biomedical research enterprise when she became Executive Director of the ASCB in 1991 at the age of 31. Since that time she has become widely recognized in Washington for her astute grasp of federal appropriations policy, and deeply admired by all who interact with her for her spectacular management of the Society.

As the middle girl of five children, Elizabeth was given a great deal of independence as a child growing up on a college campus, and charted her own course, initially as a psychology major at Stanford. A semester in Florence launched a lifelong passion for Italy, a second major in Italian literature, a mastery of the language and its culture and, yes of course, her marriage to Franco Marincola, a Milanese whom she met when he was a medical officer in the Italian Air Force. Family trips to Italy continue to be frequent, sustaining a rich bilingual and bicultural commitment.

Elizabeth knew her way around universities—her father is Professor of Thoracic Surgery, first at Yale and then Stanford (where the family moved when she was five)—so it is perhaps not surprising that her first job just out of college was as Assistant to Don Kennedy, President of Stanford, and later Jeanne Kennedy, Director of Community Relations for Stanford Hospital, for whom she handled correspondence, managed patient relations at the hospital, and organized such social events as a visit from Queen Elizabeth. But Franco, among others, was adamant that she back up her organizational skills with mainstream training, and in the fall of 1984 she enrolled in the Stanford Business School.

Elizabeth describes herself as an MBA student at Stanford as the "quintessential poet among quantitative jocks," but she thrived in the rigor of it all, found the curriculum and her classmates fascinating, and graduated as president of her class and five months pregnant with her son Jamie.

On the subject of career and children (Jamie was followed seventeen months later by Paula and seven years later by Rachel; see the t-shirt ad on page 6), Elizabeth is eager to share her three most important rules. First, don't skimp on obtaining the best help possible at home, regardless of cost; Billie, the children's nanny of 10 years, is an integral part of the whole. Second, limit the role of the indispensable helper to your own work hours and resist the temptation of live-in help to preserve the intimacy of the family. And third, "marry a good person," someone who delights in raising children with you and celebrates (not just supports) the unfolding of your career.

With her MBA in hand, Elizabeth was hired by Stanford Hospital to be Associate Director of Development and, within a year, Director of Development, overseeing fundraising for the hospital's modernization. In 1990, Franco, having completed his

training in surgery at Stanford, was offered a fellowship at the National Cancer Institute, where he is now a Senior Investigator combining basic research on the immunobiology of melanoma with clinical applications, and the family of then four moved to suburban Maryland. She spent the next year as Deputy Director of Policy at the National Institute of Mental Health, learning the ropes of the federal system. In what might best be described as celestial convergence, Franco recognized, in 1990, that a small lesion on her back was in fact early melanoma, and the resultant surgery was completely successful.

At about the time that Elizabeth realized that her future might not best be spent as a public servant, the leadership of the ASCB was facing the imminent departure of Dorothea Wilson, its beloved Executive Officer, and was reading through huge stacks of resumes from inappropriate applicants. Then-President Marc Kirschner learned of Elizabeth through a professional contact, and when he mentioned her name in an executive session, then-Treasurer Mert Bernfield came to life: "Lizzie Mark! I know her!" — as indeed he did, since her childhood, during his incarnation at Stanford Medical School. The next day he was on the phone, and the rest is our happy history.

From Elizabeth's perspective, the ASCB directorship is an ideal job. It has allowed her to take on the challenge of running a business, managing a diverse staff, overseeing a complex budget, and constantly seeking ways to "improve the product." She also feels very comfortable working with scientists—they've been part of her life all her life—and believes deeply in what we do.

From the ASCB perspective, we have somehow been fortunate enough to find our Society in extraordinarily competent and creative hands — Past-President Marc Kirschner: "my greatest contribution to ASCB is probably helping to hire Elizabeth and helping her get started as Executive Director. Elizabeth is truly a remarkable woman, who helped ASCB turn outward toward the world of politics and inward to build the strength of our membership — all this and put some money away for the Society. Despite her success and recognition, she never loses her humility or forgets that she is working for the members and represents values of the basic science community." Past-President Dick McIntosh: "Elizabeth has made so many contributions to the ASCB that it is hard to keep track of them all, but two things shine through with particular brilliance. Her sense of logical and effective organization took an already good National Office and made it truly outstanding, a model for how the administration of a scientific society can contribute to the advancement of science and the well-being of the scientists themselves. And her administrative style has generated a staff that is efficient, useful, and a continuing pleasure to work with." Past-President Ursula Goodenough: "My year-long Marincola tutorial in how-to-get-things-to-happen ranks with the most valuable and pleasurable experiences of my life. Her keen analytical skills are fully matched by her warmth, sensitivity, and slam-dunk sense of humor." President Mike Bishop: "Elizabeth has been a God-send for me as President of the ASCB. I know that I can rely on her to provide good judgment, flexible intelligence, and astonishing energy in administering the affairs of the Society. Her passion for our mission exceeds all understanding."

This profile was contributed by ASCB Past-President Ursula Goodenough