

The Wellesley College Class of 1956

presents

Scarlet Letters

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Wellesley Girls Now and Then
(Jane Dean and a new friend)

Jane writes;

A terrific senior at my old day school just heard this weekend that she will be a member of the class of '28 - having applied early decision. I had been introduced to her after she'd applied, and she and I are now 'best friends'.

Query for All:

Did you participate in any of these activities while you were at Wellesley: ringing the bell, playing the carillon, rowing on Lake Waban, hoop-rolling? We would love to hear your thoughts on any of them!

Review

John Steinbeck, *Travels With Charley*

One-thirty in the morning. I just finished the book, which was written long ago, in 1961.

Maybe Steinbeck's best work was behind him. Of fiction, maybe. But this is great work, even if you consider only its final segment, driving through the South at the time of Ruby Bridges and school integration which Rockwell captured so poignantly.

I know Norman Rockwell's paintings intimately. We lived very near the Norman Rockwell Museum, and I was there a lot. If it weren't too pretentious for what I was doing, I could claim I meditated on his paintings. And I discovered for myself that it's no accident that Stephen Spielberg was the largest donor to the founding of the museum. He recognized the cinematic genius of Rockwell.

Right in your face at the museum, there is a huge painting, an endless skinny strip showing one little girl in a white dress between great big armed men. The painting is so severely cropped that none of the men have any heads, they are only bodies from the neck down—Look closely, it's the shocking opening image of a movie. It echoes E.T. being hunted down. But the painting came first.



Rockwell is still less than fully recognized as the genius he was. That used to make me angry. We always brought visitors to the museum, very often had to drag

them there. But when they saw the actual paintings, their size, scale, finish—they almost invariably came as a revelation.

Rockwell was a storyteller in paint. He captured the dramatic moment, and any of his paintings could be stills from a movie trailer, moments in a story that has a before and an after. You can read the whole story for yourself, given time to spend with the painting, a story of feelings, because that's what drama is, feelings, and that's what Rockwell painted. Feelings. Emotions.

That immediacy, the dramatic moment, is what the last few pages of Steinbeck's account were for me. I read slower and slower. I wasn't ready for his journey to end, I needed time to absorb the felt reality, for the first time, of something that had only been dry factual history for me.

People who have an historic imagination can do it for themselves, have history come alive from fact, from prose. My husband Frank could do that. I can't. I need the emotions, the drama, the story. Otherwise history is dead for me. And, unhappily, most history in my day was taught that way, factually, and so it rarely came to life for me.

I'm writing so much at this hour because Steinbeck did his job too well. I'm so moved, so stirred, that I need to settle down, to let some of the intensity drain away before I can sleep.

Over sixty years have rolled by since Steinbeck's journey, and a great deal has changed in most of the country since then. But his visit to the South and the happenings he witnessed there are not only not changed, but they have festered and grown.

We, the entire nation, are now embarked on a new path, or rather, we have rejoined a dark old one. No one is untouched, and everyone must take a stand.

Our founding dream was bold and naive and optimistic. We must hope and pray that it is not corrupted beyond repair. Our very identity, the soul of America, hangs in the balance.

Judith Bruder
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Today's Quiz on Yesterday's Trivia
Cover over the answers while you take the quiz!

Let's see how good your memory is. This is a test for the 'older kids'! The answers are printed below.

01. After the Lone Ranger saved the day and rode off into the sunset, the grateful citizens would ask,
"Who was that masked man?"

Someone would answer, "I don't know, but he left this behind."
What did he leave behind? A _____.

02. When the Beatles first came to the U.S. in early 1964, we all watched them on The _____ Show.

03. "Get your kicks, _____!"

04. The story you are about to see is true. The names have been changed to _____.

05. 'In the jungle, the mighty jungle, _____.'

06. After the Twist, The Mashed Potato, and the Watusi, we 'danced' under a stick that was lowered as low as we could go in a dance called the '_____.'

07. Nestle's makes the very best... _____.'

08. Satchmo was America's 'Ambassador of Goodwill.' Our parents shared this great jazz trumpet player with us. His name was _____.

09. What takes a licking and keeps on ticking? _____.

10. Red Skeleton's hobo character was named _____ and Red always ended his television show by saying, 'Good Night, and '_____.'

11. Some Americans who protested the Vietnam War did so by burning their _____.

12. The cute little car with the engine in the back and the trunk in the front was called the VW. What other names did it go by? _____ or _____.

13. In 1971, singer Don MacLean sang a song about, 'the day the music died.' This was a tribute to _____.

14. We can remember the first satellite placed into orbit. The Russians did it. It was called _____.

15. One of the big fads of the late 50's and 60's was a large plastic ring that we twirled around our waist. It was called the _____-_____.
16. Remember LS/MFT _____ / _____.
17. Hey Kids! What time is it? It's _____!
18. Who knows what secrets lie in the hearts of men? Only The _____ Knows!
19. There was a song that came out in the 60's that was "a grave yard smash". It's name was the _____!
20. Alka Seltzer used a "boy with a tablet on his head" as it's Logo/Representative What was the boy's name was _____.

ANSWERS:

01. The Lone Ranger left behind... A silver bullet
02. The Ed Sullivan Show
03. On Route 66
04. To protect the innocent
05. The Lion Sleeps Tonight
06. The limbo
07. Chocolate
08. Louis Armstrong
09. The Timex Watch
10. Freddy, The Freeloader and 'Good Night and God Bless.'
11. Draft Cards (Bras were also burned. Not flags, as some have guessed)
12. Beetle or Bug
13. Buddy Holly
14. Sputnik
15. Hula-hoop
16. Lucky Strike/Mean's Fine Tobacco
17. Howdy Doody Time
18. Shadow
19. Monster Mash
20. Speedy

Heimat: Homeland or Place of Belonging

Laura Ginsburg Strauss

My husband's family and antecedents lived in southwestern Germany for as long as anyone knew. My father-in-law, Julius Strauss, told me that southern Germany was less anti-Semitic than many other areas, but still not free from that plague. I asked my mother-in-law, Eva Kops Strauss, why she didn't learn to drive in Germany. She told me that very few women drove, and as a Jewish woman, she would never do anything to call attention to herself. Her family was prosperous. They had an eiderdown business that provided down for pillows and quilts and for the WWI German army pilot jackets. She studied in Mannheim for two years to become a Montessori kindergarten teacher and returned to Stuttgart to work in that field. Her husband, my father-in-law, Julius Strauss had served as a seventeen-year-old recruit in WWI. He fought in the trenches in France, starved, but survived, to come home and go to the University of Munich. Beyond that, his terrible war experiences were never discussed. When his father died, Julius became the third generation to manage the family cigar business, then employing 2,000 people.

Julius and Eva married in 1927 and bought the end house in a row of newly built houses in Canstatt—a suburb of Stuttgart. They had a housekeeper living with them and a nurse who cared for the children, Rosemarie, born in 1928, and Peter, then called Helmut, born in 1932. They took ski vacations in Switzerland and summer vacations at a lake and went to classical music concerts. Many family members lived in the general area as they had for generations. It was a comfortable life, but in no way ostentatious.

In 1933, Hitler came to power and in September of 1935 enacted the Nuremberg Laws, restricting aspects of Jewish life and preventing Jewish businesses from advertising. Julius recognized that this was the end of the life they knew. He understood, as many did not, that the iron cross he earned in WWI would not save him from a terrible future. I have seen old scrapbooks of family photos showing members of the family in uniform from earlier wars. Their past fealty to the fatherland didn't matter.

Eva had two uncles who came to the United States just before the turn of the 20th century. They started a successful business in New York City. They remained warmly connected to their German family—describing themselves as “brothers in the old and new Heimat.” In 1935, Julius came to New York to visit the Kops brothers, who were by then a part of New York's affluent German-Jewish establishment. He hoped to build a cigar business in the New York area, but he soon realized that it would require more capital than he could raise. He clearly understood that his family would have to leave Germany—their Heimat for generations. They were extremely fortunate to have the two Kops brothers in the “new Heimat” who became their sponsors for immigration to America.

Julius had done business in Switzerland, and he knew how to sequester money there. But he would not do it. The grandparents (his mother and Eva's parents) refused to leave Germany, and he would do nothing to jeopardize their safety. My husband, Peter, (formerly Helmut, who received his more American name under the influence of his American relatives) found letters exchanged between the American family and his father, Julius. Translations showed the family's mounting anxiety as the situation in Germany worsened. Julius sold his business to a Swiss company. The Swiss were eagerly buying Jewish businesses at bargain prices because the owners had no choice but to sell. Many, many years later, this practice was investigated in Switzerland, and ugly undercurrents of anti-Semitism were publicly exposed.

The Strauss family sold the Canstatt house, knowing that they would be living in a much smaller place in the United States. They got rid of their dining room furniture and disposed of the Bosendorfer piano on which Julius and his mother played duets. They parted with all other large pieces of their furniture. Their house in Germany had been furnished in a handsome

Bauhaus style. As their remaining possessions were loaded onto a truck, two SS police supervised to be sure that nothing forbidden was packed. They were allowed to take only \$5,000 out of the country. To make use of the money available to them, the family traveled to New York first class on the SS Washington. After a brief time with their New York relatives, they settled in Hartford, Connecticut, where Julius got work with The General Cigar Company as a \$20 a week tobacco packer. Eva cleaned the house, did the laundry, marketed, cooked, and took care of the children. She struggled to manage with the rudimentary English she was learning. Julius, like so many other immigrants through the years, took English classes at night school. The children had to wear their hand knitted clothes, the dreaded sign of the "refugee". There was no money for new clothes.

Two years later, Julius got a better job with the same company, and they moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where the children grew up. Thirteen years after he arrived, Julius became president of what was then The General Cigar Company. It had many factories and was traded on the New York Stock Exchange. The three grandparents remaining in Germany came to America at the very last possible moment. Their journey was arranged with great difficulty by the American family. Their passports have swastikas and big black J's for "Jude," a terrible reminder of the fate that they so narrowly escaped.

Peter's family vowed to become 200% American. During the war, they were devastated to have to surrender their cameras and binoculars and to be denied the citizenship they so badly wanted. As aliens from an enemy country, and they had to wait. Peter was grateful for the warm acceptance he received at his American school. He never felt the slightest touch of anti-Semitism. He went to Manheim Township High School, a country school, where he excelled. He became the first student of that school to go on to Harvard. On the pages of his Harvard '54 yearbook are other class members, Jewish exiles from various countries, who managed to achieve in their new "Heimat."

When Peter, my husband was in the army and stationed in Germany, he went back to Stuttgart. We traveled there together when we were first married and later with our children. In the summer of 2019, we took our daughters and their families to Germany and we went to see the house. It looked as perfect as it did when it was newly built in 1927. Everything looked the same, just as it did in the old photos. But there was a notable difference from previous visits. In 2019, in the sidewalk in front of the connecting house, two tiles had been inset. The tiles had the names of the man and woman who had lived in that house, the dates and places of their birth, the date of their deportation, and the date and place of their deaths. With this nation-wide project, Germany acknowledged the past effort to exterminate the Jewish population.

My father-in-law was an exceptional person whose humanitarian outlook was notable. He was able to accept many difficulties with grace, and always with concern for the other person. In a life with difficulties, my mother-in-law was stalwart. She accomplished her tasks and was there if a family member needed her help. She joined local organizations with social service objectives. I have always admired my in-laws for their steadfastness and their lack of anger or bitterness, their determination not to look back, their goal to be "200% American" and their efforts to repay in every way possible their acceptance in their new Heimat. I want our grandchildren to know this story and to pass it on to future generations. Heimat is a precious part of life, but we may create it wherever we are.

Claudia's Journals

I've always believed that we should be writing about the experiences of our lives. My short declarative imperative is "A record shall be kept." If nobody writes about some incident or another, it didn't happen.

My mother Jean Gordon Lauper wrote daily in little five-year diaries, filling the five line entries for forty years. But my many years passed, unrecorded, until 1989 when I was over fifty and began to write on most days. I had been feeling uneasy about my empty annals. Shouldn't I have some records besides bank statements? But I lived an ordinary, not to say dull, life, and I don't like to write. In 1989, my husband Richard and I moved to New York. Now I would have adventures, live a more impressive life, be more inspired to get it all down. And so I began.

I don't like the constriction of the little five-line journals. I wanted to be free to say more. Our move coincided with our move onto computers which knew no limits of space or time. They encourage good writing because they can be corrected to say striking good things in flawless prose. The printers, with a little manipulation, can turn out crisp, perfect pages without misspellings or tear-stains.

So I began to type out a daily entry on my computer, often filling a neat full page a day with my modest adventures. I got to enjoy the writing and to tell my story with zest and humor. "Just wait," I would tell myself as an experience began to unfold, "until I get this down in my journal. It'll be great!" And I would later recount an adventure just a little more exciting than my real life. Being able to correct, embellish, and substitute along the way has definitely improved my writing style and has made the record vastly more exciting.

Of course, I exaggerate here somewhat. But there is no question that writing in a manner that encourages corrections and additions tends toward a more lively and entertaining result. And recording experiences that are now over saves them to enrich your ongoing, easily forgotten adventures.

And, they add up. This picture reveals the extensive, unwieldy assemblage of written experiences of my life. The journals themselves will travel to some repository where they can be read in the future, as I have read the many journals of others. I still have an online copy myself.

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