

The Wellesley College Class of 1956 presents

Scarlet Letters

Number 26 – January 2023



On Thursday, Sept 15, nine New York city's '56 alums (plus Carolyn Montgomery who was visiting from Maine and had the original idea that we meet so that she could see us) gathered in the Lounge of the Yale Club to become reacquainted. We chatted for about 40 minutes before heading up to the Roof Dining Room where we sat around a huge table and enjoyed a tasty lunch along with more conversation. Once lunch was finished, we lingered even longer, so happy to have reconnected with our fellow classmates and suggesting that we do this more often.

Seated from left to right in a photo taken by our waiter are:

Laura Ginsburg Strauss, Joanne Banks Matthews, Toni Holland Liebman, Mitzi Drucker Jonas, Cinnie Mehler Adler, Jane Atkinson Fields, Carolyn Montgomery, Carole Schiff Strauss, Claudia Lauper Bushman, Lynn Freyberg Warshow.

How I Stayed Sane During the Pandemic

The Wellesley lunch group, shown on the previous page, was asked what accomplishments they have to show for their years of Covid Quarantine.

Being a twosome helped! Ken and I walked 2-4 miles daily...great for our physical and mental health.

I kept busy with on-line volunteer work, more reading than usual, an occasional good TV movie, lots of cooking, and 1,000 piece jigsaw puzzles. I felt very fortunate despite a very mild case of covid.

Toni Holland Liebman

What I did not do during the pandemic:

1. Attend performances
2. Attend plays that were not given
3. Travel overseas

What did I do?

Amazing other things!

Carolyn Montgomery

I played bridge online, wore a mask, knew fear!

Joanne Banks Matthews

Happily, I live across the street from a lovely park, where I could take my dog every day. One highlight was the rare appearance of a western tanager, which, unafraid of Covid, made two seasonal visits, and drew avid bird watchers from all over the city. She also ate blueberries, which she carefully peeled.

I also took a variety of online classes from the 92nd Street Y, knitted, and read. Thanks to Zoom I was able to continue my English tutoring with my Russian student. (We avoided political discussions.

Lynn Freydborg Warshow

I learned Zoom. I enjoyed yelling and banging things daily in honor of the medical workers. Other people blew horns, people walking by would clap, sometimes cars started honking. This was a special moment every day, though we never met each other. I remember just looking out my window and feeling proud of our neighborhood because every single person going by would be wearing a mask. That's my Upper West Side.

Jane Atkinson Fields

I learned to Zoom.
I learned how to bank online
I missed seeing friends and children.
I'm very happy to be out and about again.
Carole Schiff Strauss

I reread a dozen of Anthony Trollope's wonderful novels, six each of the Palliser and Barchester books.

I'm now reading George Elliot complete, currently on *Felix Holt*, looking forward to *Middlemarch*.
Claudia Lauper Bushman

During the recent two-year Covid lockdown , I missed New York City, probably because I live here and it just didn't feel like the same city without time spent at dance performances, concerts, museums, dinner parties, or just mingling with crowds on the streets. What helped me get through that period were visits with my kids (totally masked) and walks outside with friends. While confined to my apartment, I enjoyed courses on Zoom to keep up my law license or lectures at the YMCA. But there's nothing like feeling free to roam and enjoy this great and wonderful city again!
Cynthia Mehler Adler (Cinnie)

Early into the isolation of Covid a Wellesley friend class of '75 raised my sinking spirits by suggesting I think about this: "Covid is advancing the future." The first thing I realized was the acceleration of technology use in ways Zoom had made it possible for me to "go to Paris" each Monday for terrific two hour art history lectures on my iPad by a man named Chris Boicos. For many years before when visiting Paris, I would perhaps only be able to attend 3 or 4 of his lectures a year!! In this and many other virtual ways, Covid accelerated my future.
Jane Kentnor Dean

Many thanks to Toni for arranging this wonderful NYC '56 reunion. Always a joy to be with 1956!
Laura Ginsburg Strauss

During the Covid beginnings from April 17, 2020, I stayed home and worried. My husband Sterling was hospitalized with a devastating stroke. I was unable to visit because of quarantine. I resolved to call up all my inner resources to repay all the love & devotion I had enjoyed during our marriage. Family photos and great family support have helped to this day.
Mitzi Drucker

British Literary Embroidery

This embroidery piece depicts a variety of British homes associated with some of my favorite English authors. From top to bottom:

Laurence Sterne's Shandy Hall in York, dating from the mid-fifteenth century.

Anne Hathaway's renowned cottage at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire.

Thomas Hardy's birthplace, a cob and thatch cottage, Dorset.

Steventon Rectory, Jane Austen's birthplace, in Hampshire, now sadly no longer in existence.

Restoration House in Rochester, Kent, a medieval city mansion. Charles Dickens's model for Miss Havisham's Satis House in *Great Expectations*.

The embroidery design was a collaboration between Betsy Leiper and myself. I learned a lot about stitching from Betsy, who ran crewel camps at her house in Sandwich, New Hampshire. Since my drawing skills are nonexistent, she drew the design on British satin, and together we worked out the elements and colors. I used cotton and silk threads in a variety of stitches--French knots galore and a lot of satin stitch, among others. It is 45 inches long and 20 inches wide, framed.

Lynn Warshow



The Beautiful Bunker

Suddenly, it seems, the light is fading.
We look up, surprised to see the porch is in shadow
And the light, like a golden monkey,
Has climbed to the top of the trees.
Oh, why was I so sure it wouldn't happen this year?
That just this once we wouldn't surrender,
But made invincible by the marigolds' stop-yellow
And the arresting red of zinnias,
We would prevail behind our barricade of flowers,
Our armament of herbs,
In this great fragrant fortress walled around with dahlias
With sunflowers rocketing three feet past the fence
And the zucchini endlessly reinventing itself;
That just this once, jars of beach plum jelly would shine
Like a jeweled force-field around us
And we would hurl ripe tomatoes like cannonballs at the darkness;
We would fling pies made from peaches and blackberries,
And, with ears of corn exploding sweetness,
The dragonflies hovering like angels above our beautiful bunker,
The fierce bees buzzing all around,
Bravely flying summer's flag
We could hold on.

Sheila Monks

1956 Munger Mini



L to R in photo: Cynthia Molson Baxter, Valerie Brown Stauffer, Ibby VanAlyea Weber, Ethel Larrabee, Anne Sinnott Moore, Lannie Burritt McNichols, Anne Sockol Segal, and Pam's husband John Blackford who joined us for dinner.

These '56ers were having such a good time at their Munger mini on October 12 in Exeter, New Hampshire, that they forgot to take photos during the day. This one was taken at dinner on Wednesday evening. Already gone, were the day trippers Kay Wood McCrillis, Sue McTighe Berkeley, and Ann Terry Deluise. The group had a fabulous day, two overnights for most and lots of laughs. They enjoyed visiting Pam Denny Blackford in her nursing facility. She greeted them with big smiles!!

Virtually present via Zoom were Olwen Beach Busch, Ray Hallaran Gramentine, Marilyn Siward Mann, and Betsy Loud Detwiler.

Mary Russell Oleson, August 15, 1935— October 18, 2022

Mary Russell Oleson, who considered herself a lifelong globetrotter, died of complications related to dementia on October 18th in Towson, MD. She was 87.

Mary was born on August 15th, 1935 in Guangzhou, China, where her father, Robert Russell, worked for the First National City Bank of New York. The family lived there, as well as in Singapore and Manila, for five years before returning to the parents' home in Maine. While their father was posted to various cities in Japan, Mary and her brother Ralph lived in Saco, Maine with their mother, a teacher in the local public schools. Mary went to Thornton Academy in Saco, graduating in 1952. Mary and Ralph spent many childhood summers on Thomas Pond in Raymond, Maine. They also spent time in the summer visiting their father in Japan.

Mary attended Wellesley College where her aunt, Helen Russell, chaired the mathematics department. While there, she lived in Severance Hall and enjoyed rowing on winning crews and producing plays as president of the Shakespeare Society. She graduated in 1956 with a BA in Mathematics. Mary often referred to her time at Wellesley as some of the best years of her life. She made close and lasting friendships there. One friend, her Wellesley roommate Merle Golden Bogin, arranged a date where Mary met John Oleson, her future husband. Two years later, he proposed to her by mail to Stockholm, where she was doing graduate work, and they were married in 1957 in Saco.

In the 1960s, John was posted to Bilbao, where their daughter Lisa was born; to Mexico City, where their son Neil was born, and to Bogota, where their son Eric was born. In the 1970s, the family lived in Paraguay, Bolivia, Egypt, and Honduras, where John served as director or deputy director of the USAID mission and where Mary continued to teach math in American schools, organize social functions related to John's diplomatic work, and join women's groups doing charity work.

They returned to their home in Chevy Chase, MD in 1981, where Mary took courses at the University of Maryland in College Park, obtained a BS degree in Computer Science in 1986, and became an IT specialist. As a feminist, she liked to think that, in the process of studying and working in the field of IT at that time, she was doing her small part in adding cracks to the "glass ceiling".

In 2000, she and John moved to Baltimore to be near their daughter and her husband Brendon Meagher and their sons, Declan and Finnian. She soon became a volunteer Democratic Party activist and continued as such to the end of her life. She began memoir writing, researching her family history and creating detailed scrapbooks to accompany her writing. Throughout their retirement, she and John continued their globetrotting adventures, domestically and abroad. Whenever she could, Mary attended her Wellesley class reunions and became a devoted donor to the Davis Museum.

Mary was predeceased by her parents, her brother, and her husband. She is survived by her children, her grandsons, and her nephew Nathan Russell. A celebration of her life will be held at a date to be determined. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Wellesley or to a charity of your choice.

Chiquita Banana was wrong....and other thoughts

Ever since the pandemic began we have been eating out very infrequently and therefore I have been cooking A LOT more. I must admit that I rather enjoy it. But along the way, I have learned some new things.

First and foremost, I found out that bananas do much better when they are kept in the fridge. I suspect Chiquita was paid to keep us in the dark...so that we were forced to buy bananas more often. Now, although the skins may darken, the inside remains firm and delicious for almost two weeks. This negates the need to bake banana bread so often! (or throw them out!)

In addition, I have learned to make banana "ice cream." It is so simple! Put sliced bananas into a container in the freezer. When ready for a cool, healthy dessert, break the pieces apart, pulse in the Cuisinart until almost smooth (I assume a blender will do as well) and add about 1/4 C milk. Stop blending while it is still thick and smooth. If you like, you can put it back in the freezer to eat at a later time. Adding berries on top makes it even better.

A friend of mine bought me a wonderful gadget on the QR channel...though I believe it sells elsewhere as well. Four inches in diameter, and 3.5" high, it is the Kuhn Rikon 2 cup **Pull Chopper**. It is GREAT for quickly and easily chopping many vegetables and nuts, but especially onions. The number of pulls determines the size of the end product. It is soooooo easy...no mess and no tears. I love it!!!!

I have also learned that the best way to keep mushrooms is in a brown paper bag...they last much longer that way than in a plastic bag.

Likewise, keeping lettuce fresh and crispy is so much easier than I used to think. Many/most of you probably know this, but just in case: wet the lettuce, wrap in paper towel, then in a plastic bag (left open) and the lettuce may last for 2-3 weeks. This works well for celery and carrots as well. It helps to re-dampen them every week or so.

Happy cooking. IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN!!!! Even at our age.

Toni Holland Liebman

Toni's Banana Machine

