

Scarlet Letters

Number 10 January 2019



The First Shall Be Last

This last banner picture in Toni Holland Liebman's incomparable collection of Wellesley 1956 banner pictures was taken when 1956ers were upper classmen at the college, before they scattered to the wide, wide world, before colored photos were common. Please help identify the people in this picture. As of publication, we have from left to right: 1. Sally True (?), 2. Jane Kentnor Dean, 3. Carla Shapiro Gelband, 4. Mary Ann Gould, 5. Mimi Gorn (?), 6. Ann Lord, 7. Mary Jo Waddell (?), 8. ?, 9. P. A. Duncan, 10. ?

Please send additions and corrections; when our list is complete, we'll reprint the picture with the proper names.

Thank you, Donors

As our faithful readers know, *Scarlet Letters* sometimes arrives online and sometimes via US Postal Service snail mail. Email is cost-free except for printouts that the College sends to '56-ers who are not email users, and it works well for newsletters. However, *Scarlet Letters* is a multi-page, illustrated literary journal that many of us want to keep and refer to long after first reading. Of course, there is a

cost for setting up, printing and snail-mailing each issue (ca. \$800), and the Class treasury is insufficient. For this issue and for the near future, four generous classmates have donated funds to cover the cost. Thanks to them, a group that chooses to remain anonymous, all class members will receive printed copies for a while. Many, many thanks to them.

Do you save *Scarlet Letters*? Have you missed receiving copies of *Scarlet Letters*? Would you like them all? Hard copies are not available, but we can send you online copies if you tell us which issues you are missing. Also we now have indices of copies now printed by issue. With this issue #10, we will put together a comprehensive index for the run of *Scarlet Letters*. This complete index will be sent online on request.

Calling all readers! We need several people to read and review classmates' books for *Scarlet Letters*. 1956-ers have written many wonderful books and are still doing so. Let Claudia or Sheila know if you occasionally would like to read and review these wonderful offerings.

Comments, Contributions, Inquiries Invited

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Published under the auspices of the
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Jane's New Farm

Chapter 1.

From the time I was about ten years old I wanted to be an archaeologist, but by age fifteen I decided that I couldn't make a living that way. I retired from my real job with British Petroleum at age fifty-seven and moved to Florida to pursue my archaeological interests at the University of South Florida. I loved it, took extra courses, and received my MA after six years. But Florida itself bored me, and I missed the seasonal changes. I had spent some time in Charlottesville, Virginia, and thought I might be able to do some digging at Monticello. So I moved to Charlottesville, finding a job not as an archaeologist but as a Monticello guide.

After four years I burned out on Jefferson. I took a part-time job as a receptionist at the University of Virginia Alumni Association. It was pleasant, the employees were nice, and I had plenty of time to pursue my archaeological interests as a volunteer. This went on for seventeen years.

Chapter 2.

A new president to the organization decided that a full-time person, probably much younger, should be the receptionist. I was not even allowed to apply. At a farewell party for me and the other part-timer, I gave this speech:

"I'm not a very sociable person, but over the years I've gotten to know a lot of you well, and it's been very rewarding to me. I've learned about your outside interests, your accomplishments, your families, and sometimes your problems. We all spend the best hours of the best days here at work, but there is lots more to each of us. There are so many sides to all of us.

"Occasionally when I've first met someone I think *There's one I want to stay away from*, but later, after coming into contact with this person from a different angle, I've found them to be quite worthwhile. This has been a learning experience for me.

"We have a terrific group of employees here, and there's not a single one of you I wouldn't be happy to take home and introduce to my family. These

seventeen years have been very rewarding to me."

I received much applause, and tears were even shed by some in the audience.

The search for the perfect replacement went on for months. We were told we would get two weeks' notice when the person was hired.

Chapter 3.

Then I got lucky. A friend from the county historical organization told me he had noticed that the historical museum in Fluvanna County, where I live, was looking for an attendant. I immediately found the information, applied, and within a week I had the job. I gave the Alumni Association two weeks' notice.

About thirty years ago the county bought Pleasant Grove, a nine-hundred-acre farm on the Rivanna River. Two hundred acres were reserved for a new county high school, a new jail, and a library. In the center of the acreage is the original 1854 house, a three-story brick structure of early-18th-century style, restored three years ago as a museum, featuring the story of the farm, the river, and the railroad.

An elderly farmer from the county has donated his extensive collection of old farm equipment, and a beautiful new barn has been erected to house this display. There are soccer, baseball, and softball fields, a dog park, picnic shelters, a playground, and twenty-two miles of trails for walking or horseback riding. Most of the farm is lovely open natural space. Look at this site: <https://www.fluvannacounty.org/parksrec/page/pleasant-grove-park-natural-experience>.

I work twenty hours every other week, including weekends. I'm planning many projects: a display of animals native to the site, studying the people who lived there, and investigating the archaeological sites.

People retire to the country to relax and enjoy the scenery. When I drive the four miles to the farm, I feel that it's my own place, but I don't have to take care of it. I hope to stay healthy for a couple of years so I can make my contribution to this site. If you're ever nearby, please come visit. It's about eight miles down the road from Mr. Jefferson's place.

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America

Someone asked me the other day why I like America. I was stunned. Why wouldn't I?

Of course, things have changed a lot since I grew up during the Second World War, a war we won and then hoped would let us live in peace. As it turned out, the world was parceled off and went in different directions.

As I look at it now, each country is vying to have the best and biggest toys (i.e. weapons). The United States, Russia, and North Korea are in the lead. It is a dangerous world.

The way I chose to remember America is this: it is a place of quiet, a peaceful place, one where you can decide what you want to do and what you want to be. Looking back now, I realize I was speaking from a place of privilege much different from the majority.

I had hoped this piece would be a tribute to my native land, a land of milk and honey, of love thy neighbor and diversity welcomed. I still feel our elections can help us stay on the right track but are they to be trusted?

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*Above, a waterway in Venice
Right, replica of ancient home in Corsica*

Joan's Contribution to SL

Our time is going fast and there still are many things and places that I want to do, learn about, and travel to.

Each year my husband, Charles, and I travel abroad. Last year we visited Sardinia and Corsica. This year we go again to Portugal and Spain. We were there years ago visiting our daughter during her junior year abroad. However, I have never been to Barcelona, and that is the current strong draw.

After raising three children and working as a systems analyst and computer programmer, I resumed my interest in art and photography. I now have four pieces on display in the Marin Civic Center Show, three photographs and a 3D printed vase. I will be entering the next show too.

Charles and I recently took a course on quantum mechanics. I would like to get a better understanding of this subject and also quantum computing, both of which are still fuzzy to me.

My family has always been important. I'm grateful that my children are good, caring, and productive people. Both my sons are happily married with good jobs and impressive children. My daughter used to work for dot.coms, but after being in India for five years, she is now a massage therapist and learning about a new and helpful body technique called DNS that the Czechs developed.

I wish my classmates well and look forward to seeing you all at our next reunion.

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Chrysalis Kids

*for Jasper, Ashley, Paige, Hillary, Kiernan, Abby,
Brianna, Cale*

I watch a caterpilla
inch and half of crawling stripes,
yellow and black on green,
grow fat feasting
on my parsley plant

until one day I find it
stiff, still and colorless.
The brightly colored wiggler
had crept into a self-made womb
for metamorphosis.

I take the mummy chrysalis
glued to stem by silky thread,
mysteriously spun,
where a new life hides
to teach my garden campers —

some with garbled language,
some with none at all,
some with crutches under arms,
some with chairs on wheels.

Parsley, they learn,
is pizza for a larva
tiger swallowtail —
herbal entrée number one
for life-change to come.

They learn of life in gardens,
insects and plants,
one thriving on the other
to change from creeping creature
to gentle flying flower.

Kids inside a chrysalis
stretch to furrow out,
sowing seeds of dreams
fragile as emerging
wings of butterflies.

A Garden Is Made of Hope

*for Jerry, Richard, Roger, Robert,
Joe*

To their special garden
with reticence they come
reluctant to relinquish
aimless hours on the porch
of the home they share,
hands more accepting
of coffee cups and cigarettes
than spading fork and trowel

hesitant to haul a hose,
force a spade
into unyielding soil,
spend a summer morning
weeding, watering,
waiting weeks for ready signs
that signal time to pick

dubious of interest
in caring for a carrot
that might not grow
shaped to perfection
from pointed tip
to whorls of green.

We urge our special friends
to risk disappointment
in nurturing fragility
of a seedling carrot sprout,
but take a chance
to tend a garden
growing hope
in spring awakening
to lettuce, kale, and chard,
and summer ripening
to tomato red.

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Special Needs Gardening: Reflections on the Inward Eye

The seed may have been planted sixty-five years ago when I was a Wellesley student volunteer at Perkins School for the Blind one spring semester. Although my experience there was brief, a lingering memory became a poem many spring years later when poetry and gardening blended in my life. That blend of interests took further root when I enlisted a team of fellow Master Gardeners for the beginning of a special needs gardening project that has come to define my summers for fifteen years.

The first was a weeklong, half-day gardening camp for children at the Easterseals Capper Foundation in Topeka, where I live. A favorite feature on their playground, a morning-glory-covered tipi tunnel, provided a speedway for wheelchairs or tricycles to travel through, sometimes with caution, sometimes with breakneck speed.

Capper Camp eventually transferred to an eight-week city summer program in a local park. A feature here with campers from ages six to twenty-one is a sensory garden where we try to stress the uniqueness of each plant, each special in its own way.

With children no longer in a camp at Capper, their playground has become a courtyard where participants in an adult services activity work one-to-one with members of my Master Gardeners team. Digging a hole can be an achievement worth a proud high-five.

Our newest challenge has called us to be gardener mentors for adults, some with severe physical limitations and others with mental illness. In both cases we have raised-bed gardens growing in resident group homes. Committee members visit weekly to assist with the major ongoing chore of watering and to share excitement over a bounty of green beans or a perfect red tomato.

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Clockwise from top left: High Five, Tipi Tunnel, Carolyn and Kent, Raised Bed

The Stable

In my early thirties, I have
Married well but, in a new city, am finding it
Uphill going breaking into new
Circles where those seeking entrance present
As credentials the
High school from which they graduated.

Mother, who made the incredible
Leap from a respectable rural farm to
Wife of our handsome,
Wealthy, well-traveled father in a
Beautiful college town, blurts
Sincerely, eerily, "I
Never really felt I belonged
Anywhere."

This from a woman once dressed by
Saks Fifth Avenue, Abercrombie and Fitch
Mutually-devoted best friend of the
Petite, astonishingly perfect but
De nouveau wife of the biggest bank's President.
Volunteer for every
Well-intentioned non-profit in town;
Matron and mistress of manners.
Devoted novice of the sisters of the most
Chic Episcopal Church, all calling by first name
The Rector's wife. Initiate privileged to
Repair by hand
Privately, quietly, invisibly the ancient Linens for
the Altar Guild.

Oh, Mother, farm child so
Steeped in the ways of barns and cattle and sheep,
grown into
Canny woman who knows intuitively
The lay of the land, the
Turn of the year,



How can you have
Missed what was right
Under your nose all along?

The simplest, most humble grotto plunged in
Darkness, donkeys and oxen shifting
Sleepily on their feet, starlight
Filtering through the roof of fronds, and over in the
Far corner the
Exhausted pair of strangers
Stunned by a
Newborn child lying on
Blood-soaked straw.

Mother, how could you miss it? Not

Much for ambition, maybe, but
Freely given, this place, where you
Belong.

Joan Miles Oliver
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to keep this garden
with its cherry tree
in bloom

Cutting down
a cherry tree
that surely would have
bloomed
fully filling up
the view/ the vision

I do remember my cherry tree In its gorgeous
bloom

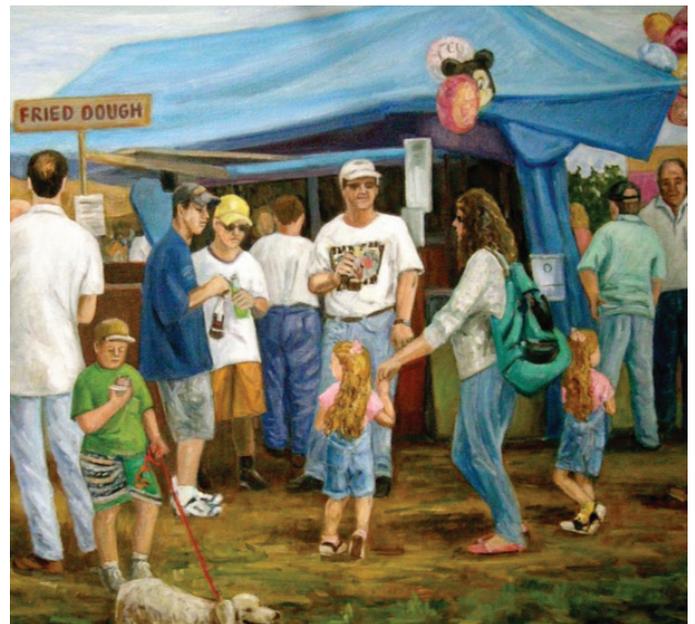
that would have been
so beautiful
of my lovely garden then

How anyone
who bought my house
would want to
cut it down
and would,
in fact, have cut it down
having wanted
to cut it down

Madeline Tiger
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But now
I'm thinking of
how lovely
the blossoms would have been
if he (or she) hadn't executed that
cruel thing
(by "executed" I mean "made it happen")
having cut it down
and I'll allow myself
to say right here
I don't always call a yard a "garden"

But if a cherry tree is
growing there
and ready to bloom
or already blooming
making this for sure
a garden
why I don't want to
ask again. I want



*An exhibition and sale of Eunice Agar's colorful
People Paintings was recently presented at an Art.Gallery
in Chatham, New York. Congratulations to Eunice.*

*Right: People at Lia Gelin Poorvu's mini:
 Top row (L to R): Nancy TenBroeck, Anne Sinnott Morre, Sue McTighe Berkeley, Judith Rulnick Klau, Nessa Osborn Higginson, Betsy Loud Detwiler, Sheila Owen Monks, Elsa Kahn Ramin, Barbara Gelder Kelley, Louise Nichols Botero.
 Bottom row: Sally Blumberg Linden, Maggie Daniel Russell, Lia Gelin Poorvu, Janet Sommers Isenberg.*



*Left: People at Jane Kentnor Dean's mini:
 Top row, L to R): Jane Kentnor Dean, Marjorie Meyers Ross, Ann Terry DeLuise, Pat Taylor Siskind, Nancy (Dawn) Selin Hudson, Cassie Freie Gaillard, Toni Holland Liebman.
 Bottom row: Ann Shaver Lloyd, Betsy Cassel Stern, Robbie Reichenbach Hodgson.*

The Mini-Reunions of Wellesley 1956

The mini-reunions are now history, resulting in many reunions large and small. Annsie Svensson McAdams, the grand organizer, is still gathering information from those who participated in the group lunches and individual telephone calls. Be sure to call or write her with your report if you have not yet done so. Callers renewed acquaintances after many years, discovering that while some of our sisters face serious difficulties grappling with illness and other problems, all were cheered to hear from other class members and appreciated being listened to.

Lucy Fowler Klug (see picture with her daughter Caroline, Wellesley '88) may have won the pompadour pudding award for her report on fifteen "spirited and fun" contacts to class members. She discussed family, medical challenges, moving, and even some politics with the sisters, impressed and inspired by the RESILIENCE of the group to their challenges.

People are planning to attend our next reunion (our 65th!) and made some useful suggestions. More faculty lectures! We want to be involved in Wellesley's



intellectual life! And this good idea: how about making it possible for classmates who come a distance to stay on campus on Thursday and Sunday nights so that we do not lose half a day on Friday and Sunday in airport travel. A little extra time on campus would be a gift to those of us who move more slowly these days, giving us a little time to wander and relax, catching up with old friends.

Send other good ideas and reports to Annsie: annsie999@yahoo.com