

Scarlet Letters

Number 11 April 2019



This banner picture was not taken by Toni Holland Liebman, who can be seen at the far left. Nevertheless, Toni did find this picture and another by an unknown photographer which will grace the next issue. We face an uncertain future beginning with issue #13. What shall we put on our cover? Suggestions encouraged.

Scarlet Letters, a journal for the Wellesley College Class of 1956, features essays, poetry, and reviews of class members' books. *Scarlet Letters* aims to foster interaction among Fifty-Sixers and to encourage them to write. Class members are invited to submit short pieces, up to a page and a half single spaced, in such categories as first memory, significant Wellesley experience, travel commentary, work experience, and humor. Their preliminary obituaries, for use at another time, are particularly encouraged, to be ready for later use.

Another generous donation from a class member will print and mail two issues of our little class journal. Thanks very much for this support.

Comments, Contributions, Inquiries Invited

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CHAUTAUQUA, AUGUST 10-16, 2019, MINI REUNION

Last summer's 1956 mini reunion at The Chautauqua Institution in upstate New York was so successful that those attending wanted to meet there again this year. Here is a glimpse of what we have to look forward to in Chautauqua during the week of August 10-16.

The theme of our week's lectures will be "Shifting Global Powers." At this time, I cannot think of a subject more germane to us all.

To fill our days there will be many cultural events: The Paul Taylor Dance Company will be featured as well as many concerts. Of course, in addition to the intellectual stimulation the campus is a beautiful place in which to lose oneself in nature.

Having attended last year, Maya McGrath Percy (513-831-6131) and Anne Sinnott Moore (520-398-9003 or 603-998-6484) jumped in to coordinate this event. Do contact them to learn more about it.

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A Love Letter to My Primary Care Doctor

As you well know, Doctor, I'm both a medical buff and a hypochondriac, which often crowds up our office visits. But you're unfailingly patient and kind and do your best to listen with compassion and grace. Because you do that with every patient, you often are running late. I used to spend that time with a book, but lately I've begun watching the restless crowd coming and going in the waiting room, a lot like sitting in a busy hotel lobby. And I think.

I used to think that I might have done well back in the day to go to medical school and become a doctor. It always seemed to me to be one of the noblest things possible for a person to do. Now in my eighties, sitting and watching, I've realized something. I see the young and the old, the fat and the thin, the able-bodied and the disabled. Short and tall, beautiful and ugly, the washed and the unwashed, they come in all sorts and all sizes. And your job is to take them all as they come. You don't get to pick and to choose.

This is what I realize while I'm watching: my romantic view of the human and healing would never have withstood the sheer messiness of the human body, its blood, sweat, tears, secretions, rashes, smells, the whole animal aspect of us. Never mind the volume of scientific information that would have flooded me in medical school; I could have dealt with that, however tough. No, it's this other aspect, the daily tsunami of bodily humanity, that would swamp me.

All of us are human beings, doctors included. We all have preferences, attractions, repulsions, good days and bad, benevolent days and cantankerous ones. We all do the best we can, as often as we can. But doctors are up against the flesh up close and personal, all day, every day. It's part of the job description.

That's the part I realize I couldn't do. I found it difficult enough as a mother, when fevers and vomit, dirty diapers and bloody knees, could overwhelm me. But those things came mostly one at a time, and it was my own child, after all, not random strangers.

I've had the luxury in my life in encounters with other people to mostly pick and choose. In this age of bureaucratic medicine, the almighty bottom line does its best to sabotage the doctor-patient relationship that I imagine is one of the important rewards (however intangible) of going through the ordeal of medical school, internship, residency, the whole daily slog.

I want to be clear here. My love letter is to my primary, the one who's run through a slew of job descriptions: family doctor, general practitioner, internist, and now, primary. The one who's there for me day in, day out. The one lowest on the totem pole of medical practice, although if you think about it, that makes it the very foundation.

The superstars, the specialists in the white hats riding in on horseback, come and go in my life. I'm certainly grateful for their expertise. But they never get to know me, just my heart or colon or arthritic toe. The whole me? I'm not their responsibility, not in the way that I am for my primary.

I'd rather be saying this to my primary in person. But on a fifteen-minute visit, which the medical insurance folks deem adequate to care for my body and soul, there isn't time for frills. I don't know: is it really a frill to be able to tell someone how much you value what they do for you? To thank them for working so well and so hard? Is assembly-line medicine really more efficient to restore and maintain health than humanistic medicine used to be? Do numbers really count more than people?

I don't think so. But I'm in my eighties after all, and I've known another world and another way of thinking. And I was brought up to say thank you when I got a gift, preferably by a written thank-you note. So this is a love letter and a thank-you note all in one, for the gift of my primary's personal attention and care, for putting my well-being before personal concerns, in all weathers and all seasons, day in and day out.

I want you to know, Doctor X, it does not go unnoticed or unappreciated.

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from the *Conz Street Chronicle*, July 2018

Preliminary Obituary for Carolyn Amoret Evans

prepared for future use

Carolyn Amoret Evans, (age) left this Earth on . She expects to be reunited with her loved ones in heaven and to be in the company of her Lord and the heavenly host. She would like to return to Earth on occasion as an angel/good ghost to be with her children and grandchildren. She wanted this as much as she wanted to live to be a healthy one hundred.

Carolyn was born in New York City to Norman and Amoret Evans. She lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for forty-five years before moving to Illinois and then Florida. Ever grateful to the powers that be, she graduated from Wellesley College with a BA in History. After taking extra education courses, Carolyn taught sixth grade.

She was lucky enough to be a stay-at-home mom. Her happiest days were spent raising her four children, Cynthia, Lansing (Valerie), Rick (Tom), and Robert (Lisa). She did volunteer work with various organizations, including several Wellesley Clubs, and she trouped with the Milwaukee Junior League Children's Theatre for many years, playing everything from a rooster to Ben Franklin's brother to a good witch.

After the children were on their own, she worked as Director of Academic Operations and Records at The Lake Forest Graduate School of Management in Lake Forest, Illinois. Retiring to Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, gave her the opportunity to study and work in photography, to explore her family's genealogy, to write, and to walk the beach. She belonged to St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, Jacksonville Beach, participating in several ministries.

Carolyn was a member of Singers by the Sea, a senior chorus, and was part of a writing group, RCW (Really Creative Women). Her loyal scribes read and edited her work and pushed her to complete one of her life goals, "being published." She did accomplish this—in newspapers, magazines, two Florida Writers Association Collections (*Let's Talk* and *Slices of Life*) and a book about her missionary



Carolyn Amoret Evans

grandfather. She also wrote a memoir for her family.

She enjoyed traveling, photographing every trip extensively. She said she could remember sights better by seeing them through a camera lens.

In her later years, Carolyn lived a full and happy life at Fleet Landing Retirement Center in Atlantic Beach. She served with many groups there, including the Residents' Council. There she met her great love, William Dewey Wade. They spent two and a half glorious years in each other's company, traveling to places that were important in their lives. Dewey passed away in 2013. Her parents predeceased Carolyn, as did her sister Anne, Anne's husband Kurt, and their daughter Lynn. She leaves behind her children, their spouses, grandchildren, and her sister Cornelia (James) and her family. They will join her at a later date.

Carolyn A. Evans

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The Summer of Wings

My magical summer of wings really began last year with the discovery of four small and spindly milkweed plants that had suddenly sprouted in my perennial garden. While any other weeds would have been given short shrift, I considered the plight of monarch butterflies today; I welcomed their appearance.

2017 drew no butterflies. However, mid-way through the summer of '18, I noticed a familiar yellow and black caterpillar munching steadily through a large milkweed leaf. The next morning produced a twin. However, by the third day, both had vanished. Then I discovered a raft of truly tiny caterpillars, but when they began to disappear, I'd had enough and marched to my computer.

A thorough search of the web made it quite clear that monarch butterfly caterpillars lead precarious lives. The list of predators including some with the gruesome habit of depositing their eggs inside unfortunate caterpillars was depressingly long. And then there were genetic problems and nasty diseases like The Black Death which turns the affected creatures into black and spongy masses. Ugh!

So I decided to raise them safely inside a large screened "habitat" stocked with bouquets of milkweed and butterfly weed, both members of the asclepias family. While I waited eagerly for a resident or two, I was privileged to watch a female monarch laying her eggs on one of my butterfly weed perennials in the garden. How carefully she bent the lower part of her body under each slender leaf, depositing only one egg per leaf. Thus, she guaranteed a plentiful food supply for each tiny baby when it hatched four days later.

Soon I had five caterpillars, ranging in size from a quarter of an inch to an inch and a half enjoying their safe heaven. They ate a lot and they pooped a lot. Every morning I carefully removed all traces of monarch "frass", ensuring a disease-free environment for these fast-growing creatures. It was fascinating to watch their development. They were obviously thriving on their diet of asclepias leaves, the only type of foliage they will/can eat. Each caterpillar split and shed its skin four times to accommodate its rapidly increasing bulk.



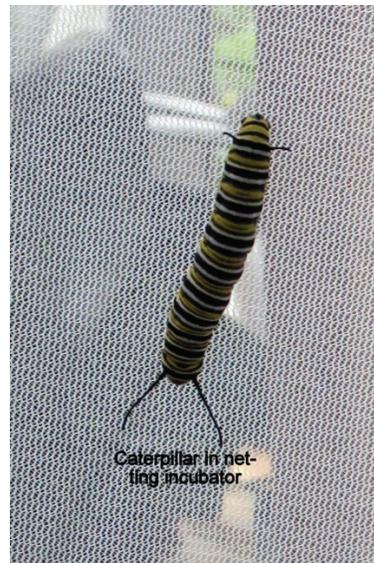
And then, responding to some mysterious inner signal, each crawled to the netted roof of the cage. There they moseyed around, taking a long time to select their own special spot. At last, satisfied with their selection, they began to produce a silken thread with which they created a small pad. Next came the tricky part: turning themselves around 'til they were able to glue their rear ends to the pad. Now they hung head down in a J position, which they maintained for at least twenty-four hours. Finally, this skin split, gradually revealing a glistening jade-green underskin that would become—as you watched-- the familiar and achingly beautiful gold-trimmed chrysalis. This elegant chamber would contain them for twelve to fourteen days. At one point, I had seventeen of these jewels hanging from the ceiling of the cage.

After about ten days, the chrysalis grows darker, more transparent. The wing patterns become visible. Days pass—sometimes one, sometimes two or three. The watcher grows impatient. When will it hatch? Inevitably, this occurs when you've given up watching. Something emerges with damp and crumpled wings. Do not move it now. The creature must spend two hours pumping fluid into those brilliant orange and black wings, letting them stiffen and dry.

Words cannot truly describe the wonder of watching a butterfly crawl to a fingertip's end, hesitate for what seems an eternity, and then suddenly, courageously, fling itself skyward. For me, it was a spiritual experience.

Of the twenty caterpillars I so carefully reared, fifteen exquisite monarch butterflies began their momentous journey south to the forests of Mexico.

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By popular demand, we include more of the poetry and pictures by Carolyn Litwin as she gardens with challenged people of all ages.

TIPI TOUR DE FORCE

The tipi is one component of a Master Gardener garden camp project at the Easter Seals Capper Foundation for children with disabilities.

The first tipi, a gardening experiment for young sprouts clasping teaspoon trowels to plant a growing cover for a playground hideaway, like its Great Plains prototype, had a single opening to enter in and exit out.

A new tipi replaces six rotted willow limbs of the first attempt with twelve criss-crossing plastic pipes, painted oak-wood brown, tightly bound with heavy rope circling at the top

and innovates two entryways between an arch of leaning poles. Six on each side spread wide around a path of interlocking bricks, a no-speed-limit traffic lane for tricycles and chairs on wheels to travel through without a turn or stop.

This preschool tour de force, green in its morning glory hide with purple-petal ornaments, provides a Capper kidlink*, easy leisure rider or hot shot storming through, a liberating freedom flight

no less exhilarating than for a brave in moccasins racing on his pony through a tall-grass prairie challenging the wind.

*kidlink--a Capper preschooler

MARIGOLD GARDENS

Gardeners who walk with canes set free

butter-yellow blooms from greenhouse pots in a courtyard garden bed to hip-hop between purple-petaled cotton plants for a summer fling.

Gardeners whose speech is slurred or not at all

plant a batch of Mary's Gold. Their blossom offerings, like those placed at the foot of statues by her worshippers, spark a counter hymn to a choir of canna leaves.

A gardener who cannot see plants his in a pot, knows Herb of the Sun

by texture of ruffled leaf by feel of many tiny flowers that cluster into one, by stringent scent that wards off nematodes.

He identifies by being told his flower's name is marigold.



IMAGINE SPRING

hidden in darkness
of sunless sky

forsythia's gold
concealed in a shroud

bridal white pear
colorless snow.

The children at Perkins
whose eyes cannot see

speak spring with words
they have been taught.

“Yellow and warm,
like sunshine.” they say

to daffodil blossoms
cupped in their palms.

“Fluffy, like clouds”
they giggle and blow

dandelion heads
their fingers explore.

Voices of children
happy at play

sing to sweet petals
soft toys in their hands.

To capture their darkness
I shut tight my eyes

while theirs open wide
imagine my spring.

BEAUTIFUL IT STANDS

ready for the morning sun
to nourish texture, taste,
and summer smell of greens—
chives, oregano and chard,
and yellow marigolds
for floral spiciness
between the edibles,

ready to give pleasure
in exchange for care
the special needs garden
sparks reflection
upon the inward eye
and feeds the need for the harvest
in lines of poetry.



Churchspotting

City churches built over the last hundred years are now so much a part of the urban landscape that they are often ignored, their grace and sturdiness taken for granted. For a moment, think of New York City without neighborhood churches, synagogues, and temples. It would be a city without a soul.

Surely houses of worship provide solace and inspiration for their congregations, but equally for the outsider, the passerby, looking up at a steeple or at glorious stained-glass windows or hesitating before an impressive wooden door behind which lies a world of faith. Churches are a link to spiritual values.

Unlike the New England village, where the church is centered on the green, New York City's religious structures seem to appear randomly in some cases. One finds a wealth of handsome religious architecture sharing a few acres. The classical Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, built in 1895; the Park Avenue Christian Church, designed by Cram-Goodhue and Ferguson in Gothic style in 1904 and inspired by Sainte Chapelle in Paris; the red brick Park Avenue United Methodist Church built in 1926; and Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, all grace two city blocks from East 84th to East 86th Street.

To imply that churches are randomly placed is not actually true; there are historic reasons for location. For example, the St. Ignatius Church was established to serve Irish Catholics who came to work on the Croton Aqueduct and on the Harlem River Railroad. St. Jean Baptiste Church, on Lexington Avenue at the southeast corner of 76th Street, was the parish church for French Canadians who found it too far and too inconvenient to travel to Canal Street, where the only French Catholic Church in the city was located. Immanuel Lutheran Church, a fine stone structure, was built in 1863 on East 88th Street for Germans who settled in Yorktown. Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun commissioned the Orthodox synagogue in 1901. This handsome structure is distinguished by a well-proportioned four-story interior space, with a balcony behind which are remarkable stained-glass windows, patterned in an art nouveau style of vines, leaves, and flowers.

An ethereal religious edifice on the East Side is the mosque at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York at 96th Street. 96th Street is extremely congested, bordered on the south by the huge Normandie Court apartments, and on the east by the Metropolitan Hospital, so that

the unexpected arrival of a mosque with an airy gold dome, a minaret, and landscaped gardens is a heaven-sent gift of light, clarity, and openness for the area's residents. The architects who designed this mosque were not concerned about fitting into context, or adapting a design to match pre-existing buildings. Nor were the devout congregations who commissioned the city's historic churches and synagogues built during the past century.

Truly sacred forms create their own environments. These buildings fill a void in our secular society and are more precious than ever.

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The Posslq

When facing the problem of how to introduce the posslq in my life, especially a senior one, I remembered this old moniker that seemed to us shocking at the time. Not so much now. Must be read using the correct pronunciation. Wikipedia definition for posslq (pronounced possel-kyoo): An acronym for "person of opposite sex sharing living quarters."

How shall I introduce him?
The options are so few;
So I'll just use that acronym,
"This is my posslq."

Boyfriend is adolescent,
Like a teeny-bopper's crush;
Lover has connotations
That tend to make 'em blush.

If we were in España
It could be Corazón;
In gay Paree, it's mon ami,
Schätze in EuroZone.

Beloved is for obits,
Sweetheart is so passé;
Partner's for an LLC,
And fiancé? No way!

So of the many epithets
I might apply to you,
I'll choose to use that favorite,
"This is my posslq!"

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