The President’s Corner

At our 40th Reunion this past May I was struck anew by how amazing Smith women are. Among our classmates we have teachers, professors, doctors, lawyers, investment bankers, counselors, musicians, marketers, volunteer leaders, and clergy to name just some of the professions represented. Numerous classmates have been groundbreakers, slashing old gender barriers and establishing new role models for women. Most of our classmates are also wives or domestic partners and mothers— and even grandmothers now. Many are survivors of various serious health or other types of crises. Some are retired but many, by choice or circumstance, are not. Whatever their work or family commitments, most find the time to give back in some volunteer capacity. However, whatever their personal story, they’re all accomplished, intelligent, aware and active. Our Reunion logo attempted to capture that sense of both the traditional and new opportunities that we women of the 60’s built on.

Did Smith create these amazing women? Or were these women always outstanding and did they, along with the classes before and after, create the environment at Smith that then fostered their potential? Chicken or egg? It seems to me that the answer has to be “both”. Smith students 40 years ago and today are women with tremendous capabilities and potential. Smith College is an institution dedicated and highly attuned to enabling and encouraging young women of all backgrounds to explore their minds and talents and to use those gifts to their fullest extent.

Perhaps the most perfect example of this symbiotic relationship between student potential and college platform that I’ve ever heard came from Class of 2009 Smith student Shaharzad Akbar. As a female student at Kabal University in Afghanistan, Shaharzad faced serious restrictions in the pursuit of her education and her interest in activism. In frustration, and facing economic hardship, she quit University to work and help support her family. But her educational dream lived on. She applied to and was accepted by Smith and received a generous financial package which made it possible for her to attend. She was made to feel welcome within the Smith diverse community and she came to see that it was “OK” to be a woman, to feel and act like a woman in public and that this was a strength not a weakness. She renewed her commitment to public activism in Afghanistan with the conviction that she could make a difference. While at Smith over a summer break she helped plan and execute the Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Conference which brought together the tribal leaders and elders from both countries to discuss their differences and to find a common strategy for the struggle against war on both sides of the border. Next year, Shaharzad will be attending Oxford University. She is a truly amazing woman. Read her full address at www.smith.edu/commencement/2009/ivyday.php.

Everywhere you look across the Smith spectrum you see women who are amazing. They’re impressive, they’re interesting and they’re your friends. Every time I go back to Smith for Reunion I realize those things again and it makes me wish we had Reunions every year. So we are thinking about organizing “regional 65th birthday parties”—more on that in future newsletters. And another thing about Smithies—they know how to have fun! So we did have a LOT of fun at our 40th. You’ll see highlights and pictures in the following pages. See if you can recognize some of your housemates and friends.

Your outgoing Class Officers and Reunion Planning team did a great job for our class and now your new Class Officer team is already hard at work on behalf of the class for the 2009-2014 term. Thanks so much to all of these wonderful volunteers. Over the next 5 years, please be in touch with any of us if you have questions about class business or have a suggestion for our website or our next Reunion. Also, please note that we are starting a new “Class Talk” cyberspace column that you’ll find interesting (details inside) but to get in on these discussions we need to have a valid email address for you. (See how to accomplish that inside as well.) In fact, class news requests for the SAQ (and some other communications) are now sent out only by email, so we really need your email address. Don’t delay—check it out!

Sue Foley
President Class of 1969
REUNION HIGHLIGHTS—MAY 21-24, 2009

We had 130 classmates in attendance along with a number of spouses and other guests. We were headquartered in Laura Scales in the Quad which has lovely open space and has been renovated—even boasting an elevator! The weather was fantastic, the campus was beautiful and Northampton was bustling with activity.

For many the weekend began with the Alumnae College sessions on Friday. We attended “classes” in Seelye Hall where we learned about “Class, Race and Gender in the New World of Environmental Change”, “Middle East Energy and Finance in the Global Economy” and “Smith’s Carbon Footprint and Yours” to name just a few of the offerings. Fortunately, there were no exams!

❖ Friday Afternoon—Carolyn Coulter Gilbert, our HQ Chair, put on a silver service tea at 3:30, just like the old days—all that was missing was a House Mother! Everyone relaxed and began their catching-up conversations. Our HQ set up was a true highlight of the weekend. A constant flow of delicious snacks and drinks, an elegant décor with beautiful flowers, the grand piano...all made for a space you just wanted to linger in. And just off the Living Room was a surprise—a Class Art Show. Ellyn Paul Weiss, an accomplished artist herself (after 25 years as a lawyer) organized the event in which 11 classmates displayed samples of their artwork. It was really wonderful to see such talent and energy.

❖ Friday Night—Joan Meltzer FitzGibbon, our Meals Chair, organized our cocktails in the Quad Courtyard and dinner in the Scales/King Dining Room. That was followed by a rousing game of 60’s Trivia over coffee and dessert. Mari Wittig Schlager Nareff, our Trivia Mistress, was devilishly diabolical in her choice of trivia questions. By the end of the evening we felt quite stupid but had laughed a lot down memory lane.

❖ Saturday Morning—We looked very bright in our yellow Parade shawls as Betty Mugar Eveillard, our Parade Chair, handed out our Parade signs with their pithy slogans. Betty proved she can herd cats as she got us all lined up correctly for marching. Several classmates wore their old yellow gym suits. They still fit—WOW—way to go ladies! As always the Parade was both fun and moving as we watched the history of Smith march before our eyes. At the AASC meeting on the Burton Lawn, President Carol Christ brought us up to date on the state of the college and we listened to Shaharzad Akbar’s incredible story.

❖ Saturday Noon—We had lunch and our Class meeting in the Campus Center where we elected our new slate of Class Officers. Thanks again to Thea Dodge Cardamone our past President for her hard work over the last 5 years. Following lunch we stayed in the Campus Center for a very lively group discussion on “Breaking Free: Exploring the Transitions Ahead” facilitated by Linda Frank Sicher. We broke into smaller groups to discuss a variety of issues relevant to our lives today like: “Creativity—Inventing the rest of your life”; “Wisdom—What do we know now that we didn’t when we were 30 or 40”; “60 and still working—The issues”, etc. It was a lively, loud session.

❖ Saturday Afternoon—At 3pm Barbara Lauren hosted an authors’ panel discussion in the Scales Living Room. We have numerous writers, authors and publishers in our class. Writing is both a painful and joyful endeavor and many classmates were anxious to hear some war stories and pick up some tips from those who have negotiated these waters successfully.

❖ Saturday Night—On a quieter note, we convened at our Class Memorial Tree (located on the road between the Quad and the President’s house) late in the afternoon to remember and honor our deceased classmates. Margi Nareff had put together a Memorial Board with pictures of each deceased classmate. Some wonderful stories were told and we remembered how dear these women were to us and their families.

❖ Saturday Night—Joan FitzGibbon scored another “10” for planning our cocktail hour in the Cutter/Ziskind Courtyard and then a delicious dinner in the dining room. President Carol Christ joined us for the first part of the dinner hour to thank all of us as Alums who represent and support the college. Over coffee and dessert Susie Jackson Stillman and Sandy Claren humorously reported out the results of our class survey. Did you know that 40% of us still work full time, 20% work part time and 25% are retired. (Check out our Class website to see the entire summary report.)

❖ Saturday Night—After dinner we adjourned to the Campus Center where classmate, Helen Hooke and her band, The Deadly Nightshade, were performing not only for our class but for all the reuniting classes.
Jan Humphrey Dexter wrote, “Reunions can be scary, you know. People get thinner, or fatter. The hair grays, or thins, or looks just gorgeous (only their hairdresser knows for sure…) What I simply love about reunions, though, is that we are all at pretty much the same place in life, and as the years go by, we are more and more compassionate towards each other. It doesn’t matter that buddies from your college days may not be in attendance—there are always people to share a laugh or memory with. I had a great time at our 40th, met wonderful people, laughed a lot, was amazed by all I had forgotten.”

Deanna Gaunce Nebert, a classmate who came all the way from Schleswing, Germany—wrote: “Each time (I attend Reunion) besides connecting with classmates and housemates I already knew at Smith, I always meet new people and discover what other women are doing with their lives. We are a generational cohort: We are the same age, we have experienced the same historical events, occasions, triumphs, failures, together or separately. We have all faced personal problems (marriage/family/job/housekeeping/finances/taxes/death/illness/disability…), so there is a great deal we can learn from each other. Personally, I find it fascinating and humbling to hear from others how such situations can be/have been mastered. Even though not all these solutions are applicable to my special case, I always come away from Reunion reveling in the company of intelligent women. Listening to others leads to the realization that problems often aren’t merely personal, but structural. Many classmates have weathered far worse troubles than I, and I return home extremely grateful to have avoided such pitfalls (at least so far).”

Lisa Henderson Rosenbloom wrote: “I fell into the habit of going to reunions because, at the time of our 10th reunion, I was working for the Mt. Holyoke Alumnae Fund and thought I might as well drive the 15 miles from South Hadley and check out our Smith Reunion for professional purposes. It turned out to be fun. Over the years, I’ve just kept going. It’s always renewing in some different way. Fellow Talbot House classmates have not returned in great numbers over the years, but, there are always interesting women attending whom we didn’t know well when at Smith, but with whom we seem to have a lot in common, in spite of very different lives and career paths. This year, feeling pretty battered by the recession, I almost didn’t go. I’m glad I changed my mind. It was well worthwhile, and provided the added bonus of a gorgeous sunny weekend on the still beautiful campus to help offset the most rainy New York summer on record.”

Harriet Cooke McGuire, who was a first time Reunion attendee and is our new Class Treasurer wrote: “I never lost touch with the mid-Atlantic/DC area’s group of Smith housemates. I looked forward to the 2009 Reunion as a chance to reconnect with more classmates and an opportunity to learn more about the variety of our experiences and interests. I especially appreciated the authors’ panel, art show and class discussion program which offered glimpses of the accomplishments of classmates I had not known well at Smith. I am glad I volunteered to take a turn as a Class Officer so I can continue to interact with class members. I look forward to learning more about the women we have become and where we are going next (since we’re certainly not slowing down, even if retired from our day jobs)”.

Comments from Classmates

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Sue wants you to know...

Our 40th Reunion was chock full of fun and friends. If you’d like to get a bit closer to the experience, here are a few opportunities to check out:

Pictures
Go to our Class Website at http://alumnae.smith.edu/smithcms/1969 and click on Photo Album to view a lot more pictures of the weekend.

Music
Our classmate Helen Hooke and her band of merry musicians played for a packed House on Saturday night. You can check the band’s available CD’s at their website www.thedeadlynighshade.net. You can also see Helen’s bio on her website at www.cdbaby.com.

The Logo
Our fun Reunion logo symbolizing our Reunion theme, “Breaking The Rules: Celebrating 60’s” is available on a variety of items that you can purchase at: http://www.cafepress.com/smith69
There are t-shirts, caps, mugs, pins, magnets, tote bags and lots of other useful stuff. FYI—we have organized this store of goodies for your enjoyment. The Class receives no money for any sale.

Web Mistress Linda Sicher Announces...

NEW!!! “Class Talk”
By the end of Reunion weekend, we were all energized by the discussions, the camaraderie, the revisiting of old friendships and the delight of new friendships. We asked ourselves: How do we keep these connections and this spirit of sharing alive during non-Reunion years? Unfortunately, our website does not have the capability for direct interaction. So, we came up with “Class Talk”. Each quarter we will post a question or topic of current relevance on the “Class Talk” section of our class website. We are inviting you all to send in your thoughts on the topic/question. Please keep your responses to a paragraph or two and send them to Roz Zakheim who will serve as the collecting point (rszesq@aol.com). Roz will edit the responses (only for clarity and space constraints) and then send them on to me for posting on the class site. We think this will be quite interesting and we urge you all to get involved and check the web site often for new questions and responses.

Here’s the first question...

“Most of us have been goal oriented all of our lives. Now at age 60+ many of the goals that have guided our lives for years have either been met or are no longer pertinent. We’re at the pinnacle of our careers or retired, we’ve had children and they are grown and gone, we’ve traveled some, volunteered for causes that are important to us, etc. Yet goal setting can be an important ingredient in maintaining mental and emotional vitality. So what are your goals now for the next 5-10 years? What are you personally working toward in your life now?”

Harriet McGuire our new Class Treasurer sends the following...

CLASS DUES
Three changes in the class dues structure were announced at our 2009 Class Meetings:
(1.) The term of previously paid “Life Member” dues has expired. We hope all class members will contribute to the class treasury at some point during the next 5 year period.
(2.) The charge for Class Dues is now $75.00 for the 5 year period (2009-2014) if paid in a lump sum. For those who prefer to pay in annual increments the dues will be $20 per year.
(3.) Since the Smith College Class of 1969 fund is now a 501(c)(3) non profit organization, receipts will be sent for each member’s contribution for tax deduction purposes.
Send your checks, made out to Smith College Class of 1969 to Harriet McGuire, 3007 Russell Rd., Alexandria, VA 22305. Please include your e-mail address to facilitate transmittal of your receipt.

CLASS TREASURY
We currently have $15,336 in our class treasury. Although we will have some substantial costs over the next 5 years for newsletters and other communications, this is a nice starting balance as we head to our 45th, and especially our 50th, Reunions. We will want to make these milestone Reunions quite special and we will want to broaden our stipend program. So, for now we’re in good shape and we appreciate your continued support of the class.
For the year of our 40th Reunion our Class continued to be a strong financial supporter of Smith with a comprehensive total gift of $1,359,813. This was achieved through a participation rate of 58.6%. While these numbers were a bit lower than our goals, they were most gratifying in these difficult economic times.

Continual alumnae support of Smith is vital at this time. The Smith Fund dollars (unrestricted funds) in FY’09 were down about 18% from all classes together, the Smith endowment is down about 17% and overall giving participation dropped by 3%. These are all signs of the times. However, the need is greater than ever. About 63% of all current Smith students are on some level of financial support from the college and this need is expected to grow. The college is making cuts in many areas to bridge the financial gap but there is only so far that effort can go without jeopardizing the qualities that Smith stands for. So, we all need to continue to do the best we can to help—remember every gift of whatever size is important. If you’d like to make a gift, you can mail it to:

The Smith Fund
33 Elm Street
Northampton, Mass. 01063

Or go to: www.smith.edu/future/giving or call: 800-241-2056 (option 1)

ClassVP/Reunion Chair, Deb Franczek, sends this message -

Want To Contact A Classmate?

Want to contact a classmate directly? For privacy reasons, we cannot post the Class Directory on our class web site. So go to the alumnae on-line directory at: http://alumnae.smith.edu. You will need to set up your account (only need to do this once) with your Smith AV#. Alternatively, if there is a specific individual you would like contact information for, email me (dfranczek@hotmail.com) and I will check the database and get back to you.

Class Co-Secretaries, Roz Zakheim and Barbara Lauren want to remind you...

We need your email address - many college and class communications come to you now only by email. Check your current listing at the college on-line directory (http://alumnae.smith.edu). Need help getting set up or a correction? Contact either Roz (rszesq@aol.com) or Barbara (blauren123@aol.com).

From Barbara Rejniak in The Smith Fund: Supporting Smith College

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FYI, the Office of Advancement will now be known as the Office of Development and a new approach will be implemented with regard to alumnae fund raising, including a pool of alumnae fund raisers who will work across classes rather than with just their specific class. Many details are still being worked out. In the meantime you will receive a broadcast fund appeal letter from President Carol Christ in the fall. and then you may receive a phone call from one of the many Smith student fund raisers.
WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

1.) We need your email address. More and more of our class communications are taking place by email. So, if we don’t have a correct, current email address for you in our database you will miss out. Please check the Smith College directory for your information and update it if necessary by going to: http://alumnae.smith.edu/tools/update_address.php or contact Sue Foley at suzannejae@aol.com. Also, check your spam filter to make sure important Smith or Class communications are not getting dumped there.

2.) Check out our class website, (http://alumnae.smith.edu/smithcms/1969) Check this frequently as our web mistress will be continually updating it. Watch for new topics/questions in “Class Talk” and send your responses into Roz Zakheim.

3.) Pay your class dues. (See page 4 for details.) Remember you can pay your dues anytime during the 5 year term (2009-2014).

4.) Volunteer. If you had a good time at Reunion, or if you’re just a good sport, consider volunteering for a class job. We’d like to identify House Reps early in the next term. This makes it possible to generate more communication among housemates and awareness of the fun in attending Reunions. Contact Debbie Franczek if you are “game” at dfranczek@hotmail.com.

5.) Send us more pictures. If you have a get-together with other Smithies take some pictures and send them into Linda Sicher - she’ll post them on our website - be sure to indicate the names and class years of those in the picture.