



# Women of Wonder

**SMITH 1976 • 45<sup>th</sup> REUNION**

## REFLECTIONS ON OUR 45TH REUNION

Reflections of us **Women of Wonder** and of wisdom: Where are we at this moment in time, in 2021 and approaching our 45th Reunion? What wisdom have we acquired and how has it guided us? As our Reunion Co-chairs have asked, how is it that our lives took the twists and turns they have and taken us to places we could never have anticipated? What are we seeing or experiencing in the world around us that we never paid attention to before? Are we ending a long-term career and taking up a new cause or endeavor? What's next in our life journeys? Perhaps describe a project that has piqued your curiosity, a passion that has driven your path, or perhaps a "life lesson learned." And many are wondering, what's next in this interesting journey called "Life"?

So please share your thoughts, reflections, and journeys, as you did for our 25th Reunion book "A Day in the Life." We would like each of you to consider writing a page or two about your own Time of Wonder, Place of Wonder, or Journey of Wonder. It will be an authentic and thought-provoking reflection of our lives at this moment in time!

Mary Ann Denton  
President of the Class of 1976

## **PREFACE**

Our 1976 Smith College yearbook began with Five Sketches of our time at Smith (written by Karen Schwefel, Ann Fuehrer, Gretchen Nelson, Cheryl Kurss, and by someone who wanted to remain Anonymous), followed by an Overview written by Andrea Feld.

We have republished four of the Sketches and Andrea Feld's Overview here, along with the authors' updated Reflections. We follow these with Reflections submitted to us from classmates as we approach our Reunion.

## The Smith Saga: '72-'76

An overview of our time at Smith written by Andrea Feld for our 1976 yearbook.

**1972-1976:** Four turbulent years of protest and revolutionary change on an international, national and local level - changes which stretched from Viet Nam, to the White House, to Northampton, Ma. Our class entered Smith College in September of 1972, in the wake of massive campus demonstrations which occurred all over the country and climaxed at Kent State University, in protest of the Vietnam War and the bombing of Cambodia by the Nixon regime. The previous spring, the Pioneer Valley Peace Center, for students and citizens against the war, had staged three weeks of non-violent blockades on the munitions and fuel entrance of Westover Air Force Base in Chicopee, Ma., the third largest base in the country with the largest concentrated supply of B-52 bombers. The protests resulted in the arrests of numerous Smith students, Mrs. Mendenhall, and President Ward of Amherst College. In the fall of 1972, several re-organizational meetings were held on the Smith campus, urging "perseverance in protesting the war." Although anti-war, civil disobedience rallies were scheduled throughout the fall, they never attracted the support they had in previous years. In March of 1973, coinciding with the cease-fire peace settlement in Viet Nam, a legal olive branch was offered to the 1300 anti-war demonstrators in Chicopee; all charges currently pending in the courts were dropped.

November of 1972 was also the first national election in which 18 year olds were eligible to vote. Smith students registered in Northampton or voted by absentee ballot. A random Sophia poll showed 54% of the campus for McGovern, 31% for Nixon, and 15% undecided. The regional McGovern campaign group recruited student volunteers to do weekend campaigning by bus in northern New York and Connecticut, set up campaign tables at strategic spots on campus, and work at the polls on election day. Despite the Watergate break-in at Democratic National Headquarters the previous June, the election was a landslide victory for Nixon, who received 60% of the national vote. Massachusetts claimed the honor of being the only state to carry McGovern: bumper stickers later proclaimed him "President of Massachusetts."

Also in the fall of 72, the new Smith Fine Arts Building opened, while the Sophia Smith Collection, one of the two major collections in the country of

personal records, papers and research memorabilia of females marked its 30th birthday with numerous speakers, exhibits and events.

Despite the feeling that apathy abounded at Smith, the past four years witnessed a variety of organization activities, protests and petitions. In 72-'73, the first waves of the Lettuce Boycott hit Smith, with the plea that the College not purchase Iceberg lettuce that didn't bear the United Farm Workers' black eagle, supporting the right of Chicano UFW's to unionize and be recognized by the growers. In 73-74, a student vote supported the purchase of only UFW lettuce by Smith's Food Service. Eventually, each house had the option of having substitute greens at all meals when UFW lettuce wasn't available.

In 74-75, the Food / House staffs at the College were reorganized, eliminating 42 positions and creating more student jobs. In November, a student petition asked for dining alternatives for Kosher and vegetarian students. A Kosher Food Service began a two week trial in the spring of '73, with TV dinners at two houses, while Lawrence House served as an evening vegetarian dining hall during January of 1976. In the spring of '76, plans are being formulated for bi-weekly vegetarian dining.

In 1972-73, the Gynecology Clinic of Smith's Health Services began services with weekly contraceptive counseling. In '73-'74, under the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling which made it legal to prescribe contraceptives and perform abortions for unmarried women, the Clinic expanded its facilities and became a separate but integral service. Dr. Money, regular staff physician, became a full-time gynecologist, working with two trained nurses. Insuring strict confidentiality of student records, the doctors considered their clinic "part of the educational aspect of Smith College." A program in peer counseling was also begun, based on the third floor of Davis Student Center.

Under another Massachusetts court ruling, the legal age for drinking in the State dropped to 18 years in March of 1972. To mark the occasion, Davis Student Center opened "Smitty's," a student-faculty bar in Davis Ballroom. In February of 1974, the college was granted a beer and wine license for the first two floors of Davis; a pizza oven was included in remodeling plans.

Also in 1972, President Ward of Amherst College came out in favor of co-education, causing "another ivory tower to fall to reality." Reactions were mixed, with students and Valley colleges fearing the effects on social activities and Five College co-operation. The Amherst Board of Trustees officially gave the okay in November of 1974: transfer students in '75-'76, freshmen women in '76-'77.

In another comment on the unnatural Smith-Amherst social scene, the Amherst newspaper printed a scandalous satire entitled "Sleazing," in November of '73. The following Friday evening, Smithies boycotted the Five College bus and all Amherst activities, bearing protest banners, ("Amherst Can Fuck Itself"), and demanding an apology for the "manner in which the article insulted women."

Spring of 1973 was the season of tenure and promotion controversies. In February, Charles S. Sackrey and Mark A. Aldrich were denied tenure in the Economics Department, based on their 'lack of commitment to teaching,' Sackrey's popular 'classroom persona image,' which 'outweighed his scholarly endeavors,' and Aldrich's 'dependence on him.' The case was brought before the Committee on Tenure and Promotion, subsequently prompting a new student interest on campus in the practice of granting tenure; mass meetings were held and petitions were circulated. In March, Aldrich was granted tenure, while Sackrey was left to submit his early resignation, despite a one year period of grace.

To further aggravate the tenure controversy, Maurianne Adams and Mary Shroeder, two English Department professors, charged the College with sex discrimination in denying them tenure after 9 years of teaching. The hearings, before the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, began in Boston, were moved to Springfield, and continued daily at the Alumnae House at Smith throughout the spring, with the drama of professors and President Mendenhall testifying against Adams and Shroeder. Students continued to meet and sign petitions, actions frowned on by the College and considered "foolish" by President Mendenhall. In April, three students were appointed to the Tenure and Promotion Sub-Committee; in the spring of 1975, the Commission decided the case in favor of the two professors, ordering their re-instatement, with back salaries paid. The College is appealing the decision through the courts, with Mendenhall citing the right of a college to decide issues relating to faculty and employment without outside interference. The case is currently pending.

Several organizations, publications and events emerged or re-emerged during the past four years. The Greccourt Review, Smith's literary magazine was revived in November, 1972, after a year of inactivity. The Outing Club was re-vitalized in 1972-73, while the Oriental Studies Group became active in 1973-74, sponsoring home-cooked luncheons, lectures, and a Five College Asian Fair. In September of 73, students tried to re-establish an FM Smith radio station, which had previously existed from World War II until 1951. In 1975-76 students are still trying to raise funds to set up the station in Davis Student Center. In the fall of 1974, a Pre-Law Society was established due to the increasing popularity of the profession. Also that fall, a Journal of Afro-American Studies emerged, "a unique venture at the undergraduate level," with the purpose of publishing papers and research of Smith College students. In December of 1974, The New Current emerged, a newspaper in magazine format, to report opinions of national scope, in a freer style than straight news writing. Despite financial problems and a slogan, "Published at least once every 100 years," the New Current was chartered and budgeted for 1975-76, and published twice yearly. In May of 1974, the first Faculty Show in five years was performed, the Gilbert and Sullivan musical, "Patience." In March of 1975, the Rally Day Show, a series of skits written and performed by each Smith class was revived, a tradition which had stretched from 1923-1971.

1973-74 was a year of energy and gasoline conservation. A volunteer gas rationing program was established in Ma., and students were urged to leave their cars at home. The College also sponsored contests of energy conservation in the houses, comparing meter readings to previous years. Monthly winners in large and small house categories received a free pizza and beer party.

In 1973-74, Allen Weinstein of the History and American Studies Departments won his two year suit to obtain the release of the FBI files pertaining to Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, under the Freedom of Information Act. He planned to use the files for research on the question of internal security in the Cold War period. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, students were guaranteed access to their personal academic records and references.

Due to the complaints of mothers left out of the excitement of Fathers' Weekend each spring, a Mothers' Week was established in October in full weekly operation, students complained that the philosophy behind the event was basically sexist, since working mothers were not considered.

Finally, in the spring of 1974, the Student Activities Committee changed Fathers' Weekend, a tradition since World War II for sophomores and juniors, into Parents' Weekend.

The first Woman's Weekend at Smith was held in November of '73. As an outgrowth of the workshops, a Women's Resource Center was organized on the third floor of Davis, to co-ordinate the services available to women and establish support groups. A gay campus organization, Sophia-sisters, also was organized, gaining confidence and strength from a weekend workshop

In September of 1973, Billie Jean King won the "Battle of the Sexes," when she defeated male chauvinist Bobby Riggs over national TV, redeeming Margaret Court and Women's tennis. In a spontaneous, joyous response, 600 cheering Smithies marched through the campus bearing banners and singing. Helen Reddy's sound, 'I Am Woman' blared out of the windows in the Quad, while houses hung out signs saying, 'Right on, Billie Jean,' and 'Woman is King;' and Franklin King House became 'Billie Jean King House.' A huge banner proclaiming 'Tennis Today, Tomorrow the World,' was draped across the Greccourt Gates in front of College Hall, while a telegram was sent to the Astrodome, with the message, "We love you, Billie Jean King, signed, Smith College." The demonstration marked the first time in awhile that Smithies had turned out en masse for something they believed in.

In the months after the 1972 Presidential election, students at Smith watched the POW's return home from Viet Nam on television, and followed the continuing array of scandalous and illicit deeds attributed to the Nixon regime. The televised Senate hearings were held the summer of '73. Vice President Agnew resigned the following October, pleading no contest to Federal Income Tax evasion charges in Maryland; Gerald Ford succeeded him as the 40th Vice President. Within months, Attorney General Elliot Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William D Ruckelshaus resigned in protest of the firing of Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox: Cox was replaced by Leon Jaworski. The summer of 1974, the House of Representatives passed the impeachment resolution: President Nixon resigned in August.

Throughout these events, the Smith Political Action group remained active. Shocked and angered by Presidential conduct and the breach of justice, 300 students marched on a Sunday evening through campus with banners



calling for the impeachment of Nixon. By candlelight, students read the Declaration of Independence, congratulating Smithies for being able to rally for 'things more important than a tennis match.' Students were urged to conduct a telegram and letter campaign to their elected representatives, and helped circulate a Five College petition for impeachment.

Traditional standards at Smith were rapidly changing. By September of 1974, the two year gym requirement was dropped, yet gym enrollment remained stable. A March, '74 proposal to place a voting or non-voting student on the Committee of Educational Policy for more effective representation was finally approved by the College faculty, placing three voting student members on the CEP in November of 1974. President Thomas C. Mendenhall announced his resignation, effective in the spring of 1975. Thus, in 1973, a Presidential Search Committee was appointed to select a candidate before Smith's Centennial year: 1974-75; three students representing the classes of 1973, 74, and 75 were elected to the committee.

The character and tone of the campus and downtown Northampton began to change. In September of 1974, Amtrak agreed to again stop in Northampton, a central location in terms of bus service and highway transportation. Due to lagging profits and the popularity of malls, numerous downtown stores, like the 102 year old McCallum's, went out of business. Northampton Junior College, a 77 year old two year private College, did not re-open in 1973-74, due to competition from public colleges and universities.

On campus, the House Fellows Program was established in 1973-74, bringing alumnae from various graduate schools and professions back to individual Smith houses as information sources. In 1974, the Continuing Education Program was re-vitalized, encouraging older women to return to complete their undergraduate degrees. To further encourage this, a Smith Day Care Center was opened in February of 1975, on the lower level of St. John's Church, headed by a full-time co-ordinator, a Board of faculty members and spouses, and paid and volunteer Smith students.

Campus and town security became more of a concern over the past four years, precipitated by the 1973 slaying of a Smith student and the 1975 stabbing of a Smith jogger. In 1975-76, a student-operated van became available for evening transportation to academic buildings and houses.

T.V. soap operas were the rage in 1974-75, with many Smithies scheduling afternoon classes around their favorite shows. The new craze of streaking also hit the campus, taking up where swallowing goldfish left off twenty years ago. The spontaneous nude dash or streak through public places, sporting only tennis shoes and hats, began occurring with increasing frequency in the Five College area. Mass streaks were held at U Mass and Mt. Holyoke; at Smith streakers dashed through Davis Student Center, Neilson Library, and an Art 100 lecture. As a change of pace, a "Pajama Night" was held at Neilson, where everyone was encouraged to come study in nightgowns and robes.

Over the past four years, the College has had a decreasing number of Twelve College applicants, probably due to the change-over to co-education at many male schools. Smith can accommodate 52 males; at its peak, the program included 48 men, which dropped to 38 in 1973-74, and 15 in 1974-75, leaving Sessions Annex as the only co-ed residence. (Wesley House and Park Annex became available for females.) In 1974-75, the College purchased Oak House, a residence for 'overflow freshmen:' plans are now being formulated for an off-campus apartment house for students. In 1974, Dawes House reaffirmed its constitution and commitment to speaking French, a tradition existing since 1905.

In September of 1974, Jill Kerr Conway, Vice President of External Affairs at the University of Toronto, and an historian committed to feminist research, was named by the Presidential Search Committee to succeed Thomas C. Mendenhall. This appointment of Smith's first female President immediately preceded the November, 1974 Connecticut election of Ella Grasso as the country's first female Governor, and the appointment of Carla Hills as Head of HUD. It also came as the College traditionally clapped in its Centennial Year, 1974-75, preceding the Bi-centennial. There were special Centennial courses, internships, events and speakers, such as Betty Friedan, Katherine Graham, Dixie Lee Ray, Elizabeth Hardwick, Maya Angelou, and Niki Giovanni. One hundred years of town and gown relations were celebrated in a parade of local and college officials and students. A Centennial Ball with creative black tie was held in the spring, yet the most popular event of the year was the emergence of the Centennial T-shirts, brightly colored and sporting the slogan, "A Century of Women on Top - Smith Centennial, 1875-1975."

Strange as it may seem, the major issue which dominated 1974-75, Smith's Centennial year, was butter vs. margarine. The campus became

pre-occupied with the World Food Crisis, sponsoring a 24 hour fast in November, and sending petitions to President Mendenhall asking for one meatless day a week. An ad hoc committee explored possibilities for effectively coping with the problems of world's food shortage, while Student Food Policy Committee, including Reverend Richard Unsworth, College Chaplain, Dr. Vera Joseph, College Physician, Paul Garvey, Director of Food Services, the Executive Rep. of Student Government, and two other students tried to eliminate undesirable foods from the Smith menu, such as bacon and butter. When students returned in February, the butter at meals had already been replaced by margarine.

Irate students swiftly protested the new tasteless yellow substitute, berating the Food Service office with phone calls and complaints. The Food Policy Committee visited Smith houses, explaining that "butter was poison in your system," was not nutritionally sound, and required 300% more grain than margarine did. Students complained that they had not been consulted on the issue beforehand; as a compromise, Food Service switched to a tastier brand of margarine. Those truly concerned with the world food crisis stated in frustration that a 'butter pat in Northampton, Ma., meant nothing when children were starving overseas."

As a result of last year's controversy, each Smith House now has a Food Representative who consults periodically with the Head of Food Services. Petitions were also circulated in houses this year to protest the state food tax imposed on Massachusetts institutions by the legislature.

1975-76 has arrived; as the Class of 76 entered its senior year, Smith College entered its second hundred years with a female president, officially marked with an inauguration with seniors in caps and gowns and an inaugural ball. The academic year began with a big innovation: a satisfactory / unsatisfactory option for a fourth, not a fifth course, which had been pending before the CEP since March of 1974. More students than ever before are encouraged to take courses outside their fields of interest, and Smith is also giving credit for courses with a vocational focus, such as Accounting, now offered by the Economics Department. Although a student survey revealed the student body is overwhelmingly in favor of changing the academic competency requirement in all departments from its present format, it remained strongly entrenched for one more year.

A fire occurred in the reference room of Neilson Library this fall, causing thousands of dollars worth of damage: luckily, most of the books can be

replaced. Although Five College library privileges were extended in 1973-74, the high disappearance rate of books has instituted the new student job of library checker at all exits. Plans to expand the library call for demolishing Alumnae Gym, which is being protested by a concerned group of students, faculty members, and townspeople in an effort to have it declared an historical landmark. Renovations and additions to Scott Gym, begun in December of '74, are still in progress.

Four years later, Smith is again preparing for a Presidential election. With the rapid approach of the Massachusetts primary, the major Democratic candidates have made frequent appearances in the area: Jimmy Carter, Birch Bayh, Fred Harris, Sargent Shriver. Later this year, Hubert Humphrey and Ella Grasso will speak on the Smith Campus. Columnist and commentator Shana Alexander will speak at the Commencement of the Class of 1976 in May.

Smith has come a long way in four years: traditions have been altered, expanded, done away with completely. The protests and petitions have reflected the troubled times that we've all gone through in the past four years, while the experiences and innovations reflect the changes we, ourselves, have gone through as individuals.

"Today is not yesterday. - We ourselves change. - How then, can our works and thoughts, if they are always to be the fittest, continue always the same. -- Change, indeed, is painful, yet ever needful; and if memory have its force and worth, so also has hope. --" (Carlyle)

Andrea Feld '76

## **Sketch #1: Karen Schwefel '76**

What happens during four years of college? Here in our community we find a series of dialogues: in our classes, our house and at neighboring schools. The quality of the experience depends on the quality of the dialogues and the roles we play in them. We had the chance to experiment with different voices and various types of language in our settings but did we use the opportunity well? The forms taken by the dialogues shaped our experiences. Part of what we gained was determined by the rules we played, by how much we gave to each dialogue. In the classroom, it was easy to be the passive half of a socratic dialogue: a professor expounded on a subject while some of us nodded tacitly without posing probing questions. A better version of the classroom dialogue came from consistent inquiry and debate: active voices made the scene more stimulating, passive ones sometimes led to slow suffocation. Whether by absorbing without questioning or by grasping through inquisitive participation, we learned the languages of disciplines we chose to explore. We discovered vocabularies for our distinct voices: analytical, descriptive, critical and colloquial.

Our conversations reflected our experience here: occasionally we spoke wearily or with indifference and at times we spoke dynamically. But the most significant fact about our experience is that we had the chance to speak with women, to get to know ourselves through conversations with those most like us. We could muse and play or argue and resolve and enjoy the silence later. We had the precious chance to share and then be alone. Experience together showed us that discourses became more valuable when they demanded a response. And if one approached the truth in dialogue, that seemed most worthwhile, worth thinking about and worth discussing.

After four years of dialogues we have reached a point, a state of mind. We have moved beyond ignorance, but we have not attained wisdom. In Plato's Symposium, a woman named Diotima tells Socrates that some state exists which lies between wisdom and ignorance. She says that there is a state of mind half between wisdom and ignorance. She says that there is "a state of mind half between wisdom and ignorance" which is "having true convictions without being able to give reasons for them." If we have arrived at that state of mind, we have gained something invaluable from our experience at Smith. If we can give reasons for our

convictions, then we are closer to wisdom. If we cannot, the search for those reasons now begins, with the aid of the tools from the dialogues: the words which compose a variety of languages, giving life to the voices within us.

## **What happens in 45 years after graduation from Smith?**

Karen Schwefel Butler 2021 Reflection

My last sketch in our 1976 yearbook was very philosophical, about our experiences at Smith during four years at an all women's college. And so Smith has remained, a rare single-sex institution, still relevant and meaningful. The advantages we gained from being educated here remain extraordinary.

Leadership in almost any field of endeavor is in our DNA, as our college found those qualities in us as teenagers and fostered them throughout our college years. We had the opportunity to be house presidents, news editors, captains of sports teams, heads of many organizations and groups within Smith and at the top of our classes. This was in part because we weren't holding back for some fellow to take the spot, so that we would be "datable". As Matina Horner— a friend who combined Radcliffe with Harvard and was recruited from her Psychology PHD post at U. Michigan to solve the riddle of how can women succeed more— had written: women don't reach higher for success because they fear failure. Actually, Matina's research found that women hold back in the classroom and elsewhere because they fear success will render them less attractive to men they want to date and perhaps marry. Imagine that, fear of success ! This was the central idea behind Matina's doctoral thesis and what got her hired at age 31 to lead Radcliffe as President and Harvard into coeducation—to teach women how to embrace success, take chances, speak up, stand up and lead. Do you recall as I do, Smith President Jill Ker Conway telling us at Convocation one year in the 1970's that if we delayed having children, we would be more likely to succeed in our careers, because we'd have a greater chance to establish ourselves?

These ideas seemed a bit radical at that time and are now mainstream, because we have more than 50 years of feminism (thanks to Smith Graduates Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan) behind us to achieve great things and if we wanted to, to lead. Whether as a mother raising children, a pillar of our communities, an educator, researcher, business executive or owner, lawyer, judge, doctor, architect, engineer, diplomat, CIA agent, public official, writer, artist, museum director, chef (a nod to Smith's Julia Child) restaurateur, inventor, priest, politician, philanthropist or person passionate about her life's work in any field: we women of Smith had the chance to pursue the dream of the lives we cherish today. Because of our

education, the tools and the opportunities we found at Smith and during the course of our lives, we have lived to share these experiences then and now. These exceptional experiences which we shared with each other, our families and the friends who support and sustain us, as we love, support and sustain them. We were inspired then, are inspiring now and we pass these qualities on to the next generation.

As a former Public Official who worked on the \$ 2 billion Redevelopment of Times Square, a former banker in New York who closed \$2 billion in commercial construction loans, a developer of an ex-military base as an award-winning \$1 billion new community near Chicago and a redeveloper of regional shopping malls across the U.S. I can say : I had the courage to undertake these challenges because of the foundation of a Smith education and the experience of an all women's college. Those conversations we had as women at Smith, and the ones we've had over almost a half century since, helped us raise our children and grandchildren, build and improve our workplaces and communities and do anything worthwhile, that we wanted to do. Even as we step into our golden years, we continue to be the pillars wherever we are, Wonderful

Women of Smith! The world  would not be the same without you.

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Karen Schwefel Butler 1976, is a widow who was married 30 years, raised a stepson and has 7 nieces and nephews and 5 grand nieces and nephews. She has worked in 31 U.S States plus Canada and the United Kingdom. Karen was also President of Washburn House at Smith from 1975-1976.



## **Sketch #2: Ann Fuehrer '76**

Going to Smith for four years can be a very isolating experience. One can quickly become segregated from the "real world" out there. Being encouraged to achieve and reminded constantly that we are among a privileged and pampered few, it is easy to lose sight of the struggles of brothers and sisters who are not as fortunate as ourselves. I had done volunteer work with different groups of people for about four years before I came to Smith. Once here, however, I found it easy to hide myself in the library or in my room, venturing out only for classes, meals and Friday nights at Amherst.

Becoming involved with SOS my junior year was probably the best move I could have made to get myself back into life outside of Smith. I became a community visitor at the Hampshire County House of Corrections, spending about two hours a week there talking with an inmate on a one-to-one basis. I also worked with guys in the jail's halfway house and became somewhat familiar with the workings of the courts, the welfare department and employment agencies. This year I have continued visiting and tutoring at the jail while, in addition, supervising volunteers working with the Model Probation Project in Springfield. I have made many friends and have discovered several ways in which I could plan a career to further the cause of victims of our criminal justice system. No amount of book learning could have taught me the things I have learned in the past fifteen months of volunteer work.

We hear about Patty Hearst and Joann Little but it was really only this past year that it came close to home, here on campus, that anyone and everyone is a potential victim of a violent crime. And even if we are never personally injured by an assailant, we are all victims of corrupt government, greedy business enterprises, vandals, or air polluters.

We cannot stay hidden away on the campus forever; the world is closing in. We must go out and give of ourselves to try and do something about the mess in America today. Twenty thousand dollars worth of education will do no good at all if we cannot make our mark on the world, if we cannot help reduce victimization.

My four years at Smith have provided a tremendous learning and growing experience. If they have prepared me for a lifetime of learning and growing, then I am well on the way to sharing with others my good fortune.

## 45 years later:

My heart is full with love for the me I was then. My nascent intersectional feminism, identifying the corruption of principles of equality, justice and human rights by the entitlement of gender, race and class privilege. I was just learning the analytic frameworks of sociology and psychology, the power associated with social constructions and alternate realities, and the meaning of cultural trauma and institutional betrayal identified by my colleagues in feminist psychology.

There has always been a “mess in America.” When she was about 6 years old, my daughter asked me how she could be famous. She was socialized in a society giving accolades for individual achievement, valuing material success, emphasizing women’s physical appearance, and exploiting social influencing. I emphasized talent and accomplishment.

At age 21, I wanted to make my mark. Attending Smith was a powerful experience for me—I could speak and demonstrate I was a smart girl without being teased for it by male peers. I was well-prepared academically for the doctoral program in Social and Organizational Psychology at the University of Illinois in Chicago. I began the life-long process of creating a woman-centered life. And I cherished the legacy of so many accomplished Smithies before me. In large part because of my skin color, physical ability, education, religion, cisgender and socioeconomic privilege, there were words I wasn’t using then—oppression, systemic racism, transphobia. But I benefited from a “class” I took during Smith’s first interterm in 1975—we read deBeauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Gornick’s *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, and Morgan’s *Sisterhood is Powerful*. I was finding language with which to describe and understand experiences in my daily life that helped me unpack the big picture.

For 38 years, I mentored students studying Psychology and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies at a Public Ivy university. In my personal life, I experienced oppression I could clearly identify—my wife and I celebrated our silver anniversary by getting married in 2015 because we finally could in the State of Ohio.

Now, at 66, I am focused on living a life of integrity and accountability, this in a time of political leaders whose pathologies triggered by adverse

childhood experiences, and supported by self-serving inhabitants of all of our major societal institutions, exploit others through weaponized lies to increase radicalized violence, and to try to destroy those imperfect institutions. On January 10, 2021, I provided the message for the Sunday morning service of my faith community, Hopedale Unitarian Universalist Community in Oxford, Ohio. Entitled “Dignity and justice at a food pantry?”, my message focused on my current career as Executive Director of the Talawanda Oxford Pantry and Social Services, and the challenges I face in promoting the worth and dignity of all people, and equity, compassion and justice at an emergency food assistance program, especially in a time of pandemic. No longer am I volunteering, I am getting paid to serve in a way similar to my work with SOS during my junior year at Smith in 1974-75. I am still giving of myself to try to do something about the mess in the United States of America.

Last fall, I got another look back at the 21-year old me. A Smithie classmate, Betsy Bicknell, sent me about two dozen letters I had written to her during and shortly after our four years together in Tyler House. She had saved the letters all these years, and a friend had advised her to send them back to me, so that I could reconnect with my earlier self. Those letters were a gift I couldn't have anticipated, and will never forget or let go of. Again, I smiled, sometimes chagrined, as I read what I had written about specific people and events, long ago forgotten. But I could connect with that me, my focus on finding relationships with men, my uncertainty about where my professional interests were headed, and my deep appreciation for what a good friend Betsy was. Forty-five years later, I have found fulfillment in all parts of that life as I was pursuing it: a loving partner of 30 years and an amazing 24-year old daughter; having mentored thousands of undergraduate and graduate students over my 38 years at Miami University; and a handful of close friends, some of whom I've known since Smith, and even since high school. Yes, I had not anticipated the cancers that have taken parts of my body or left Mohs surgery scars that have reshaped my face. The deaths of friends and family members and nonhuman animal companions, too, have left their marks. But I am proud beyond expression of being a Smithie, and of the energy I conveyed in that sketch from the 1976 Smith College yearbook. Looking back every once in awhile refocuses me away from the COVID virus that I haven't yet experienced, and from the images of the January 6, 2021 insurrection at our Capitol Building. To “the good old days”, and to continuing to share with others my good fortune.

### **Sketch #3: Gretchen Nelson '76**

As the ship pulled into Southampton, I remember lying in my bed with a tight knot of excitement and nervousness cramping my stomach. Back in the comfort of Smith, it had seemed so easy and glamorous to go study in England for a year, now in the cold (and it certainly was that) reality of Southampton most of the glamour was gone, and all of the ease. In those last few minutes before rising and dressing, how I longed to be in France or Geneva on one of the college programs, or in America on a Twelve-College exchange; for a few minutes I even toyed with a desire to be at Amherst but only for a very few minutes. In an attempt to rationalize my fears I thought back over all the old-husbands tales, pithy maxims purporting parental wisdom, but all that came to mind was: "If wishes were horses, all women would ride," and the only ride I was to take was on an iron horse to Waterloo. Somehow or other I was able to disengage myself from bed and off I headed, laden with three of the heaviest suitcases ever set down on British soil, a letter of acceptance from The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and one-thousand prayers that I would end up Wellington and not Bonaparte.

As I reflect back now on the year that I spent in England, although measured in time equal to any of my nineteen previous years, it seems to have flown by in half the time; somehow all those hours spent at the Festival Hall listening to countless performances by such artists as Rubenstein, Richter, and Serkin, as well as trips to Paris and Scotland, seem to blend into one huge dream, and I begin to wonder whether I ever really did go to London. Even at the time, no matter how much pleasure was incorporated in each minute listening to Monserrate Caballe sing Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, or gazing at Venus de Milo in the Louvre, I could not escape from a continual feeling of unreality.

It is only now, six months later, that I realize the importance of going away for a year. Everything I did in my Junior year, taking a leave of absence from Smith, depositing myself in London with no real idea of what I was doing, and subsequently surviving, staying on for an entire year with no October, Thanksgiving or Christmas Break in the shelter and solitude of home, learning music from music --- listening to live performances by the greatest artists of the century--- not studying it in some book, all of that was a dream and one which is unrepeatable. Only when you are a student do you have the opportunity and courage to accomplish the seemingly

impossible; only then do you have the time and energy, but more importantly, the desire to learn, not just from academia but from life and live experiences. We as children of the twentieth century, a century marked by progress and its metaphor "speed," are given four years in which to sit back, study and hypothesize on the movement of our age in the hope that by doing so, we can bring to civilization the best we can offer---whatever you do, don't waste a single moment of those

## **Has It Really Been 45 Years?**

Gretchen Nelson

Seems like it was just yesterday when we were young, footloose, fancy free. But, I know it wasn't just yesterday because I had no memory of writing that little essay for the yearbook back in 1976. When Louise McPhillips asked me to do an update on my essay, I had to delve down into the deep recesses of my brain to pull forth the fact that I even did it. And, then I had to delve down into the deep recesses of my library to find the yearbook and read what I wrote. So it really has been 45 years.

Reading that essay brought back so many wonderful memories of the days and years spent with all of you. And meandering through the photographs was such a delight. Back then I thought we all looked so grown-up, but looking back now we look so young. No doubt that is because we were. And, now we just look a little older.

45 years is more than 2.5 times longer than we had lived on this earth when we started at Smith. I'm not sure if we are 2.5 times smarter than we were back then but I'll accept that it might be true. We have worked hard, played hard, birthed and raised children, nurtured our families, took care of parents as they aged, and struggled through losses. We have moved locations, bought and sold homes, traveled the world for work and pleasure and just enjoyed simple moments at home. Some of us have retired and are giving back to our communities or are just enjoying life. Others, like me, continue to work content knowing that retirement is not in our DNA. We have lived our lives as we were taught at Smith – to be strong and capable women never willing to give up. For that, I will be forever grateful.

#### **Sketch #4: Cheryl Kurss '76**

"Junior Year in Paris" -- a strange temptation. It could perhaps be an extended European holiday with just enough educational backing for a Smith academic year, "perfect for one seeking that extra 'touch of class' to complete her finishing school career." Or, it could provide "sound academic backing - a strong program integrated with the French educational system, offering courses in all disciplines." It was the great debate of my sophomore year to go or not to go. The final vote was affirmative: I was to go to Paris.

Now, presently back and reintegrated into Smith life in Northampton, I can evaluate and review my year in its proper perspective. The entire year was of education value: as at Smith where education can be academia pura (class rooms and lectures) as well as outside experiences and influences, so a year in Paris can be "education" in a broad sense of the word. Simply living in a large city, and a European one at that, which offers a new culture, different language, new tastes and a different civilization, opens doors to experiences beyond the realm of Northampton, Massachusetts/ Moreover, Paris is unique.

A change in the educational system, different methods of teaching and learning was a complete revelation for me. Rather puzzling at first and definitely less convenient, considering travel time, library facilities and contact amongst peers and professors, the novelty of it all made me all the more determined to persist. Classes were more traditional for the most part and individual preparation and study were emphasized. I found classes at certain French institutions to be taught on an extremely high level, extremely challenging and, therefore, definitely worthwhile.

As to living in France, what could be bad? After a six week adjustment period in the south of France, all very pleasant, I anticipated no problem. But Paris, when I arrived, was not all that gay. The mail and phone company went "indefinitely on strike," "course shopping" was overwhelming, the Smith College director was in the hospital with pneumonia, my luggage did not arrive until almost Christmas, inflation was soaring and so on but, after all, how to deal with petty problems (all this in retrospect, of course) and survive in the world were part of the Junior Year Program. Sometimes it was an effort to overcome the loneliness and fatigue, but I knew that was the easy way out; to give up and return safely

to Smith in Northampton meant temporary comfort and a missed opportunity. I had my doubts at times and even questioned my original intentions, yet Paris, at other moments couldn't have been better...

Theater, opera, ballet or perhaps just mingling in the cafe amongst the hundreds of students, tourists and natives. Parks, museums, a walk on the quai, maybe an excursion to a different historic site, or simply a tour through the ancient sewers. Often I would just walk up the large boulevards, collecting bits of conversations, impressions, feelings, but not understanding then what Paris and this year meant for me. As Ernest Hemingway once said of Paris, "There is never an ending to Paris and the memory of each person who has lived in it differs from that of any other ... Paris was always worth it and you received return for whatever you brought to it." I brought with me anticipation for a valuable year abroad and I received return on that with interest. My evaluation is evidently based on personal experience and contacts, and that of fellow participants might differ accordingly. However, for many on this program, the year abroad was definitely a positive venture. Obviously I will never return to Paris in the same capacity, nor will Paris ever be the same for me, but Paris last springtime ... o, que c'etait beau!



## **Women of Wonder: Reflections for my 45th Smith College Reunion: The Twists and Turns in Life and What is Next in Life**

Cheryl Kurss

When I first heard about the planning for our 45th reunion, I got very excited and started pouring thru my old scrapbooks (and there were many – from my first acceptance letter, to my Junior Year Abroad tome, to the many reunion albums). I may be a Smith groupie when it comes to reunions because I love coming back every 5 years and meeting old friends, meeting new and interesting women from all classes and hanging out at my favorite spots on campus. I also began to reflect on writing this entry about my journey over the past 45 years from my career choices to my personal life choices. I always consider myself so lucky to have had the choices to make, and the good fortune to have things turn out for the most part. After I graduated from Smith, I lived in NYC, then graduated from law school, married and had 3 beautiful children, and now have two young grandchildren, lots of friends, vacations, dogs, time for community and charitable giving back. Overall, a life of wonder, with the usual ups and downs and moments of great joy and times of great disappointment. So I had wanted to write about what is next in life and what lessons I learned. And then the twist and turn that changed it all and the focus of this essay.

Just a few short weeks ago, my eldest daughter died, the ultimate nightmare for any parent. Over these recent days I have found great comfort in hearing from her friends and mine, my family, our greater community and amazing support system that organized themselves around my family. I learned that grieving is a lonely and solitary endeavor where I wanted to be alone with my memories and thoughts, yet I could not survive without a community and family. I learned that there is a whole world of grieving families and we don't really know the right words to say to someone in this great pain. I learned that while time will heal some things, time is not linear with grief and there is no going back to a normal life. I learned that I can find joy and meaning in my life but the deep wound that I have will be a scar that I have for life.

I am learning about grief from other parents who share this story. And I understand that if I wanted to avoid this great pain, I could have loved less and cared less about my daughter. But for me, I am glad to have loved so

deeply and wear my loss so deeply as I am finding a new landscape for my world.

What is the lesson? Twists and turns in life take us to unexpected places, physically, mentally and emotionally. We need to be ready for the journey, take time to love and enjoy the gifts we have. At this stage in our lives, we have all experienced the death of a loved one, even a death among our Smith classmates. Take the time to remember them as we keep them alive with our memories. I believe that our community of strong and smart Smith women can journey together for many more years. I would be happy to share what I have learned and am learning about grief and loss and community. My new motto is to have grace in my life and be gentle both to myself and to others. For anyone who asks me now if I am OK, I can honestly reply that I am NOT OK, but I am OK not being OK. It's about accepting ourselves with our life and understanding that we all have twists and turns: isn't that a wonder?

## **Time Of Wonder**

Dr. Robin Steinberg-Gendelman '76

It seems like yesterday that I wrote my "Day In The Life" essay for our former reunion project over 20 years ago. It begins with my alarm clock blaring in the morning, beckoning me to awaken my 4 children to get ready for school.

Flash forward: One of those children, my daughter Ashira, is currently an orthodontist, and mother of twins. She presented us with the beautiful gift of adorable twin grandchildren, a boy and a girl, two and a half years ago....at 28 weeks of gestation, and weighing just 2.8, and 2.4 lbs respectively.

Our lives were simultaneously uplifted and upended. A festive Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) meal at our home with friends and family was soon followed by early mild labor pains thought to be Braxton-Hicks, then a terrifying ride to the hospital during which my daughter began delivering the babies in the Uber necessitating an ambulance with police escort to the hospital, and finally an emergency C-section and delivery of 2 special blessings who were then whisked to the NICU.

Our days became a whirlwind of excitement tinged with fear. We rode a roller coaster of emotions from the depth of despair at the doctors' litany of possible worst-case scenarios to the heights of exhilaration at the nurses' positive comments and progress notes citing the encouraging growth and development markers, and good vital signs. We held our breath each day hoping for good news, and jumped for joy at each ounce of weight gain by the babies.

Throughout the ordeal, our unsung heroes were the nurses who spent countless hours tending to the babies' every need during each shift even making sure that the twins heard me singing in a pre-recorded tape of songs which I had prepared for them (placing a sign near their incubators which read "Please remember to play my grandma's bedtime songs for me before I go to sleep."), the professional volunteer cuddlers (yes, they have such a thing!) who hugged the babies till parents and grandparents arrived each day, and the musicians who played various instruments to enrich the babies' hearing and brain development.

Our hearts melted when an adorable child who had been a NICU patient herself several years earlier, brought weekly knitted caps and blankets her mother had made for the current NICU infants.

My daughter spent her post-partum days pumping breast milk bottles, and running to the hospital to visit the babies and deliver the milk while concurrently finishing an orthodontic residency at Harvard Dental School, an overwhelming task with one premature baby let alone two! Her husband dutifully labeled all the bottles with dates, and sent daily text reminders about times to pump. Before long, my daughter's freezer, and our giant deep freezer were full to the brim with milk bottles for the babies. After 3 months, and on their actual due date, the babies were finally discharged, and we soon celebrated a bris (ritual circumcision), and a simchat bat (welcome party for a new baby girl). There was boundless joy at both events where we were joined by the NICU nurses who had by now become like family. Fortunately, due in good part to their efforts, and the help of G-d, our ordeal had a happy outcome.

The twins, now two and a half years old, are thriving, running about, jumping, dancing, singing, and talking up a storm (much of which we can actually understand). They love Facetiming, and visiting with their cousins (my other 5 grandchildren), their aunts and uncles (whose names they remember), and of course with their grandma ("Mimi") and grandpa ("Grumpy").

I am now keenly attuned to the small wonders, and magical moments in a child's daily life that can at first seem invisible: the gleam in a child's eyes at first mastering a new task, the unmitigated joy at dancing to a favorite song, the dimpled devilish grin at committing a mischievous act, the furrowed brow of curiosity and wide-eyed wonder at discovering something new, the hearty belly laugh during a game of peekaboo or peas porridge hot. I will never again neglect to notice these symbols of what I now call the "miraculous in the mundane".

The experience has also emphasized for me the supreme importance of our quiet, unsung heroes working behind the scenes: dedicated nurses, hospital volunteers, loving parents, and extended family. These are the backbone of our society, the pillars that keep a community afloat. Prestige, money, material acquisitions are immaterial in the great scheme of life.

Similarly, with the Covid experience, it was those who toiled behind the scenes, and often risked their own lives: frontline health care workers, supermarket clerks, delivery personnel, volunteers at food banks, and parents supervising their kids' Zoom classes who provided the engine that kept the world running. These people are often taken for granted when life runs smoothly, and not appreciated until a time of emergency. We need to always remember their priceless services by proper remuneration and tangible benefits such as paid family leave, and subsidized child care, items beyond mere pot banging at 6:00 PM in appreciation.

In a society in which we are often absorbed with the flashy, and the showy: Instagram influencers, the Twitter sound bite, the You Tube celebrities, the Facetime following, let us remember what truly keeps the world functioning. It's the quiet daily efforts, and dedication of our unsung heroes.

Covid laid bare the truth. It didn't bypass the rich and powerful. It demonstrated that we are all interdependent, and that our continued survival depends on all of us working together to help each other, and recognizing the important link we each represent in the chain of humanity.

## Reflections at 67 by Charity Imbrie

Background: Grew up in Bowling Green, Ohio. Majored in music at Smith, but realized early in my junior year that I might one day have to support myself, so broadened my studies. Moved to Pittsburgh in 1977 to work for relatives who volunteered to pay for law school if I would work for their business. Graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 1980. Working for the relatives did not pan out – the steel business was not a good place for women in 1980 and in fact, the company’s Canadian customers made it almost impossible for women to work in that industry as they did not allow women in the mills. Worked for a large law firm for 3 ½ years, then as in-house counsel for Pittsburgh’s largest grocery chain (Giant Eagle) for 10 years, and finally, 22 years in private practice - first with two friends and eventually on my own. While in law school, I finally admitted to myself that I was a lesbian, and began a long-term relationship with a woman. We decided to have a child together, and Emma was born to my partner in 1984. In 1996, when it became legally permissible, I adopted Emma without her birth mother having to give up her parental rights. The relationship with the partner did not last, but our co-parenting relationship continues to this day. My current partnership with Jane has endured for 30 years. (As evidence of what a small world it is, Jane went to Sweet Briar College and was classmates with “Patty” Skarda, who became a Smith English professor).

Most Difficult Challenge (other than my sister’s death): By 1992, I was a Senior V.P. and General Counsel of Giant Eagle, as well as General Counsel of its subsidiary, Phar-Mor. The chain expanded very rapidly from a handful of stores in 1984 to 300+ stores in 38 states in 1992. In July of 1992, the entire senior accounting staff of Phar-Mor (CFO, V.P. of Finance, Director of Accounting) failed to show up for work. Forensic accountants were hired. The accounting and finance staff of Phar-Mor had kept 2 sets of books – “cooking the books”, mostly by inflating inventory levels to make it appear that the company was making money when it was actually losing boatloads. All that expansion based on bad data! Lawsuits from investors, including a big Wall Street player, ensued. Phar-Mor senior

officers were sentenced to lengthy jail terms. I was deposed over 3 days by a host of the country's finest litigators, including lead attorney, Herb Wachtel. It was quite a different view of the law for me.

Lessons Learned:

1. A lawyer representing a corporation represents the corporation, not the officers, individually. In the real world, however, a lawyer cannot represent a company when the senior officer and the lawyer no longer have faith in each other.
2. Sometimes your advice should not be put in writing, but sometimes the writing will protect you.
3. When you are involved in a corporate scandal, you come to understand that some co-workers will want to distance themselves because you remind them of the scandal.
4. There are second acts in American lives. After I left Giant Eagle, I rebuilt my career and reputation and maintained a successful law practice for 22 years. I could establish my own level of work and could make more time for Emma.

Most Rewarding Challenge: I assumed that I would never have children, given my sexual orientation and career plans. But life had some surprises in store for me: my first long-term partner and I had a daughter in 1984. In 1984 it was not common for two lesbians to have a child together (at least not in Pittsburgh). In 1991, Jane came to Emma's and my relationship with two daughters (aged 14 and 18 at the time). So surprisingly, I had a daughter and two step-daughters.

Some of the challenges in rearing Emma stemmed from our (both Emma's and my) reactions to societal norms. I did not feel comfortable being "out" at my job, and Emma sometimes did not know how to explain her family in a way that was comfortable for her. Oddly, it did not occur to me that Emma would be subjected to so many questions. Some of the challenges in rearing Emma stemmed from the types of issues all blended families may have, with the extra complication of being a gay family. Many working mothers face a dilemma when they have to stay home with a sick child or leave to pick up a child. It was an added pressure to be a gay working mother. I recognized that I was phenomenally fortunate, however,

being a senior executive who had no one monitoring my comings and goings.

The challenges paled in comparison to the rewards, of course. I would never trade my time with Emma and watching her grow into a resourceful, fun, strong and interesting woman, for anything. Since high school, when Emma went to see the Carnegie International at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, she has had a passion for art. After Haverford College, she got a Ph.D. in Art History from Northwestern University, and now works as the Charlotte Feng Ford '83 Curator of Contemporary Art at the Smith College Museum of Art. What serendipity and a bit surreal. If you are visiting the SCMA, feel free to stop and meet Emma (full name: Emma Imbrie Chubb). She is used to “women of a certain age” introducing themselves to her, often with an explanation of how they know one of her mothers.

#### Lessons Learned:

1. In Pennsylvania (at least in 1984), the mother can list anyone she wants on the child's birth certificate as the father. Emma's birth certificate lists “C. Imbrie” as the father.
2. In the 1990's many states changed their laws regarding two parent adoptions which was a boon to gay couples with children.
3. The best thing a parent can do is teach her children to be independent.



## Reflection for 45<sup>th</sup> Reunion

Jennifer Lenox Craig

On March 13, 2020, the Concord Museum (where I work as the Director of Advancement) closed its doors and the world began shutting down in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. As I write this, in April, 2021, it has been just over a year, one like none other we have ever experienced. Now that I am fully vaccinated and the people in my life are on their way to being vaccinated if not already done, it feels like the world is opening up again and yet another (though happier) transition is upon us. So, when thinking about writing a “reflection” on the occasion of our 45<sup>th</sup> Reunion, it seemed to me that reflecting on what I learned during this past strange year might be a good topic. So here goes...

First, despite missing my friends—a lot—I learned that I really enjoyed being home and even felt a sense of relief that I didn’t need to “gear up” to drive somewhere, park, and make good conversation for a few hours. A full calendar and a To Do list with a million items scratched off has always a measure of my personal satisfaction and feelings of success. And I have long been plagued by intense “FOMO” (Fear of missing out). But, interestingly, when the calendar collapsed and there was literally nothing going on to miss out on, instead of feeling lost and bereft, I found myself feeling calm, relaxed, de-pressurized, and content.

A second observation was less surprising to me and that is that being in nature is absolutely essential for my mental health. Like most people, I spent more time outdoors during this past year and had the privilege to be able to work from my lake home in Maine for the better part of most weeks. I have always been attuned to the natural world but in the past year my “noticing” skills exploded and every change in the season brought new discovery and joy.

Another “gift” of the past year has been a shift in people’s attitudes at work and other places to a more forgiving frame of mind. As a development department, we had made plans for a spring Gala, Garden Tour, exhibition opening, and a million other fund-raising events that all had to be cancelled or “re-imagined”. The word in the trade was to “pivot”, a euphemism for going back and starting over. Yet immediately, helpful ideas began pouring in from this and that trade organization and, as a department, we just started making things up—producing a

virtual Garden Tour, doing a Giving Day-type fundraiser instead of the Gala, etc. Expectations were lowered and, in that space, great creativity was allowed to bloom. My young colleagues felt a great sense of pride in what they had been able to pull out of nowhere and morale in the department was high despite the struggles of the pandemic.

I am sure there are more observations I could make on our recent experience, but I'd rather think for just a moment about what's next. How can I hold on to the revelations I had during the pandemic and keep the good parts going? The easy parts will be: no, I am not going back to pants with zippers; yes, I am going to continue to zoom for work and play; yes, I am fine with not always hugging people; yes, I will continue to get my Martha Stewart food boxes every week and cook a lot. But holding onto the feelings of calm and contentment, continuing to be a forgiving and encouraging boss, keeping things from getting frenetic, taking time to notice the world around me more---I am going to need to work hard to hold on to those. I know if I can manage it, it will be well worth it.

**Reflection by Martha Calihan, MD**  
Author of “A Death Lived”

Are you ready to die?

Because the truth is, death is the only certainty in each of our lives; the one absolute fact for each of us from the moment we are born.

So why then, is death such an unwelcome topic of conversation?

In our culture, the last 100 years have seen both the medicalization and the sanitization of death to the degree that many of us have not ever experienced death first hand, haven't seen a dead body, haven't been with someone as they transitioned from this life.

And in our ignorance our fear is born.

Our deaths often do not occur at home, and thus are no longer seen and experienced as a natural part of life. People who are dying are more often in institutions such as hospitals, rehab or long term care facilities, where the day to day care of the one dying is in the hands of the staff, not a family member.

The statistics tell us that most of us, if given the choice, would prefer to die at home, despite that, experience says that the majority of us don't.

Can we change that? Can we make choices about our death and dying process?

The answer is categorically yes. Most of us will not have a sudden death; we will instead have a slower unwinding of our life; often dealing with a chronic illness or condition for which there is no cure. And in this situation, we have choices. We have decisions we can make to direct those caring for us. We can choose more or less intervention, where we want to be when the time comes, what care and comfort measures are important to us. We can make decisions about whether and when we might want to move into palliative care or hospice care.

When my husband, Charles died, it was after a prolonged illness and multiple hospitalizations. There were further options and treatments being offered, but the end result was not likely to change. There was no cure available.

We had the opportunity to have many, many conversations about his situation and about the fact that this was heading towards his death. And we took that opportunity to talk...over and over, and in out talking, he arrived at his decision about his end of life care. I, and we, as a family, understood his values and his choices. And we were able to support and honor his decisions when the time came without the added burden of wondering what he would have wanted when he could no longer speak for himself.

His clarity and honesty were his final gift to us.

As we make decisions about end of life care, we need to communicate our decisions to those who need to know. We can't assume that our family, friends or named health care proxy will make the choices and decisions we would want if we haven't talked with them; if we haven't had the sometimes hard and painful discussions.

It's not easy to have these conversations. We have to be willing to admit that we will in fact, die, and we have to be willing to understand options and what different interventions might be available. We have to know and understand our personal values, our individual fears and desires.

We can't have a lot of judgment about someone's choices and decisions: there is no absolute right or wrong. What matters is that each of us be able to determine what we would want done when we are dying. Yes, we can always change our mind, but what is important is having the conversation(s) and having someone who understands and can honor our choices if the time comes that we can no longer speak for ourself.

We have an opportunity to have our death reflect the essence of who we have been as people, to be in alignment with our values and ideals. To take advantage of this opportunity we need to have made decisions about what is important to us; to communicate these decisions to those who will be caring for us; to family and friends, to our health care proxy. And to do this we have to have had the difficult conversations.

Do it now, before its too late. Trust me, you will be glad you did.

## **A Place of Wonder: Nursing**

Nancy Barney McCrickard

In middle school I happened on a photo of a nurse sitting with an elderly woman as she ate her meal in a hospital setting. The photo evoked the beauty of tenderness and compassion; it inspired in me a desire to become a nurse. At Smith I considered a pre-med major, but after finishing the first semester focused increasingly on music. After Smith I continued studying cello and composition at a conservatory in Freiburg, Germany. Thoughts of nursing remained an undercurrent. I returned to Boston where I taught and free-lanced as a musician until 1988 when I left to volunteer in Washington State. My intention was, in part, to take time to discern whether to change course and study nursing. The decision became clear one evening as I sat with an elder at her hospital bedside, flooded with the certainty that I wanted to accompany people in times of vulnerability, to be a comforting presence in times of need, and to serve people from a wide variety of demographic backgrounds and circumstances. I left Washington to study nursing at Case University in a program designed for people who already had a degree and life experiences.

I started my nursing career at University Hospitals in Cleveland and then worked for twenty years as a Licensed School Nurse in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. School nursing put me right in the middle of the school community, students, families, and the wider community, satisfying two focuses that emerged for me during nursing school: family and community health. The school nurse's role is to support students in their ability to be present and learn in school. The responsibilities include broad public health activities, health education, participation in academic support teams, assessment and care of individual students for illnesses, minor scrapes and falls, more serious injuries, management of chronic health conditions such as Diabetes and asthma, and support in times of crisis. The school setting is not immune to threats of harm, suicide ideation, sexting, domestic violence and the

gamut of mental health and behavior issues. I tried to make the clinic a place where students would feel safe and welcome. Some students would come just to say hello, some to have a moment out of class and for one- on-one attention, some to talk about very personal concerns. Many students needed help in acquiring coping skills.

My final assignment, at which I spent five days a week for nine years, was a Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade school with a diverse, multi-lingual population. In addition to students born in the U.S., including Puerto Rico, there were students whose families were refugees from Nepal, Syria, the Congo, Somalia, and other countries, as well as many students with a variety of disabilities. I loved the mix of cultures and I loved engaging with students of all abilities.

In May of 2020 I retired from twenty-nine years as a full-time Registered Nurse—thirty- two years if I count my time in nursing school, which I do from the standpoint of having had intimate encounters with people all along the way. Through the years I have had the privilege of accompanying people through times of illness, pain, vulnerability, joy, and sorrow. I have witnessed great personal courage and strength in adversity; I have witnessed the gathering of families and friends in support of their loved ones at times of sorrow and of joy. Nursing has been a place of wonder for me, a sacred space in which I have crossed paths with people who have enriched my life. I treasure the memories I have of those I have encountered and accompanied along the way. I am grateful to the people who have entrusted me with their care and confided in me the intimacies of their stories and hearts.

## **Reflection on Wonder**

Louise Jones McPhillips

There is a lovely folk hymn that begins with the words, “I wonder as I wander out under the sky.” I was reminded of those words and its poignant melody as Frank and I set out on a cross-country road trip from our home in Birmingham, Alabama to Los Angeles just a month ago. We were newly vaccinated and excited to visit our youngest son whom we had not seen in over 15 months.

A sense of wonder is an essential part of what makes us human. To wonder is to be curious, but it is more than that. Wonderment allows us to be filled with awe when confronted with something that is beautiful, unexpected or inexplicable. Since there is also an element of doubt when we wonder, certainty denies us the exhilaration that accompanies wonder.

Our road trip, which tracked the Trail of Tears from Alabama to Oklahoma, evoked all of those emotions. We marveled at the tenacity of Ida B. Wells near her childhood home in tiny Holly Springs, Mississippi. In Memphis, when we stood below the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, we could not fathom the evil of white supremacy that struck down Dr. King, our own classmate Yoki’s father, on that fateful day in April 1968. In Little Rock, we wondered how the nine Black students found the courage to face down mob violence at Central High School. In Tulsa, we mourned the hundreds of innocent Americans who died in the Race Massacre almost exactly 100 years ago. And we ended our own trail of tears at the Oklahoma City National Memorial, which emerged from the bombed-out rubble of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

From Oklahoma City, our route essentially traced the old U.S. Route 66 through Texas into New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. At the Painted Desert/Petrified Forest, our wonderment was piqued by the unexpected and inexplicable beauty that took 200 million years to unfold. We stood in awe at the majesty of the Grand Canyon, which contains exposed rock over 1 billion years old. At Zion National Park, we hiked among massive cliffs of cream, pink and red that soared into a brilliant blue sky.

So we were filled with wonder as we witnessed both the best and the worst of America. Most of all, after being home-bound by the COVID-19 pandemic for so long, we were thrilled to visit family along the way. In the

Ozarks of Arkansas, we stopped to see our nephew, his wife and their adorable 6-month old baby, Julia. Later in Santa Fe, we visited Frank's sister, Sandy, who is nearing her 80th birthday. In Los Angeles, we celebrated with Dixon and his fiancée, Katy, as they made plans for their July wedding. Baby Julia and her great-aunt Sandy are on opposite ends of the spectrum of life, while Dixon and Katy are embarking on their life together. We share with all of them their sense of wonder, with anticipation and hope for the future.



## **Honing My Sense of Wonder: my personal journey after Smith College**

Pamela Stratton, MD, Class of 1976

My sense of wonder began long before I attended Smith College. I was raised by two teachers to be curious and independent. Coming of age in the 1970s, I wanted to make a difference in the world by using my natural abilities in math and science. Through serendipity and grit, I am delighted to report that I have impacted women's health worldwide. My journey has been guided by a combination of curiosity, instincts, fearlessness, spirit of adventure and passion about women's health. It has been full of drama and unfathomable challenges at times, as I am sure everyone else's life journey has. Those aspects of my narrative are not worthy of our attention. Instead, I am sharing my incredible journey in which I have leap-frogged from one adventure to another.

On the personal side, I have married twice, to very different men, who were each accomplished in their own way. The first, a fellow physician, and I misunderstood each other's core principles. As a result, he was not the right life partner for me and ultimately not a staunch ally for my life journey. The second one, Ed Case, is a kind, loving, smart man who thinks the best of me and always encourages me to do great things and stay true to myself. I have a grown son, Eric Cheskin, who has successfully navigated his own life, love, and accomplishments – every parent's dream. But now onto my story.

As a freshman at Smith, my initial plan to become a psychologist evolved. My natural talents in mathematics drew me to it as my major. Alas I found mathematics to be cerebral and solitary – not the path for me to contribute to the world. An improbable, late evening conversation with Dorothy Coyle '76 made me pivot from psychology to premed; likely she has no recollection of that conversation. An important influence was my Smith roommate – Dr. Laurie (Krent '76) Jacker and her father, Dr. J. Krent. He convinced both Laurie and me to pursue a MD (medicine) rather than a PhD. He reasoned that medicine would offer us more flexibility and options in our career paths. And he was right.

The Smith College Career Center helped me find a summer internship at the Emory-Grady Family Planning Program in Atlanta, Georgia. There I revised a

book, “Contraceptive Technology”, the primer on contraception guiding care at Planned Parenthood Clinics across the country. My interest in providing health care to women grew. Teaching women about their reproductive health – what was normal and what was not - and their choices about when to have children - were my central tenets. If I could achieve this ideal in practice, my patients could flourish and achieve their personal and professional dreams. Thus, my interest in becoming a physician became solely focused on becoming an obstetrician gynecologist, aiming to be an astute clinician, an inspiring teacher and cutting-edge researcher.

My journey from Smith led me to New York Medical College in the New York City area. When the medical school tuition doubled between first and second year of medical school, I joined the Navy to finance my education. I began my training in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Harvard’s Beth Israel Hospital and then joined my fiancé - soon to be first husband - at Yale-New Haven Hospital where I completed my residency. The variation in clinical practice between Harvard and Yale inspired an interest in evidence-based medicine. Importantly, when I was the Chief Resident in Obstetrics at Yale in 1986, newly available HIV testing made possible screening of at-risk pregnant women. Identifying those

infected and imagining the medical care they needed, helped me recognize and begin to think about the AIDS epidemic in women.

Serendipity intervened and I was stationed at Bethesda Naval Hospital. There I became the medical student coordinator and Chief of the Division of Gynecology. And I was the only woman faculty member in the Ob-Gyn department. I was rewarded for transforming a floundering 3<sup>rd</sup> year medical student rotation to one that was sought after and for inspiring medical students to pursue a career in Obstetrics and Gynecology. My reward was attending education-based and scientific meetings where I could network with academic obstetrician gynecologists who influenced my career trajectory. Soon, I was recruited to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to work in AIDS research whose facilities are across the street from Bethesda Naval Hospital.

In 1989, near the beginning of research into HIV, I was asked to develop the AIDS research agenda for women, determine a way to engage more

obstetrician-gynecologists in AIDS research, and increase the participation of women in AIDS clinical trials. I worked in the Pediatric, Adolescent, and Maternal AIDS Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. While these goals seemed lofty, especially as the only ob-gyn working at NIH in AIDS research at the time, serendipity intervened. The pediatricians had designed a study to test the AIDS drug, zidovudine, in newborn babies to decrease the risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. As an obstetrician, testing this drug during pregnancy seemed a sounder strategy to prevent transmission but potentially riskier to the mother and fetus. Over time, I modified the study design to begin safely in pregnancy; I built a consensus among scientists, pediatricians, obstetricians, NIH staff - all stakeholders – for a new design, provided an ethical justification for treating pregnant women, and worked collaboratively across many organizations to rapidly and responsibly launch the study. This new study that required use of zidovudine during pregnancy, labor and delivery, and the newborn period successfully reduced the risk of transmission of HIV from 30% to 4%. This advance essentially halted mother to child HIV transmission and added to the rationale for a Federal policy to include reproductive aged women in clinical trials in the United States.

Serendipity intervened and I transitioned to contraception research, the topic that had drawn me to Ob- Gyn. In the Contraceptive Development Branch, I worked on a new “morning after” emergency contraceptive, an antiprogestin named CDB2914. It is in the same class of hormones as the infamous abortion pill, RU486, also known as mifepristone. Concurrently, opportunities to develop new non-latex condoms and spermicide/microbicides to prevent sexual transmission of HIV arose. We also created a Contraceptive Clinical Trials network to study new contraceptive methods.

Then an opportunity unfolded to conduct clinical research myself at the NIH Clinical Center. The planned studies would determine the dose of CDB2914 for emergency contraception. After those phase I studies, other studies to determine its effectiveness followed. CDB2914 is now marketed as the emergency contraceptive ulipristal.

Then, my curiosity was piqued about chronic pelvic pain in women with endometriosis. I sought to better understand the relationship between pain

and endometriosis, and to improve the therapeutic options for women with both endometriosis and pain. My 20 years of in-depth clinical investigation has contributed to the international dialogue to treat pain in affected women, rather than solely treating endometriosis lesions to treat pain.

Serendipity intervened again. I was asked to become Chief of the Gynecology Consult Service in the NIH Clinical Center. Every patient at the Clinical Center participates in a research study. The Clinical Center's research focus is immunology, genetics, and cancer - often rare and complex diseases. Gynecology consults meant I focused on keeping women safe as they participated in clinical studies AND learned about how their diseases affected their reproductive and gynecologic health. I worked collaboratively with other researchers to define the gynecologic health of women undergoing stem cell transplant, with inherited and other bone marrow failure syndromes, with genetic syndromes causing uterine fibroids or with other tumors of the reproductive tract.

After 17 years, I stepped down from that role to take a writing sabbatical. I sought space to think and recharge my creativity. I wanted to publish my research findings on the gynecologic health of women with these complex and rare conditions, and to finish a clinical trial of a novel approach to treating endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain – using botulinum toxin in the pelvic floor. Now 30 peer-reviewed papers and 31 abstracts later, my list of papers yet to be published is shorter. And I had imagined I would be transitioning away from medicine to another life adventure. But serendipity intervened again.

A year and a half ago, I began working with Dr. Janine Clayton at the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health to create an NIH-wide research agenda on maternal health. Many of you may know that our daughters are 50% more likely to die in childbirth than we were. In fact, the US maternal mortality rate has been steadily increasing over the last 20 years, while other high-income countries have experienced a decrease in their maternal mortality rate. We must change this trajectory for our daughters and granddaughters. Thus far, the research agenda focuses on the leading causes of maternal mortality, on contributing health conditions or social factors and on structural and

healthcare system issues. This opportunity also is allowing me to consider broad issues in women's health research in the United States.

I would never have embarked on this journey had I not gone to Smith College where I honed my critical thinking skills and was given permission to soar. Smith College encouraged me to always find and take a seat at the table, to pursue what I cared about, to be curious, to stay grounded in who I was, and to develop deep and lasting friendships. It is the friendships with women from Smith College that hold I hold dearest and have touched me forever.

As a woman of wonder, who wanders, who leap-frogs, and who is deeply committed to women's health research as a way to guide women to achieve their dreams, I hope you have enjoyed reading about my journey. I appreciate your interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink. The first letter is a large, stylized 'J' that loops around. The name 'Stratton' is written in a cursive, flowing script.

## Reflections at Our 45th Reunion

Mary Ann Denton

I look back to our graduation from Smith and realize how different my life has been from how I thought it would turn out. While at Smith, I and many of our classmates embraced some degree of condescension towards Smith graduates of the 50's and 60's who seemingly approached college as an opportunity to find a successful husband. So I knew I wanted a career and not just a "job" but I didn't know what career.

My mother was surprised and very worried for me. She could not understand why I did not know what I wanted to do. After all, she had encouraged me to go to Smith in order to study with brilliant women and to find a brilliant career. She had wanted to attend Smith herself but didn't have the money, so she "had to attend" (her words) Ohio State instead. She was a straight A student all the way through to her Phd studies in Speech and Hearing (except for the one D she received because the professor caught her knitting in his lecture). She knew exactly what she wanted to do with her life and she pursued it aggressively. Then she met my father when he was doing his medical residency, fell in love, got married, and walked away from finishing her dissertation. She became a stay-at-home mom instead. That's what most women did in those days. Fast forward to my Smith graduation, she was now divorced from my philandering father and very keen to see me thrive in the workplace and earn my own money.

It took me two years of working different jobs for me to decide that I wanted to become a lawyer. I was accepted to the University of Michigan's Law School and had a wonderful time there. I also met my husband there and we were married a week after he graduated. I graduated a year later and by then we were living and working in Washington, D.C.. It was an exciting time and place to be a young attorney, working with some of the smartest minds in the country and "doing deals". Eventually we started our family but I kept working because we had hired a full-time nanny, a 23 year old woman from Wales. After interviewing her and checking her background and speaking to her parents, we thought she was perfect and near Mary Poppins status! But, alas, she wasn't. She was an ordinary human being with ordinary challenges. Her boyfriend was emotionally abusive to her, something which she hid from us so that she could continue working for her green card. Her girlfriend was a vacuous flirt who

encouraged her to lose weight by ingesting laxatives. I couldn't see the pressure our nanny was facing, nor its emotional toll, until she started to unravel with the birth of our second child. When I came home from work one day, my sister was crying and describing how our nanny had started to shake our baby to get her to stop crying. Not a back-and-forth shake, but a stern shake nonetheless. In one moment I realized that I couldn't trust another nanny to care for my kids. I realized that I could never really know the mental state of any non-family care giver, which I deem essential in caring for children. We had no choice but to let her go. So my husband took three days leave from his corporate legal position so that I could clear out my office at Freddie Mac and miss the closing dinner for the \$4B deal that I had just closed. In three days time, I was a stay-at-home mom. It was that abrupt. Neither my mother nor my colleagues could really understand how I could leave my career just as it was beginning to soar.

But to my mind, it was all about the good of the family. If I couldn't trust another nanny, I had to do the job myself. I wasn't bitter or upset. I accepted it as a matter-of-fact. Parenting is a hard enough job for people who truly love their kids; it can be overwhelming for people who aren't the parents of the kids they nanny. I couldn't risk my kids' well-being for my career. That was the choice that I faced.

So I threw myself into this new job with all the energy that I had! My days were filled with kids' activities and schools and volunteer work. Now that my career was no longer keeping us in Washington, D.C., we followed my husband as he moved about the country with his soaring career. I am so glad that I was able to help my kids adjust to new homes, new schools and new friends. When people would ask me what did I miss most about my career, I told them it wasn't the money so much as it was the "civility" of the office...anyone who's had to referee fights among children would understand this! When our kids grew up and sincerely thanked me for staying home with them, I felt that my career sacrifice had been well worth it.

Unlike my mother, I continued to have the emotional and financial support of my husband throughout my life. For that I am eternally grateful.

So fast forward to today when both our daughters gave birth to our first grandchildren this past year. One lives near Boston; the other lives nearby to us. For our nearby daughter, my now retired husband decided to leave

his retirement life of golf, guitars and reading for hours in order to become a full-time nanny to our granddaughter.

*Why on earth would he do such a thing?* He says he wants to support our daughter's and son-in-law's career development and allow them to develop their careers without concerns about the quality or costs of childcare. Women today face the same work/life challenges that I did and that my mother did before me. Our daughter is thriving in her career and he wants to see where it takes her. He also wants to commit to doing the bulk share of the childcare because he is so grateful to me for sacrificing my career in order to raise our children. He feels that it is his turn to provide the primary childcare this time around.

So no, my life hasn't turned out the way I had anticipated when I graduated Smith. I had a short career as a lawyer and a much longer career as a full time mother. I am now retired from both and can now focus on my hobbies of sewing, quilting and embroidery...and babysitting my grandchild two afternoons a week so that my husband can pursue his hobbies of golf, playing guitar and reading.

When I left Smith, I bought into the idea that a career was the cornerstone of a successful life. What I discovered is that a path to a happy and successful life also can be found in leaving a career behind to focus fully on family.



## Reflections

Cathrael ("Kate") Kazin '76

At sixty-five, I have been with the same woman for nearly fifteen years and married for six. As a freshman at Smith, I could never have imagined writing those words -- any of them. Though I'd known I was gay in high school, I still wrestled with coming out and my romantic relationship with my roommate, Charity, was a secret to all but the few other gay women we'd managed to detect. Marriage itself -- never mind of the same-sex variety -- was not anywhere on my horizon; I'd found my parents' tumultuous, often violent relationship traumatic and was determined not to replicate it (and unaware that I could be with someone on my own terms).

I feel enormous affection for Smith and for Northampton (I happened to have been born at Cooley Dickinson, when my father was a visiting professor at Smith) and have wonderful memories of my time there. I am still in constant contact with my best friend from college, Charlotte. But I often felt very out of place. I was a New York Jew, graduate of a "progressive" school (translation: I had no idea how to study), with pretty bad untreated (and undiagnosed) ADHD. I felt surrounded by decorous young women who didn't raise their hands in class even when they had done the reading! This was unfathomable to me. I felt like a bull in a china shop. And though I fancied myself terribly sophisticated, I was hilariously provincial in my way. I had never met a young Republican -- scarcely knew they existed -- so when I saw a "Nixon Now More Than Ever" sticker on a classmate's notebook I informed her that she should take that off, since "people might get the wrong idea." "What wrong idea?" she asked me. Oh.

I'd spent my high school years involved in anti-war activities and assumed anyone smart would share my politics (okay, I still haven't completely gotten over that). The closest thing to political action I saw at Smith was the spontaneous blaring of "I am Woman" when Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs. But though we might have called ourselves feminists, we had little awareness of the larger societal forces of sexism operating at Smith -- for example, with the tenure denials of Maurianne Adams and Mary Carruthers. The EEOC hearings on the case, which were open, took place at the Alumnae House our freshman year. I was shocked by what I heard. Mary Carruthers became, by the way, a famous medievalist; the idea that Smith did not see fit to grant her tenure is still astonishing. I did not yet

perceive that there was a pattern at work, one that systematically disadvantaged women, people of color -- anyone seen by people in power as "other."

After Smith, I went to graduate school in English at Cornell and then to the University of Iowa, where I taught happily for years before I realized I did not have the temperament to be a scholar. I became a lawyer and a speechwriter, then moved to Israel (that's a whole other story), came back to the States, and helped start a college for front-line workers. It focused on real-world projects and experiential learning rather than papers and exams and ended up being quite transformational for the learners as well as for their employers. These days I'm doing the same kind of work as a consultant, helping both colleges and business create new pathways and new models for learning, especially for working adults.

Since I'm in the business of thinking about higher ed, I often reflect on my education at Smith and appreciate how privileged I am to have had that experience. I wish learners everywhere could have just a taste of what so many of us, including me, took for granted at the time -- the beauty of our surroundings, faculty who knew us and cared about us, and the sense that we and our education mattered.