

ALUMNAE QUARTERLY

CLASS OF 1969 NOTES

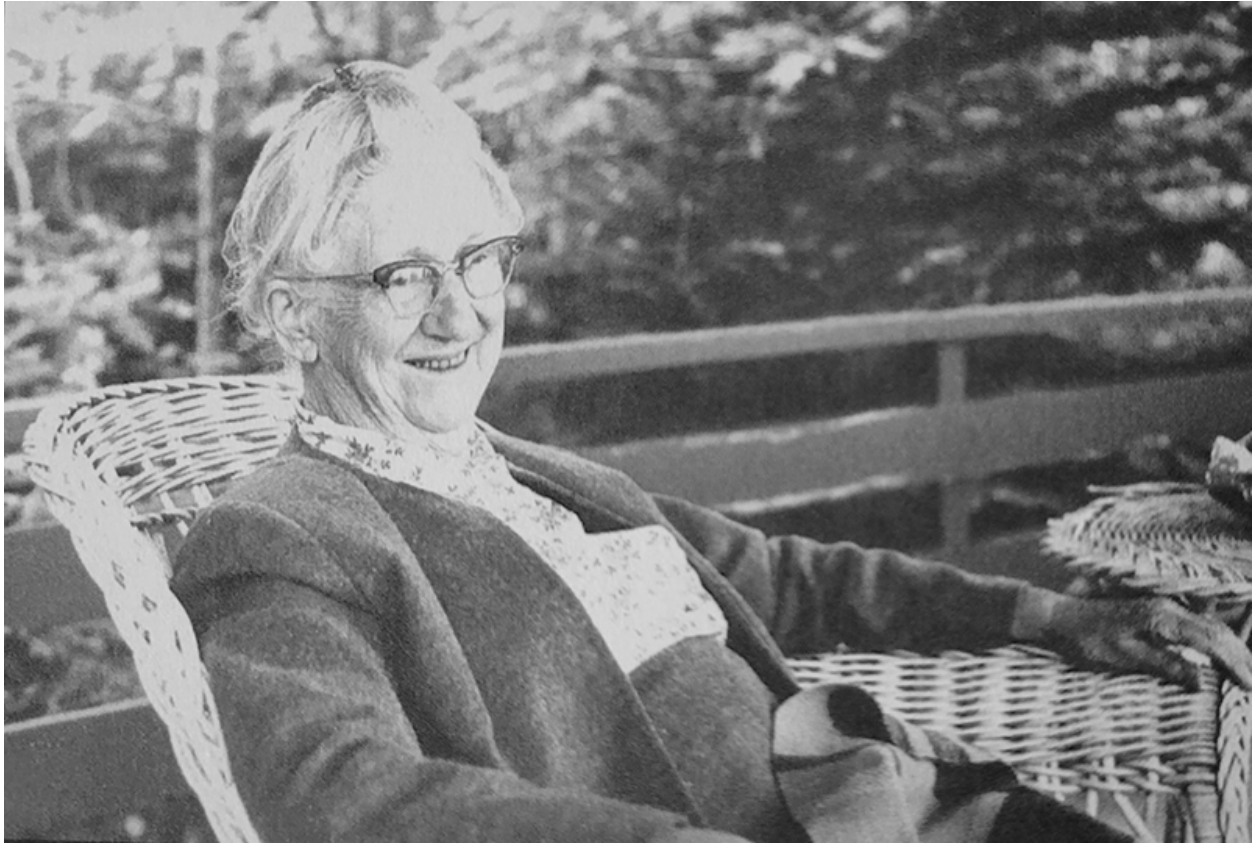
SUMMER, 2025

A century and a half after Smith College began, we're invited to reminisce. Remember linen napkins in dining room cubbies, and house mothers serving tea on weekend afternoons? Remember the King's Men who kept our lawns beautiful, and the Grass Law that allowed us to walk on those lawns as long as we weren't going anywhere?

Mary Ann Ericson says, "One of my fondest memories at Smith is a Sunday afternoon film experience in Wright Hall. The film was 1939's *Wuthering Heights*, starring Sir Lawrence Olivier and Merle Oberon. I can still hear the sobs of countless young women to the cry of 'Heathcliff! Heathcliff!'" Fifty-five years on, she's signed up for a tour of northern England, "Literary Places and Sacred Spaces." The tour is coordinated through Saint Anselm College—where Mary Ann worked for 18 years before retiring in 2014—and the itinerary was enticing to her as a medieval history major, but "the idea of going to the Brontë parsonage" was also a draw. It "just triggers an emotional response in me," she writes.

Remember the rule against saving seats at those Wright Hall movies? Mrs. **Hilda Beulah Edwards Hamlin** (class of 1912) used to enforce it, brandishing a carved ivory cane at scofflaws. Mrs. Hamlin had been sent from England as a girl to be raised by an uncle on the Smith faculty (he couldn't braid hair, but kept her studying hard enough to make Phi Beta Kappa). She was still auditing classes in the 1960s, but summering in Christmas Cove, Maine, where she planted lupine seeds. She once got to talking with a young man in the post office there, and when he commented on the lupines she said oh, there was an old coot in the neighborhood who tossed seeds by the side of the road, wherever she walked, and called herself

Hilda Lupina. He wanted to meet Hilda Lupina, so she gave him convoluted directions to her house and managed to get there ahead of him and open the door. She recounted this to Gale with great satisfaction, and you can see her wry sense of humor in this picture:



Years later, Gale met a Christmas Cove librarian at a conference and was happy to confirm what she'd always suspected: [Mrs. Hamlin](#) was the real-life inspiration for *Miss Rumphius*, a great picture book by **Barbara Cooney** (class of 1938).

Smith changed fast during our undergraduate years. President Mendenhall made cameo appearances in the traditional senior Rally Day shows – his appearance as the gondolier Carlos of Naples was memorable – but his correspondence files include folders titled “Student Unrest.” Up until 1968 the dorms had a grand total of eighteen parietal hours a year, and while your date was in your room you had to keep the door open and three feet on the floor at all times. But that

fall, about fifty of us moved into the first senior house, Mary Ellen Chase, which was so experimental that its dining room wasn't yet ready.

For **Rosa Leader Smith** it was a first experiment in dorm living. She and other “townies” lived at home and were assigned to Hampshire House, “in reality a dimly lit basement room in Albright,” as a base of operations on campus. She escaped “sometimes intrusive parental oversight” when she moved to Chase, but remained studious and shy. On campus she still felt like a bystander of sorts, and in that “time of social and political upheaval,” aside from classes and a few SDS meetings, her extracurricular activities still took place largely outside the college. Link to Rosa's essay on her Chase House experience [here](#).

Carolyn Leigh Patterson writes, “I chose the senior house when I was returning from Junior year in Geneva, Switzerland because I did not want to deal with dinner conversations focused on Wedding Plans. It turned out to be a wonderful decision. I met lots of interesting classmates whom I would not have met otherwise and had a year dominated by my own and others' intellectual pursuits. The place had interesting nooks and crannies, such as the little balcony where **Tina Beebe** kept her pet owl. And it was a lot closer to the main campus than the Quad where I lived before. A win-win.”

That was then, this is now. January 2025 brought Carolyn a new right knee. “Everyone I know it seems has either had this surgery or knows several people who have had it so I am getting lots of sympathy.”

Sandra Perko writes, “I'm still living in Lunenburg, MA, and enjoying retirement with swimming and boating in the summer and skiing and ballroom in the winter. It was great to see classmates and meet new people at the 55th reunion last May. For those of you who knew my first husband, Jim Walker (Yale '69)—I found out that he passed away last month (December,

2024) in north Georgia, where he and his family have lived for many years. He is survived by his second wife, Pat Madsen, who was also Smith '69, and by children and grandchildren.”

And however much we remember, we still look ahead. **Carol Fox Kurt** says, “I am looking forward to our class trip to the south next year. I have been connecting with our classmates more since our last reunion on our monthly zoom calls. I am getting ready to go to southern Patagonia in a few weeks and am still skiing here in Aspen for as long as I can.”

Lynn Slaughter's debut adult mystery, *Missed Cue*, was the NYC Big Book Award winner in the mystery category, and her latest young adult novel, *Missing Mom*, came out in January. She writes, “My husband and I have both had some health challenges this year—makes us more grateful than ever to still be here.

Peggy Elman Gillespie continues to work full-time as the Co-Director of the non-profit Family Diversity Projects—visit them at www.familydiversityprojects.org, and see more on Peggy's 2025 activities [here](#).

And keep sending us your news, ideas, book recommendations, and pictures! We love hearing from you.

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