

The Wellesley College Class of 1956 presents

Scarlet Letters

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March 3rd, 2021, Boca Grande Club, a Wellesley Mini-Reunion in Jacksonville, Florida
Carolyn Montgomery, Ellie Roos Faber, Joan Ward Lasley, Jane Power Mykrantz

***Scarlet Letters* Completes Twenty Issues, Five Years, 2016-2021**

Plans for the Future

Five years ago, we featured Joan Ward Lasley's admonition to write our obituaries, and we encourage the recalcitrant to act. Here's how:

Begin with the usual who, what, where, when.

Add your history: parents, education, work, marriage, children, interests, experiences. List survivors, arrangements & place to send memorial gifts.

Note newspapers you wish notified. Add Wellesley. (See obituary example in this issue.) Joan suggests reviewing and updating the draft on your birthday each year. There may well be changes. She suggests that a folder with this obituary, a nice photograph, and your preferences for obsequies be placed for easy discovery. Funerals have to be pulled together quickly. Your survivors will be grateful for your forward thinking.

Comments and Contributions Invited

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How I Became an Addict in Five Slow Steps

Step One, 1960:

The young Allen family buys its first home, an ancient little farmhouse, probably the oldest existing house in Red Bank, NJ. Brimming with love for their red house and with relatively empty pockets, they begin their extremely rewarding (to them) five-year renovation project. They even hire a landscape architect to design the small city plot. However, when Meredith stands watching that dour Scotsman talking to Len, it sounds like a geometry lesson, all angles and lines. And when she meekly inquires where a few flowers might go, he briskly blows her off. "Oh, little lady," he sniffs, "this is certainly not the time to be discussing such matters. That'll have to come later." Fortunately, we live a scant ten miles from the ocean, so the children and I enjoy our summers romping "down the shore" as they say in New Jersey.

Step Two, 1971:

It is time to move. Len has changed jobs and is enduring the stresses and strains of a daily three-hour roundtrip commute on the Garden State Parkway. House-hunting within a half hour of his job proves very difficult. We finally settle on a great, tall, dressed-stone house, built in 1885 for the manager of a large country estate. (The owner's house is a typical shingle-style "cottage" built on the edge of a lake.)

They immediately begin another Allen-type renovation. Meanwhile, they begin to notice "the grounds," the nearly three acres that belong to the house. An active, riffly little brook borders one side of the house, separating it from a mini-forest. Behind the house, a large fall-mown meadow is liberally strewn with wildflowers. The house rests on broad, sunny lawns, adorned only with clumps of overgrown forsythia. But the BEST part, to our wondering eyes, is the four-foot-high stone walls separating the property from the street. Struck with the thought that those walls need gardens, Meredith wonders if she could somehow learn to be a gardener.

Beautiful and inspiring garden books are devoured. We visit all the open gardens we can find, Len snapping away at all appealing ideas. We learn about The Garden Conservancy and its fund-raising Open Garden Days, happily visiting any in our area. And she discovers that yes! she certainly could learn to be a gardener. We begin decorating the front walls with lush perennial gardens. And then we create two more interesting ones in the back of the house. There is so much to learn...but who knew that learning could be such fun?

Step Three, 1988:

The Allens move again, this time to another old farmhouse in Lebanon, NJ. This house is interesting in that it has sustained quite a few additions during its long history. Still, there are many "improvements" that we "must" undertake.

Like every old house we ever bought, Number Three is also sans gardens. In all those years, apparently no owner had been inspired to plant even a daffodil or two. Time to get busy. This time the project is an enclosed garden, complete with picket fence and entrance arbor. We even have beds

separated by gravel pathways. By now, feeling confident in her acquired gardening skills, Meredith knows that perennials often look best arranged by height—short, medium, tall. Choosing some of her favorite plants, she happily digs away. But by the second year, it has become obvious that she has made a major bob-boo. One cannot cram three layers of plants into a three-foot wide bed without creating an over-planted mess.

Step Four, 1998:

Len retires and it's time to pull up forty-one years of roots and to move to New England, where each of our families has much deeper ones. It takes us two plus years to find The Perfect House. We find a classic center chimney colonial with five working fireplaces, wide floorboards, wavy glass windows and a great deal of innate elegance. Yes, of course we have a lot of work to do here. We have tumbling stone walls repaired, design stone walks both hither and yon, lay a lovely bluestone terrace. The house is on fifteen acres with a wonderful pond, a rough pasture, and a relatively untouched woodland. No daffodils, let alone gardens. And here it is—a tabula rasa just waiting for her. All that snowy winter, Meredith designs a number of gardens. These are mixed borders, gardens that combine trees and shrubs plus perennials. A truly well-planned garden contains plants for three seasons. The season starts with bulbs and asters, and 'mums signal the last hurrah. As they say: A well-designed garden can be compared to a symphony orchestra, with the themes and melodies--the varied solo orchestra instruments--being carried by different perennials as the months slip by.

We love these gardens. And so does the public. The gardens are displayed in three different magazines, the house's interior in another. Because we feel obligated (and honored), we agree to be part of The Garden Conservancy's Open Garden Days. For perfectionists like us...ugh!

Step Five, 2015:

The Allens suddenly look at each other and realize that they are now O-L-D. Still healthy but getting a tad creaky. But how can this now fanatic gardener leave her work? And how can she part with the marvelous birdlife that she has nurtured here?

How? Very sadly. We move into an excellent CCRC only half an hour from our private paradise. In a complete (but WONDERFUL upon reflection!) change of plans, we find ourselves not in an apartment, but in a cottage. Ah, no more gardening thinks the gentleman. Wow! I can't wait to begin, thinks the lady. There are many excellent books written advising older gardeners to slow down, to garden if they must in a greatly diminished area. But what does the Hopelessly Addicted Gardener do? She starts with a front-of-the-cottage bed...and then...year by year...she adds three additional gardens. She can't help herself. She now considers perennial gardens to be like paintings. She'll do another. That'll be her masterpiece. And while it's growing, she can smell the soil. She can watch the first tiny leaves emerge. She can talk to the native bees and trace the rambling journeys of the bumblebees. When the first lily opens, she can swoon over its scent. Perhaps if she works hard enough, she can dim the memories of the lost gardens. Addiction does have its good points.

Meredeth Johnson Allen

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My Painting Life



At various times through the years, I signed up for lessons in painting with watercolors. I enjoyed them all, but when the sessions ended, I always put away my tubes of paint and brushes, waiting for the time when inspiration might strike again. That all changed in the fall of 2007, after I pushed through the heavy doors of the old fire station that was the home of the North River Art Center. I was toting a bag full of the art supplies required for a beginning class in soft pastels. When I walked out, three hours later, I was hooked. Painting with soft pastels had become part of my life.

At the helm of that class was a talented artist who loved to teach. She delighted in sharing her expertise and in bringing in samples of new papers and pastels and alerting us to the work of other pastelists we might enjoy, and from whom we could learn. The class was diverse; a father and son duo and women of various ages and levels of expertise. They were dedicated, collegial and fun.

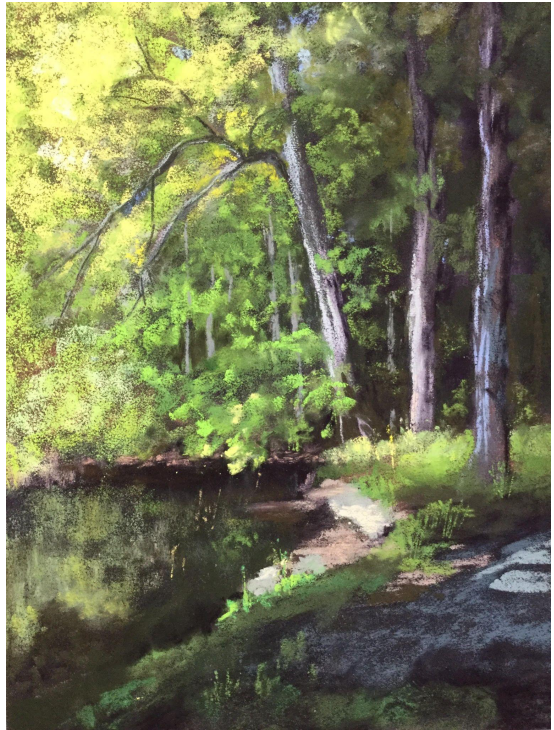
After a few years, however, I decided it was time to



challenge myself in a new setting. Our NRAC teacher was also the artist-facilitator for a group of women who met at the South Shore Art Center to paint and critique each other's work for five hours each week. After painting for three hours, the group broke for lunch and discussed their work as each painting was put up on an easel. There were a lot of helpful comments and more than a few belly laughs, much appreciated in a sometimes, stressful life. During those years, I also signed up for workshops with visiting artists and even joined a group which went to paint en plein air in southern Spain. My husband Bob joined that group. Not to paint, but to enjoy the tapas when we met for lunch and the pitcher of sangria that was

waiting on the patio of the inn at the end of each day when we met for our critique (and, of course, the beautiful scenery!) Memories of that trip are vivid.

I am fortunate to live in an area populated with many incredible artists, some of whom are nationally known. I have been lucky to have been able to take classes or workshops with several. What I never anticipated, when set off on this artistic journey, was the joy and excitement which would come as I sometimes came closer to making the leap between just documenting a scene and interpreting it emotionally, making it art. A few years ago, I came across a Mary Oliver poem which delighted me. I laughed when I read the first line, because I had done two paintings of blue iris. Then I read further and thought, “oh she is writing about creating a poem, but this is about creating a painting, too.” It’s my mantra. Just pay attention.



PRAYING

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

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Obituary

Claudia Marian Lauper Bushman died x in x of the general breaking up of old age. She was x years old. Always a domestic mother and housewife, she was also a productive scholar who measured out her life in projects of all kinds. She was born to Jean Vernon Gordon and Serge James Lauper on June 11, 1934 in Oakland, California, the second of four daughters. Her sisters are Georgia Gates, Paulie Hutchings, and Bonnie Goodliffe. She grew up in the Sunset District of San Francisco, California, the former sand dunes of the Pacific Ocean, frequently shrouded with fog and accompanied by foghorns. She attended San Francisco public schools: Lawton Grammar School for grades k-7; for grade 8, her class was bused across Golden Gate Park to the Richmond District to attend Presidio Junior High School, a circumstance reflecting the overcrowding of the schools during World War II. She attended Abraham Lincoln High School, "High on a hilltop, mid sand and sea," for grades 9-12. From that vantage point she could see the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay, as well as the brilliant orange Golden Gate Bridge, when the absence of fog allowed.

She identified herself as a third generation American and a fifth generation Mormon, suggesting the reality of grandparents from four different countries, her father's parents Emma Wissing from Denmark and her husband Emile Lauper from Switzerland and her mother's parents James Frater Gordon (born after his parents emigrated from Scotland), and Margaret Elizabeth Schutt from England. Her grandparents, all involved in Mormon conversion, met and married in Utah, and later moved to California, where her parents met and married.

Claudia attended Wellesley College in Massachusetts from 1952 to 1956, the fortuitous and accidental result of the open society following World War II. She was an adventurous, if not a brilliant student. She met her husband of x years, Richard Lyman Bushman, a student at Harvard College in the small Cambridge Mormon congregation. Married in 1955, they continued at school, Claudia as a Wellesley senior and Richard as a Harvard graduate student. Their six children are Clarissa (1956-2018), Richard, Jr. (1959) (m. Harriet), Karl (1962) (m. Diane), Margaret (1965) (m. Michael LaBianca), Serge (1966) (m.

Patricia) and Benjamin (1971) (m. Erika). Their twenty grandchildren are Helena, William (Sloane), Raffy, Ted, Max, Luke, Montana, Peter, Nadia, Shelley, Caroline, Reeve, Isabella (dec.), Claudia, Gwyneth, Suzanne, Frances, Libby, Ayden, and Asher. The great grand children are Margaret, Hazel, and James.

Claudia had special interests in historical huswifery, birds, reptiles, the shows of Gilbert and Sullivan, songs and music of all sorts, nonsense poetry, and handwork. She sang in and conducted many choirs. She would break into song unexpectedly, and she often prefaced serious talks with the requirement that audiences sing or dance, activities which she believed improved most gatherings.

Claudia studied English literature at Wellesley College and lived a life of reading and writing as well as housekeeping and child-rearing. She graduated from college, the first in her family, in maternity clothes. She began work on her M.A. degree in American literature from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, with two children and finished with three. She began her work on a Ph.D. degree in American Studies from Boston University with five children and finished with six. She studied women's work, switching from one life to another during her busy productive years. She taught at several universities, moving from Massachusetts, to Utah, to Rhode Island, south to Delaware, and in 1989 to New York City as her husband, a distinguished American Colonial historian, ascended academic ranks. He held named chairs at the University of Delaware, Claremont Graduate University, and Columbia University. An additional chair at the University of Virginia was named for him. Claudia regarded her husband as her greatest teacher, and they frequently discussed ideas, collaborated on projects, and read and edited the other's writing. In 2002, she was named the New York State Mother of the Year.

During the family's second long tenure in Massachusetts, from 1968 to 1977, Claudia was part of a Mormon feminist women's discussion group whose members became known for their activities, events, and publications. She edited their book, *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* and was founding editor of the Mormon feminist newspaper, *Exponent II*, (1974-) named for *The Woman's Exponent*, (1872-1914) published in early Utah.

After the family moved to Delaware in 1977, she taught at the University of Delaware and founded the Newark (DE) Historical Society. Her activism led to a position as the director of the Delaware Heritage Commission, a state agency celebrating historical events. As the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the United States Constitution, the ratification of which made Delaware "The First State," took place under her watch, the Commission oversaw a plethora of events: commemorations, reenactments, publications, concerts, dramas, wreath-laying, parades, and stamp introductions, as well as the Great Bicentennial Ladybug Launch, in which the state legislators and school children liberated more than a million specimens of the state insect.

During a four-year stay in Southern California when her husband was initiating a Mormon Studies program at Claremont Graduate University, she taught courses on women and began a large oral history project. She grew to think that documenting their lives was the most important thing people could do, creating primary sources for future use. She herself kept an almost daily journal for more than forty years and regretted not having begun sooner.

Her New York years were known for more academic and church projects. She produced church-themed shows at Carnegie Hall and Radio City Music Hall. Her list of published books grew. She wrote on women's work, Virginia farming, and attitudes toward Christopher Columbus. She spoke to many groups. She, her husband, and others, sponsored a New York Center for Mormon Arts. She and Sheila Monks began a modest quarterly publication for her Wellesley class. The name Scarlet Letters indicates that red was the class color. She was grateful for things to do and the ability to do them. She moved along her many projects by focusing on their desired ends. As she said, "If you keep up, you'll never get ahead."

Claudia Bushman

A TREE POEM

Cyn Greene wrote this after yet another large tract was completely bulldozed near her community in Venice, FL to build townhomes. She says Venice is not the paradise it was when she moved there four years ago. No more horse or cattle farms, new developments springing up everywhere. She thinks it truly is paradise lost.

FOR THE TREES, SOME THOUGHTS

These trees have stood so long
and seen so much.
Undisturbed giants sheltering wildlife
under their green canopies.
Now they lie
felled where they stood.
Gone forever.
Acres of devastation and bulldozed earth.

These trees which bestowed
the richness of nature
soon to be replaced

with yet more concrete, cars, and congestion.
What took nature centuries to create
is disappearing before our eyes.
Greed, not nature prevails.
Where do the deer and the birds take refuge?
Where do we take refuge?

These trees are gone
and we grieve for them.

Cynthia Snider Greene
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October Recipe

Sally Blumberg Linden, recently retired president of the Wellesley Class of 1956, submits this recipe, perfectly suited to the elegant little dinner parties she now has time to compose.

Sheet-Pan Chicken with Sweet Potatoes and Peppers

4-6 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
12 oz. sweet potatoes – peeled, ½” cubes
1 large red, yellow or orange bell pepper, thinly sliced
1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 ½ T fresh sage, finely chopped
Cilantro or flat-leaf parsley for serving
3T cider vinegar
1 ½ t honey
2 ½ T extra-virgin olive oil
1 ½ t or more kosher salt
1 t coriander
½ t black pepper
¾ t sweet paprika
1/8 t cayenne
1/8 t allspice

In small bowl, mix vinegar and honey. Mix in half red onion and pinch of salt. Set aside for garnish. In large bowl, mix 1 t salt, garlic, coriander, and black pepper. Add chicken and rub mixture all over it. Marinate for 30 minutes.

In another large bowl mix 2T oil, remaining onion, sage, remaining salt, paprika, cayenne, allspice, and sweet potato.

Add remaining oil to chicken. Place skin-side up on rimmed baking sheet. Place vegetables around (not on top or underneath) chicken.

Roast at 425° for 15 minutes. Raise temperature to 450°. Flip over vegetables but not chicken. Drizzle chicken with 2t liquid from onion-vinegar mixture. Roast 15/20 minutes longer, till chicken is cooked through.

Serve with onion-vinegar mixture (i.e., pickled onions) and cilantro or parsley leaves.

Thanks to Melissa Clark of the New York Times