

*The Wellesley College Class of 1956 presents*

# *Scarlet Letters*

*Number 25 - October 2022*



*Oh, to be at Wellesley, now that Autumn's here. . .*

**Dear Classmates,**

Your officers had the pleasure of meeting on Zoom at the beginning of August. It always is fun and rewarding to "see" each other, and to exchange news and ideas.

The principal focus of this meeting was to discuss, and vote on, an idea for encouraging mini reunions around the country, in person where possible. We voted to support any in-person minis by offering to supplement the cost from our class treasury. The amount offered to the hostess would be determined on an individual basis, depending on the location, number of classmates involved, and any other factors specific to that particular mini. This decision was made recognizing that any funds taken from the class treasury leave that much less for donations to our class endowment funds, but realistically it will not be a very large amount of money, and it may make the difference in classmates being able to get together--a very important factor in our lives now. And it may encourage more of us to plan and attend in-person minis if we know that the cost will not be prohibitive.

I hope that you will agree with this decision. Our class treasury is healthy and able to do this, and still fulfill our obligations to keep Scarlet Letters coming your way and to support our class endowment funds. We are very fortunate.

COVID has not gone away, in spite of vaccinations and boosters. And it still can be very troublesome at our age. Take care and stay well.

All best,

**Anne Sinnott Moore**

**P.S.** Maya Percy, as vice-chair, is responsible for the mini-reunions. If you want to plan one, please contact her at [marian@mpercylaw.com](mailto:marian@mpercylaw.com) or 847-482-0651. If you would like to have a ZOOM reunion, she can organize one for you.

**P.P.S.** Send photos of the events, with lists of participants, to Scarlet Letters!

## A Wellesley Farewell

*I recently attended a graveside service in Erie, Pa. for our classmate Ellie Zurn Hutt. I decided to give her "A '56 Farewell." It happened like this.*

On July 9th of this year, I was invited to attend a burial service for our classmate Ellie Zurn Hutt. Her big memorial service had already been conducted in Washington D.C. and she had been memorialized by her daughter in the Spring 2022 issue of the Wellesley Alumnae Magazine. The Zurn family plot in her hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania was to be her final resting place.

I had a crazy idea. Ellie had always attended reunions and loved the alumnae parade. Why not wear white slacks, a white top, my red and white '56 reunion scarf, and a string or two of red party beads? I did just that only to find others attired in somber black. For a moment, I felt entirely awkward.

But no--they loved it and standing out made me visible in the best way possible. There was a dinner held later and there so many family members came up to me to ask what Ellie was like as a college freshman, etc. Ellie was also part of our Wellesley at Chautauqua group in recent years, and I could share how enthusiastic she was then about a course she was attending on Ernest Hemingway. She was remembered by all for her kindness. Her children and grandchildren are a reflection of this.

I was proud to say goodbye crazily representing all of you. **Wellesley '56 Rah!**

*Having celebrated the life of Ellie Zurn Hutt in true Wellesley style, Cecily was invited to submit her own obituary. Her response: "Not a bad idea. Here it is." Her submission is as follows.*

Cecily Ann Parke Sesler died x in x of x. She was x years old. She was born in Akron, Ohio on November 8, 1934, the daughter of Dr. George Kenneth Parke and Harriet Doyle Parke. She graduated from Old Trail School in Akron and Wellesley College and served as class president in both schools. After her college graduation in 1956, she worked for a time as a caseworker for the Family and Child Service agencies in both Akron and Erie, Pennsylvania. Later in life, she was employed at the Booker T. Washington Center in Erie for a brief time.

In 1958, Cecily became the wife of William G. Sesler, an attorney who was soon to become a Pennsylvania State Senator (1960-1972). Cecily was a member of the Junior League, AAUW, Delta Sigma Sorority, the Lawyers' Wives Auxiliary, the Northfield League, and the Carpe Diem Society of Mercyhurst University. She was a den mother and held memberships in poetry and book groups throughout her adult life. She was a board member for Safenet (a women's shelter), Family Services, and the Sarah Reed Children's Center. She served two terms as president of the Seedling Garden Club of Erie and was briefly a Deacon of the First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant. She served as alumnae representative for Wellesley College for thirty years, interviewing prospective students and attending local college fairs. In her later years, she was a hospice volunteer with the UPMC Hamot Hospital NODA Program (No One Dies Alone).

Cecily talked often but listened well. She was fascinated by human behavior and that was a big part of who she was. One of her social work supervisors deemed her "the most natural social worker she had ever met." Cecily was a good friend to many and a "natural mother." There was a saying about her in her high school yearbook which read: "She doeth little kindnesses which others leave undone." Both she and Bill believed in weaving the

riches of their educations into the lives of their children in subtle, living ways, preparing them for a lifetime of learning and service to others.

Cecily was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, and her brother Charles Doyle Parke. Survivors include her daughter Elizabeth Beckman (Charles), two sons Gregory (Beth) and Douglas (Virginia), eight grandchildren: Catie, Jennifer (Ed), Amanda (Chip), Tim, Michael (Allyson), Will, Russell, and Julia, and two great grandchildren Oscar and Asher. Friends may call at x. Memorials may be made to WQLN, 8425 Peach St., Erie, Pa. 16509; Because You Care, 6041 West Road, McKean, Pa. 16426, or the Sarah Reed Children's Center, 2445 W. 34th St., Erie, Pa. 16506.

**Cecily Parke Sesler**

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*Wonderful images from the ideal Wellesley retirement life. Ethel Larrabee is visiting Valerie Brown Stauffer at her picturesque Nantucket cottage. Val's new sailboat can be seen in one picture. The flags on the wall read 1 9 5 6.*



## Two airlines, One diplomatic pouch

In September 1955, I moved to Barcelona to join my parents who had moved there earlier that year. I had completed two years at Wellesley, and all Barnard's course requirements, to qualify for a BA Spring '55. Wellesley '56 students were entering their senior year. I spent that year adjusting to life in a very cultured city known for its urban design and architecture, a city that was only beginning to recover from a gruesome civil war focused particularly on destroying the Catalan culture. I began to make friends, to learn the language and to participate in events evolving from my father's business life. But by the end of 1956, with mixed emotions, I prepared to return to New York to look for a job.

And then I was offered a job: First Grade Teacher at Marymount International School, one of several such schools in Europe catering to children of foreign families living in those cities. The school was established in 1946 (and closed in 1968), situated in a beautiful mansion in Pedralbes in the hills above Barcelona. My teaching colleagues were mostly recent graduates of Marymount College in NYC. My students were mostly children of well-educated Catalans, along with the son of an American family living in Barcelona and the sons of naval personnel based in Barcelona (US Sixth Fleet's summer base). None had ever been in a classroom, so their attention spans were minimal. And I had never been at the front of a classroom.



*The Marymount International School  
in Barcelona*

**And.** . . . I had absolutely no teaching materials. Franco did not allow any educational materials into the country and there were no English language materials anywhere. I was on my own, and the school was not helpful.

At Barnard I had met Tobia Brown in an education class, and we had struck up a friendship which continued when I moved to Barcelona, and she enrolled at Harvard for graduate work in education. I begged her to acquire some first-grade reading materials. Which she did: a set of official NY State first grade readers.

**But.** . . How to get them from USA to Barcelona, given Franco's strict importation rules?

My father was connected to two important solutions: 1. He knew the manager of the PanAm office in Barcelona. Only two airlines flew from USA to Spain: TWA to Madrid, and PanAm to Barcelona. And 2. The American Embassy in Madrid. My father arranged for the books to be put into a diplomatic pouch on a TWA flight to Madrid, a pouch which was put in the TWA's pilot's cabin, and then turned over to embassy personnel in Madrid who transferred it to a PanAm pilot who delivered it to

Barcelona, where it was picked up by the American Counsel, a close friend of my parents; and then to me!

At the end of the year my first-graders were reading from NY State readers in perfect English. I asked each to draw and sign and their names; and they added mine (**Mis Abushar**) in perfect phonetic English!

***And I learned that teaching first graders was not my calling!***

**Gayle Abouchar Jaeger**  
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***The artwork of Gayle's First Graders***

## ***Joan Miles Oliver Obituary for “Scarlet Letters”***

Joan Oliver died in St. Louis, Missouri of multiple organ failure after a brief illness on \_\_\_\_\_. Joan was born on Oct. 2, 1934, in Madison, Wisconsin, the third child born to Philip Erskine Miles and Eleanor Burgess Miles.

After delaying her admission to Wellesley College and studying at the University of Wisconsin, she entered Wellesley College as a transfer student, graduating in 1956 having majored in French. The following year she immersed herself in the French language and culture and explored southern France on the back of a motorcycle, courtesy of the U.S. government in the form of a Fulbright Fellowship. Her love of the French language and people was lifelong.

Joan married G. Charles Oliver, Jr., M.D. (“Charlie”) in Los Angeles, California, on August 31, 1958. They moved at two-year intervals to Palo Alto, California; Fairborn, Ohio; and London, England, where Charlie had a Public Health Services fellowship. In 1965, Joan earned a second baccalaureate degree in Psychology from the University of London. Their only child, Paul Erskine Oliver, was born in London the same year. The family then settled in St. Louis, Missouri, where Charlie had a teaching position at Barnes Hospital. Joan combined parenting with professional training and received her Ph.D. degree in Clinical Psychology from Washington University in 1974.

Joan began academic life as a teacher of Clinical Psychology in September, 1974, at St. Louis University in St. Louis. Here she found her vocation in teaching, training, and conducting research. Her teaching assignment was a year-long course in Psychopathology, which required mastering a large body of research. Training students in Clinical Psychology in assessment and therapy was organized around a small-group method called the Vertical Team approach. A Vertical Team consisted of about six students at different levels of training performing clinical services under the supervision of a single faculty member. Training was facilitated by the deliberate grouping of older, more experienced students with younger ones, all sharing the experience of delivering services through the Clinical Training Program’s Clinic, a very active clinic with fees based on ability to pay that excluded only those with active psychosis or active drug addiction. At any time, a faculty member was supervising about 36 cases of all ages and conditions. Vertical Teams insured developing close relationships with students. The method was also employed in the teaching and training of research. St. Louis University was undergoing a period of rapid growth, so Joan proceeded quickly through the academic ranks from Visiting Assistant Professor to Professor of Psychology. Joan was the second woman faculty member in the Department of Psychology and the first in the Doctoral Training Program in Clinical Psychology.

During the process begun in 1976 seeking dissolution of marriage from Charlie, Joan made the decision to seek child support for Paul but not to seek spousal support (“alimony”) for herself, a decision with many future ramifications. Gradually she became not only the single

parent, but also the only parent of a child with very special needs. Her second career was seeking appropriate diagnoses and treatment for Paul.

In 1990, after returning to St. Louis from a sabbatical in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to learn cognitive therapy, Joan was one of the first founders of a small non-profit agency organized to provide socialization and other social, enrichment activities to adults with learning disabilities. The program was only the second of its kind in the U.S. Programs existed for pupils with learning disabilities up to the age of 18, but services disappeared abruptly after reaching that cut-off age. The non-profit started in the time-honored way of four women sitting in the living room of the chief foremother trying to envision and implement services for adults. This non-profit, Pathways to Independence, has grown into a large, well-funded agency approved for both local government and private institutional grants. It now has a full calendar of events ranging from cooking and budgeting lessons to a serious book club. The new experience of institution-building and creating a social-service experiment was regarded by Joan as an achievement.

Joan took phased retirement from St. Louis University from 1999-2004, serving 31 years. She continued her small private practice, however, until 2010, completing her retirement at age 76. Like so many who devote major time and energy to their work life, Joan felt she was retiring to spend more time with her family. This meant getting to know Paul, her special-needs offspring, in a new way, and continuing to search for the best living and social support options for him. Joan regarded retirement as the retroactive return of all the missed coffee breaks at work and all the late suppers at home. Retirement also provided the opportunity to do some prose writing and to become an occasional poetry writer.

Joan is survived by her son, Paul Oliver; her sister, Carol Miles Tashjian; and nieces Elizabeth Tashjian, Amy Tashjian, Vicky Tashjian, Sarah Miles, Katy Miles, Elizabeth Miles, & nephew Charles Miles.

**Joan Miles Oliver**  
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**Madeleine Albright, Wellesley 1959**—just three years younger than all of us!—was our country’s long-time Secretary of State. Intelligent and strong, she was also very witty. She had a huge collection of pins, one of which was almost invariably perched on her left shoulder. People quickly learned that the pins had significance: a snake or a wasp would usually mean “Don’t mess with me!” while a dove or a flower meant she was in a more benign mood. One of her favorite pins was a large bug, which she swore ended the day farther up on her shoulder than where she had pinned it that morning. Madeleine died in March of this year. She wrote an entertaining and beautifully illustrated book about her pins, which I highly recommend: “Read My Pins” (HarperCollins, copyright 2009).

**Sheila Monks**  
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