

The Wellesley College Class of 1956 presents

Scarlet Letters

Number 20 - July 2021



Munger Hall residents, Fall of 1955

Front row: Pam Denny, Nancy Wittenberg, Ray Halloran and Anne Sinnott.

Back row: Barb Doern, Ibbly Van Alyea, Connie Zick, Maggie Dandy, Valerie Brown, and Cynn timer Molson

Reunion!

*"I remember walking home from the Library in the fall with the carillon playing and the trees blazing, thinking how lucky I was to be there."
-Cathryn Towley ("Kaki") Olson. (d. June 19, 2017)*

Our virtual 65th Reunion was a huge success. Many thanks to Dianne Isaacs Weil, Reunion Chair, and committee Maud Hazeltine Chaplin, Joan Ward Lasley, Annsie Svensson McAdams, Sally Blumberg Linden, Isabelle Clore Plaster, and Jane Power Mykrantz, as well as class officers and others.

The Zoom meeting consisted of four parts: Sally Blumberg Linden, class president from 2016-2021, welcomed our new slate of officers listed on page eight. Many thanks to those who have retired, to our fresh new officers, and to those who continue in office and responsibility.

Fond memories were rekindled in a memorial meeting where the names of class members deceased since our last reunion were read aloud.

Two other items, an extensive montage of photographs that Toni Holland Liebman had taken over the years set to the music of *"Infernally Yours,"* our Junior Show, and Lia Gelin Poorvu's interview of Andrew Shennan, Provost and Dean of the College about the present and future of Wellesley College students, are available for you to revisit. Toni has set this up to be easy for you to access without logging in or with a password.

Go to the Wellesley website at <https://alum.wellesley.edu/class-of-1956> and go to REUNIONS and then "click here." Be sure to do this. You will be glad you did.

Wellesley '56, 65th Reunion

May 23, 2021

Impressions from somewhere on Zoom

Wuntcha know? The miracle of technology brought about 75 of us together for a few sweet hours, and the same technology failed so that the promised Junior Show material wasn't available. That said, the faces in the little boxes were eager although mostly unfamiliar, but I am glad I was there and sorry you weren't.

I was glad because the slide show at the beginning was a wonderful compilation of how we have changed—by our 50th reunion there wasn't a skirt visible in any pictures—we're all wearing pants and better for it. By the 60th very few were still coloring their hair, and even today at 86+ when there are a few holdouts, I am tempted to ask, for God's sake why?

Watching the pictures of college years reminded me of how not gung-ho Wellesley I was—no step-singing, no hoop-rolling, certainly no whatever those clubhouses were.

But when the memorial service part of the reunion came on, my heart hurt for the numbers, 47 of us gone in the five years since the last reunion, many of the names resonating, my beloved cousin Mike (she was never Judy) Rulnick Hyman, everyone's beloved Carla Gelband Shapiro. Dear Maud's reminding us before the names were read (in a quotation from someone I didn't get the name of) that "life is about not knowing, the delicious ambiguity," pretty much summed it up.

Other numbers? In 1952 we were 425 Freshpersons, 398 of us graduated in '56 (I finally made it in '57), and there are 270 of us left. Our two endowed funds (Coretta Scott King and Maud Hazeltine Chaplin) are each worth well over a million dollars and last year provided a Wellesley education for 3 students.

Admittedly, I hadn't thought that the next part would be as interesting and heartwarming as it was. Lia Gelin Poorvu introduced us to the current Provost and Dean of the College, Andrew Shennan, and asked him to tell us about how the pandemic year had affected Wellesley. She began by reminding

us of the tragic 1914 fire that nearly destroyed the college, and Dean Shennan quoted President Pendleton's words to the students at that time as they grieved the enormity of the loss: "You are the college."

Those words gave a guiding principle to the management of this new challenge. Faculty and administration devised ways of dealing that focused on the students' education above all else. As he talked about the examples of flexibility, for example dividing the usual load of four courses in half and then accordingly dividing the semesters into two seven-week sessions, I found myself unaccountably proud that I had gone to a college that could at such short notice and under such pressure make learning happen. The college could safely accommodate about half of the students on campus, so first-years and sophomores were given preference for the first term, juniors and seniors for the second.

Dean Shennan's warm, informative talk (and Lia's pertinent questions) were recorded; although I don't know how, I'm pretty sure you will be able to access the recording. Believe me, it will be worth your while, especially if, like me, your ties to the college have weakened over the years. (Does someone somewhere have my Posture Picture? I still have nightmares.)

I don't want to forget the other parts of the meeting: going forward, we have a new slate of class officers, we have made startlingly large financial contributions to the college, (\$2,712,000 since the last reunion), and our retiring class officers led by Sally Linden were suitably thanked. We are the only class that has anything like the benefit of the marvelous *Scarlet Letters* in which you are reading this screed. We were told that the Record Book for this reunion has been sent out; I have not as of today, received mine. We were told what we were supposed to do in that case, but as should not surprise you, I missed the instructions.

For a 1956 65th Record Book, write to claudia.bushman@gmail.com or call (646) 319-7396

Judith Rulnick Klau (proudly) '56

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Ester wrote this piece to go in the Record Book. Her entry there provides an introduction to this poem.

Remembering My Husband

I glimpse your face among the clouds,
Your eyes unusually pensive,
Yet you were always serene
Facing hardships with a smile,
But you could be stern
When my pessimism ruffled
Our loving togetherness.
You trusted life, the future,
And were easily moved
By a crying child, a troubled friend.
You could also be tough,
Even though it caused you suffering
Because you were a man of peace,
Who hated conflicts.
Where are you now?
Your room is empty,
Even your bed is gone,
That enormous hospital bed
Where you would lie, at night,
Waiting for a fitful sleep.
Perhaps you see me,
You hear my voice
And you would like to help me
Carry the load of my loneliness.
I leaned on the comfort
Of your peaceful face,

Sometimes even on the storm
Of your bad moods
That never lasted more than one second,
Because you wanted to see me smile.
But you were my smile,
Your reassuring presence.
Even your absences
Even the sagging body,
Of your old age,
The wrinkles on your face,
Your ailments
That sometimes irked me
As personal enemies.
It seems so unfair
To separate two beings
Who love each other
And who should leave life
Together,
That life that is now
An empty shell,
A pretence:
It had a meaning
Only when you and I
Faced it
Side by side.

Ester Rota Gasperoni
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Paintings by Susan Wylie Berry



At Wellesley, I majored in art history and loved the “lab” work that accompanied my courses. I have appreciated my art studies at Wellesley all my life, and I fitted in painting whenever possible. After college, at the Yale School of Art, I had the privilege to learn from Joseph Albers and Neil Welliver. Following two great museum jobs, I was able to continue studio art at Wesleyan when my husband, Spencer, taught there. I spent many years with Spencer, a biologist, who was interested in art and restoring an old house, in which I still live. We raised two sons and a daughter there. Sadly, I lost Spencer several years ago.

I finally became an art teacher at a private school and continued my own work in my free time. In retirement, I have returned to the watercolors I have loved since childhood and have been able to work daily in recent years.

These past years, art has been a psychological rescue for me! I have completed many watercolors over the past twelve months, and I have been encouraged and cheered by supportive children and five grandchildren.





Susan Wylie Berry
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Poetry by Noel Smith Fernandez

How to Care for Elderly Loves

In the first place
they get cold in bed.
They sleep with their undershirts on,
but the chill is on them.
They once may have frozen
in the battlefield while
picking up the dead.
Take that frost bitten hand
And tuck it like a duck
would its ducklings.
The bombs still whistle in the sky.
Just hold and hold and hold it
all the long lovely afternoon.

Equinox

Winter comes about by certain shifts.
At dusk on the pond the mallards mumble
and hunker into their dark silk water.
A wood duck's piping like a blade slants in
through the rosy air. A katydid waits
for an answer.
Something ticks.
I feel a slight tugging. There is a need
to turn and say goodbye but
the fire is lit
and people are coming in
the front door. It is not easy
to know what is leaving or when it left.

Night Voyage

He lay day and night in his bed.
His purple mottled hands rested gently
at his waist. Day and night.
His cheeks had caved in and his mouth
formed a tender oval as from time to time
his breath stalled and took hold again.
His children never left and always said,
“Daddy, it’s me, Lily. I love you,
Daddy.” Etcetera.

At last at 4:28 in the black dark
came the signs he had been waiting for.
He set his rudder and hoisted the genoa,
jib and mainsail. The grommets clanked
in the stays. The compass set itself.
He felt the mainsail fill. He wound
the lines around the capstan.

It was a sacred wind and it bore him
through the night and through
the world’s air.

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Marathon Musings

Among the happy highlights of my life have been running in seven marathons. The distance is approximately that from Wellesley to Boston and half-way back!

A friend convinced me to run in the Richmond, Virginia Marathon. It poured rain and “I hit the wall”. That means I absolutely ran out of energy. Margie talked me into finishing. Soon she and two other running friends convinced me to run the huge New York Marathon. My brother and I took early buses to Staten Island to wait four hours in very cold temperatures for the race to begin.

But it was a beautiful sunny day as we finally started over the Verrazano Bridge which bounced as we crossed it. The cheering crowds, novelty high fives, and finally the finish in Central Park. On the plane home, we proudly wore our finishers’ medals for all to see.

Next, I was invited to run in the Helsinki Marathon. Visits with my AFS Finnish daughter there were a treat. Only 5% of the runners were women. Older women looked me in the eye and said Hyva which means, “I think you are great!” A glorious run.



I began to think about qualifying for the Boston Marathon—the oldest there is. Charlotte, North Carolina had a lovely course to admire, but I did not feel well. On to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Nice course, but a very hot and humid day. Not your typical November weather. I pulled out at mile eighteen to save energy for another attempt. Number six was in Philadelphia starting at the Museum, through the park and along the Schuylkill River. Great support from my daughter, Kem, but a tendon tightened up and I could not run. Darn. On such a pretty day.



No more dreams of running Boston until I was told about running for The Dana Farber Cancer Fund. To be given one of their race numbers, I had to raise \$1,500 dollars. Letterhead stationery was supplied. I guess my pleading letter was convincing as my friends were most generous.

About 35,000 of us started down towards the “Scream Tunnel” of Wellesley students. In Newton, my other daughter supplied me with fresh socks and much encouragement as we ran together into Boston. This was a happy finish to my last marathon in the Boston One Hundredth.



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Bowling Ball

“One thing I am known for in Florida’s gardening world is having created a large floral arrangement in a bowling ball, using two curtain rods and torch ginger! It was awarded a blue ribbon by a panel of nationally accredited flower show judges...”

Margaret Sample O’Donnell
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All Comments, Contributions, and Inquiries Are Invited

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Published under the auspices of the Wellesley Class of 1956 Whose New Officers from 2021-2026 Are the following

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