

Mount Holyoke College, Class of 1961
Our 50th Reunion, May 19-22, 2011
Reported by Bonnie Barrett Stretch, Reunion Scribe

The 50th Reunion is different.

First of all, it didn't rain (unlike the 45th and 40th). This is not a detail but a strategic advantage, in that we could get outdoors, stroll the campus, have a Parade, and visit new (new since our day) facilities such as (but not limited to) the LEEDS award-winning Kendade Environmental science building; the huge but surprisingly elegant Creighton dormitory (also LEEDS award-winning); the recently renovated dorms; the expanded library complex; the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum; the Music building; Blanchard (now the student center); the Equestrian Center; Kendall's new Fitness center, Natatorium (competitive swimming/diving pool), dance center, track and field complex; and the new Boathouse on the Connecticut River (more about that later).

Second of all, we were there – at our vigorous insistence – on Commencement weekend, able to meet the graduating Seniors and participate in the pageantry of the Alumnae Parade, the laying of the laurel wreath, and the singing of the Alma Mater and Bread and Roses at Mary Lyon's grave, and also catch a trace of the academic life that thrives today on our beautiful New England campus.

Third, we no longer scoffed at rides in the college vans whenever we got tired of walking or had to get to an event quickly. (The campus seemed longer and wider than when we were 20 years old, or even 60 years old.)

Fourth and most important, more classmates returned to this reunion than ever before. As early as March, the Alumnae office began to suspect that the double capacity of Abbey-Buckland would not be enough to hold everyone, and planned for an overflow into South Rocky.

The numbers made a difference. "From the first surprised gasp to the final hug," as one classmate put it, one of the greatest joys was connecting again with classmates we hadn't seen for decades and with classmates we never really knew as undergraduates. Said reunion veteran Kim Kimball Holmquist, "That's the theme of the weekend: So many more people than usual. Everyone found themselves talking with people they scarcely knew in college and wondered why they ever missed that opportunity."

"I felt like I came home to myself, like 50 years had not elapsed."

Classmates arriving for the first time, or the first time in a long time, were unsure what to expect. But that changed almost immediately, as we were greeted with joy and hugs by folks like Liz Hottel Barrett offering us homemade brownies and little green "cocktails" called appletinis, and charming undergraduates who offered to help take our luggage to our rooms. Opening our welcome bags, we discovered each filled with a crazy green fright wig and a green duster mitt for waving in the parade –

and we knew this wasn't going to be just a nostalgic event. Jean Castleman Chase recalled, "I had signed up for the reunion not knowing what to expect and just decided to give it a try. I came away energized, invigorated and excited. The combination of connecting with old friends and being with classmates I hardly knew was wonderful. In both cases we had interesting enlightening discussions along with lots of laughs."

Beth Carpenter Listerman echoed those feelings, "The reunion was wonderful in every respect. I loved seeing those people I haven't seen in ages, but I so enjoyed getting to know those I really didn't know in college."

"I was incredibly impressed with the kinds of adults my classmates have become and with the interesting life experiences they have had," said Judy Weinstein Segal. "I loved the strong sense of community that was present throughout the weekend and felt honored to be a part of that community."

Jane Kaplan Yendell wrote later: "As a virgin 'reuner' this year, I am having trouble finding the words to describe how much the weekend affected me on both the institutional and personal levels. . . . Perhaps the most remarkable thing was speaking with classmates I may not have known on campus, but with whom I felt an instant rapport and then thought to myself, How I wish she had been my friend back then."

Amy Connor Laidlaw declared, "I personally had more fun at reunion than expected. Having been a quiet person in college, I thought perhaps very few would even remember me, but this was not the case. It was interesting to learn about the lives of classmates whom I knew either barely or not at all. I was impressed not only with the number of degrees and achievements of so many but also with what many of the alumnae offspring have done with their lives. My husband Rob commented on the general high level of energy and the natural and quick connections that were made. I shared that "revved up" feeling and, talking to classmates brushing their teeth in the dorm, found that others felt the same way." (Amy had discovered an old Reunion Truth: Some of the best reunion conversations take place in or on the way to and from the bathrooms at night or in the morning.)

Perhaps Karen Johnson, who had been such a vital presence during undergraduate days and so rarely seen since, put it most poignantly: "I had no idea what to expect and was totally blown away by it. First of all, I recognized almost everyone in the class, and you recognized me, even without the long blond hair. I felt like I came home to myself, like 50 years had not elapsed. And I had also come home to you and to the school. The entire experience was very profound." As in the past, Karen's presence and creativity was an igniting force at reunion events, and old friends and new enthusiastically embraced her and her partner Barbara, who loved the college, wished she had studied here and hopes to interest her five-year-old granddaughter in attending when the time comes.

As for me (your Reunion Scribe), a special pleasure was seeing Nancy Simonds for the first time since graduation. "I confess I have never been one for reunion events," Nancy wrote, "but re-connecting here in Boston with Sandy Iger Kohler, I was motivated to participate this time. I think my most powerful memory is the joy of seeing dear friends who, despite the many years, still retain the same core values

and qualities that first drew us together. I remember the pure joy I felt, the love even, in seeing for the first time since 1961 women from our class who, though changed, have not changed at all. That we could talk so easily, laugh so easily, and share these reunion days so happily – yes, these are my best memories. This is what reunion is all about. I can hardly wait until our 55th! With her quiet style and extraordinary mind, Nancy made her presence known as gently and clearly as she did as an undergraduate. Truly an “uncommon woman,” her eclectic career is daunting to read in the Additional Pages for the Class Book, sent out by the intrepid Elsa Anderson van Bergen, who continued to compile our individual pages as they trickled in right up to the last minute. (Thank you, Elsa!)

As usual, Rocki Hill Hughes caught the beat of the moment in her Reunion poem, “Taking Stock Fifty Years Out of Mount Holyoke College”:

Well, now it's time to meet again – we can talk about the trip...
Its hard fought fights, our victories and when a foot did slip,
Where we've wandered, times we cried, the flowers we could smell,
Our laughs and triumphs, how we failed and braved each special hell.

We each have traveled separate paths from those we knew before,
And each began the journey here to what life had in store.
We were sisters then, we're sisters now, and will be to the end,
And even longer, living in the memory of a friend.

Welcome Ceremony for Rising Alumnae – “A Beautiful Bridge to Alumnae Status”

What's this? you may ask. It's a new tradition, established for the first time this year with our class, designed to welcome new graduates immediately into the worldwide community of MHC Alumnae. The special half-century relationship of the graduating class and 50th Reunion class was first officially recognized by the class of 1960, which bonded so well with the class of 2010 that the class of 2011 wanted the same relationship with their grandmother class of 1961. Historically skeptical of “new traditions,” 1961ers tended to resist the label of “grandmother” but classmates who had arrived by Thursday afternoon dutifully went to Chapin to participate, and were overwhelmed by the event. Class President Bobbi Childs Sampson, in a short elegant talk, welcomed the Seniors to “that half century journey that we, the Class of 1961, have just traveled”, and recalled our own graduation day seeing the alumnae of the Class of 1911, who had graduated into a world in which they could not yet vote! “Truly a different world.”

The ceremony was simple. Members of the grandmother class lined up across the front of the auditorium; members of the granddaughter class formed a line, each facing a “grandmother” who placed around each graduate's neck a lovely silk scarf in their class color (yellow) decorated with their class animal (sphinx). “I was immediately impressed with the huge number of Seniors who were in Chapin for the ‘scarfing,’” recalls Sherry Welles Urner, who is now our new Class President. “With each successive wave of Seniors, the intimacy seemed to build. Congratulations and questions about future

plans seemed to end with hugs and best wishes and genuine emotion, even tears. It was an awesome experience. I was so impressed with the diversity of the graduates, their respect for us, their accomplishments and aspirations. For the rest of the weekend, I noticed yellow scarves as part of graduates' attire – and if I said 'Your scarf is lovely,' the student would invariably say 'I love it - and thank you.' I came to the ceremony as a skeptic, but now I think the scarves were a beautiful bridge to full maturity and alumnae status."



Seniors and scarves. [Photo: Sue Carr]

"We were all impressed and moved by the students Mount Holyoke is graduating now," said Dee deFerranti Abrahamse. "I met students from Bangladesh, Africa and around the US, going on to study nutrition, biochemistry, museum studies, intern in Africa and travel globally. This was one of my favorite parts of the Reunion. I'm so glad we insisted on being there on graduation weekend!"

Judy Weinstein Segal observed, "The College seems to have found a new niche with student diversity and the study of international affairs. One young lady from Brazil discussed her reasons for attending Mount Holyoke. She said that treatment of women is a major issue in many parts of the world and women's colleges like Mount Holyoke provide helpful forums for exploring this issue. She also enjoyed the sense of community that was available on campus and how the diverse student population at the college was able to come together to form a cohesive community."



Marian Strong Moore and "granddaughter" [Photo: Sue Carr]

Later the Same Day – and Next Morning

More classmates arrived into the early evening. "Thursday evening's buffet supper in the dorm was wonderful," reports Dee. "I enjoyed hearing about Tunisia from Chris Hollister Hila, from Joan Schlossberg Kass about her teaching and working with ESL immigrant students, from Cindy Friedman Sutton about the lecture series she'd started in her small town, and so much else that night."

"Friday morning," Dee continued, "I had time for a lovely walk around campus, enjoying the gardens, looking at the library and how it has been remodeled into a wonderful complex. I discovered the Center for Global Initiatives, the Miller Worley Center for the Environment and the Weisman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts, and enjoyed the green campus (in both senses – eel ladders!)."

Jean Castleman Chase added, “Walking around campus with friends was a special way to talk about our memories, our views of the world, and of course about ourselves and families, so full of hopes, challenges and fun.”

In a slightly different twist, Carol Spaulding Bulkeley and husband John, strolling down by Lower Lake, “encountered three young gals, one from Amherst, the others from MHC. We chatted a bit about our college days, John at then-all-male Amherst, how we met, almost 50 years married, etc. As we walked away, we heard one of them say, ‘Aren’t they cute!’”

At the Seniors’ Graduation Rehearsal, Bobbi Childs Sampson as Class president, along with our Class Agent and Leadership Gift Teams (Sue Wheatley Carr, Marian Strong Moore, Susan Rhodes Brown, Katherine Kaufman Snelson and Sally Ginsberg Abrahamson) presented a super-sized check for \$2011 to the graduates. As Bobbi put it, “Our check is symbolic – not just in its glorious physical size but in what it represents. In 1961, our class used its ‘seed money’ for stationery and stamps. It was our way of staying in touch and building community. You, the Class of 2011, will most certainly use your resources differently – but to the same ends.”

Farther Afield and On the Waterfront

Others wandered farther afield, walking around Upper Lake and visiting the “new” Equestrian Center. (New to us; it opened in 1987!) Alice McGovern Doering and Babbie Baldwin Miller, together with spouses Al and Ludlow, made an early morning visit to the new Boathouse, unveiled in the Spring of 2010 on the Connecticut River, a short drive from campus. Al and Ludlow already had a special connection with MHC crew coach Jean Friedman from our previous reunion. As passionate rowing partners on the Schuylkill River (think 19th-century paintings by Philadelphia artist Thomas Eakins), they had gotten special permission to take out a boat during the 45th Reunion. This time when they showed up, Jean asked if they would fill in on one of the “eights” that members of a younger reunioning class wanted to take out. “Al and Ludlow would not turn down an opportunity like that!” said Alice. “They had a wonderful row and were very impressed with the new facilities. The boathouse is beautiful, not to mention the setting on the fast-flowing pretty river.”



[Photo: Coach Jean Friedman.]

(Footnote: The Boathouse is the latest of major athletic upgrades at the College, which now has winning intercollegiate teams in 13 major sports. (Hooray for Title IX !) The Boathouse also serves several local community programs. For more information, go to <http://athletics.mtholyoke.edu/facilities/boathouse.>)

Friday 11:30 AM – State of the College Address

Many of us went to the State of the College address to see our new President, Lynn Pasquerella, in action. She engaged us with her signature style of dialoguing with her audience rather than simply addressing us – a style that has won hearts and minds on campus, in the local community, and in the multitude of intellectual and leadership forums where she participates throughout the year. She spoke of course about her love for her alma mater Mount Holyoke, but also about the need to project the College's story more vividly to the public through more diverse settings and partnerships.

Among those are a new partnership with National Public Radio; community outreach initiatives under way locally, nationally and internationally; Mount Holyoke's role in Hillary Clinton's "Women and Public Service Initiative" (whose first conference takes place at Bryn Mawr this Fall); task forces focused on expanding curriculum-to-career connections, and many other on-going efforts by the administration, faculty, students and alumnae. On the College Website, a June 28, 2011 notice says that President Pasquerella was one of the first signers of the Presidents' Pledge, in which college and university presidents agree to donate five percent of their annual income to help alleviate global poverty.

She reminded us that MHC was named by *US News and World Report* as the college offering students the best classroom experience. This year the College received 3,401 applications, the highest number ever, and sent out 625 acceptances for an expected class of 585 students, she said. (For more details see page 6 of the *Summer Alumnae Quarterly*.) The College, set in this very small New England town, has one of the most diverse student bodies and faculties and attracts talent from all over the world.

Pasquerella emphasized that all of this can be sustained and expanded only by improving the College's financial base. This remains the biggest challenge and is the subject of strategic planning task forces including alumnae, faculty, administration and trustees. "To engage with the world, our alumnae are key," she said. "We are seeking new ways to integrate this systemically into the College's development."

Back to Class

Emily Dickinson and Mary Lyon have always been a fascinating duo. So no surprise that Martha Ackman's Friday afternoon class on their relationship was packed. Ackman, a senior lecturer on gender studies and the new president of the Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS), provided a wholly fresh picture of the two women's encounter in 1847-48, far more positive than traditionally portrayed. Ackman's lively presentation made her audience eager to read her forthcoming book. Class ended, many raced on to hear Vincent Ferraro, Ruth Lawson Professor of Politics, whose ripped-from-the-headlines analysis of the "Arab Spring" was riveting. "I hope he goes on the road for Mount Holyoke and comes to Los Angeles!" declared Dee as we hastened to get to the President's reception and dinner at Willits-Hallowell Center.

President's Reception and Dinner

It is tradition for the President of the College to host the 50th Class for Friday evening's dinner. This was the first occasion for all of us to be together and the conversations and re-acquaintances were many and

lively. Lynn Pasquerella joined us during the reception hour and gave a brief welcome. We overflowed the seating, but with that sorted out, food and conversation were ample. But our gift-raising team knew there was still work to do – we were about \$30k short of the \$1 million goal our class planned for our reunion gift to the college. Sally Abrahamson made the appeal with the aid of Peggy Bloete Shilling's husband Gary. Classmates and spouses responded generously and in a few minutes our goal was met with applause from all. "I was proud to get to my feet and signal Sally that I was able to make an additional contribution to help us meet our goal," recalled Jane Kaplan Yendell.

Friday Night "Open Mike" Entertainment

Emerging from the Willits dining room, many of us hitched a ride on a campus van to get back to Abbey-Buckland in time for an evening of "open mike" entertainment. Jane Kaplan Yendell treated us to a CD of Dottie Smith Mann reading a couple of her poems. Since last October, the Class email List has been inspired by Dottie's running log of the battle she and husband E.D. have been fighting since E.D. was diagnosed with fourth-stage stomach cancer. Jane said, "The CD brought me great comfort in 2006 as my beloved Bob was dying and I thought we'd like to have at least her voice and poetry with us." With the opening words "I am Dottie Mann," the room went quiet and we listened to Dottie's voice read a poem about the sea and beach near her home in Ormond Beach, Florida. This was followed by "Memories of Mount Holyoke." Said Jane, "It was perfect for our 50th reunion."

In a perfect follow-on, Sandy Iger Kohler read six deeply meditative poems from her latest book of poetry, *Improbable Music*, published this past May by Word Press. Then Judy Marshall Kennedy introduced "an old woman who accompanied me from North Conway, New Hampshire," and for a moment many didn't recognize Carol Sweeney Benson as she stood before us in costume and performed a monologue as Mrs. Watts, adapted from the play *The Trip to Bountiful*, by Horton Foote. Several years ago after the death of her beloved Larry, Carol serendipitously launched on a new career as an actress at River Arts, a community theater in Morrisville, Vermont. As she declared on her Class Book page, "I'm having a blast enjoying a fulfilling, challenging, exciting and totally unexpected acting career." Later that night, a man brushing his teeth next to her in the bathroom stopped, did a double-take, and then congratulated her on her performance. "That was special," she chuckled.

Another star performer, Karen Johnson, read her delightful, funny and moving poem of tribute to Nadine Shepardson, Chair of Lab Theater who had a transforming impact on a little girl with long blond hair and tons of talent who arrived on campus in 1957. "All I knew was that in 1957/She was the first person who really / Cared about me and saw my talent / And when I looked into her eyes / I could see myself becoming / A real live actress in New York / With a booming voice and fabulous stage presence / A carbon copy of Miss Shepardson / The teacher who recognized my destiny / And started me on the path to / Fulfill my dreams." The complete poem brought Miss Shepardson back to full flowing life for all of us who participated in Lab Theatre. Miss Shep would have been thrilled. (You can read the whole poem, "A Star Discovered," on Karen's "additional" Class Page. Karen also read several moving personal poems, reminding us all of her multiple talents that enriched so many undergraduate events.

Saturday Morning – Parade Time!



Green fright wigs, big green duster mitts for waving, pashmina scarves worn to suit each person's style.

Diana Diggin: "But of course – because we are the original uncommon women."



Above: Norma Fowler Aronson beckons to all:
"Come to the Parade!"
[Photos: Susan Carr]

Who is this uncommon woman?

Jennifer Bagster-Collins Seaver: "My chief memory of the parade, alumnae meeting and Saturday lunch – which is all I attended because of family commitments – is that we are a vibrant, enthusiastic and caring group of uncommon, albeit grey-haired women – Right down to our green shoes, flip flops, waders, etc., we demonstrated to others that we are our own people. My other thought was, How young and beautifully diverse the Seniors were."



Carol Spaulding Bulkeley: "I thought the green wigs were a hoot – just the right touch for the fun loving uncommon women that we are. I'm still trying to get the green out of my white shirt collar, but it was worth it. We are now at our lake house in northern Idaho, and I've been using my green duster thingy to get rid of the winter dust up here."

Above: Parade leaders Carol Benson Sweeney, Marion Strong Moore, Sue Wheatley Carr, Class president Bobbie Sampson and College President Lynn Pasquerella

Right: 1961 cheers on 2011. Journeys made and journeys begun.

[Photos: Chris Hamilton]

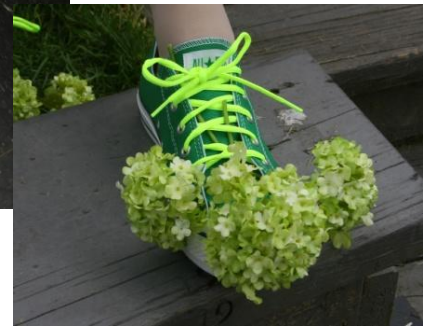


The Great Green Shoe Contest. Conjured up through the Chat List as colorful fun, competitive spirit soon turned it into a contest. At Parade lineup, the air was filled with challenges. The creativity was astonishing, ranging from absurd to practical to gorgeous. Only a few examples are available here.

(Who knew there were so many shades of green!)



Photo: Chris Hamilton



[Photos: Sue Carr]

Multiple prizes were called for:

Silliest - Nancy Dingwall Platt. *Funniest* – Alice Ai-Lie Uong.

Most elegant – Calli Davidge Demtrack, Chris Hollister Hila

Grand Prize – Liz Hottel Barrett (bottom left above) – because, Liz explained, her shoes recreated the College Seal in 3-D, palm tree and all. Naturally this was well researched: “What I never knew,” Liz declared, “is our college seal refers to Psalm 144, line 12, King James: ‘That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.’ Not only are we uncommon, we are polished cornerstones!”

Alumnae Meeting

The Parade concluded as always with the laying of the laurel wreath by the Seniors at Mary Lyon’s grave, followed by singing the Alma Mater and Bread and Roses – inspiration for us to reflect on and for Seniors to soar on. We moved on to the Alumnae Meeting in the Amphitheater – Perfect weather: cloudy (no sweltering heat) and dry (for the first time in decades, it seemed.) Our Class Agent and Leadership Gift Teams won all the Alumnae Association awards for participation and performance this year. Moreover, three members of our Class received the **Alumnae Loyalty Award** for service to our class and to the college: **Peggy Bloete Shilling, Carol Benson Sweeney and Bobbi Childs Sampson.**

In addition, two classmates were honored with the prestigious **Alumnae Achievement Award** for service to the larger society, reflecting the vision and pioneering spirit of Mary Lyon. **Rosemary Cox Masters** was honored for her lifelong career developing and directing groundbreaking professional victim service organizations for profoundly underserved populations, and her sustained commitment to creating multiple innovative volunteer services for victims of trauma at home and abroad. **Helga Jahnke Hernes** was honored for her work promoting the rights of women and peace and justice worldwide, while serving twice as State Secretary in Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and as Norway's Ambassador to Austria, Slovakia, Switzerland and the Holy See.

As a serious reading of our Class Book biographies reveals, these were but the shining peaks in a long mountain range of lifetime achievements by our classmates making a difference in the world for half a century. (Many thanks to Elsa Anderson van Bergen for so diligently pursuing the biographies and compiling this comprehensive directory, including full names and contact information.)



Rosemary Cox Masters receives Alumnae Achievement award.
[Photo: Donald Casey]



[Photo: Chris Hamilton]

Saturday Afternoon - The Pace Picks Up

Class Meeting

For a bunch of 70-year-olds, we maintained quite a pace throughout the day. So much to do, so much to see, so many classmates to meet and learn from. Following a delicious lunch and a performance by the 2011 **V-8s**, we moved quickly into the Class Meeting and elected new class officers - including **Candy Canney Schauble** and **Sallie Crittendon Nealand** in the **new position of Web Coordinators**. Moving forward, class communication will become increasingly electronic to keep pace with the rest of the Alumnae Association and the college. The Web Coordinators will take the lead in developing the Class Website, and classmates are urged to become familiar with using the site as soon as possible.

The other Class Officers for 2011-2016 are: President, Sherry Welles Urner; **V.P.**, Nony Moore Barr; **Secretary**, Bonnie Stretch; **Scribe**, Babbie Baldwin Miller; **Treasurer**, Elsa Anderson van Bergen.

Class President Bobbi Childs Sampson expressed everyone's thanks to Reunion Chairs Sarah Stearns Gipson and Barbara Bowman Prairie, who had mustered together the largest ever team of volunteers to help create an extraordinarily rich and far-ranging program of activities. At least 36 class members nationwide helped organize panels, events and entertainments across the campus for four marvelous days. Sarah and Barbara were roundly cheered for their amazing organizational skills that managed to herd everyone into an efficient and cooperative team effort. Moreover, Class Treasurer Carol Sweeney Benson was able to report a Class Treasury balance of \$7,417.49 as of May 2. Carol congratulated Barbara and Sarah on their superb budgeting and planning.

On the fund-raising front, the Class Agent team, headed by Sue Wheatley Carr and Marian Strong Moore reported that we met our class gift goal of \$1 million and exceeded it by \$3,000, with 96% of the class participating. Sue and Marian also announced that this year's team of Class Agents involved more volunteers than any other class – another record. They – together with the Leadership Gift Team of Sue Rhodes Brown, Katherine Kaufmann Snelson and Sally Ginsberg Abrahamson – accomplished all this with cheerful persistence and optimism over the past 5 years, a period including the most serious economic downturn in recent history. Concluding the meeting, Bobbi passed the gavel to new President Sherry Welles Urner.

Later, Bobbi wrote, "I realized, as I looked at all of us gathered together, that part of the strength and confirmation and real joy of these few days was the result of so many of us pitching in and helping to make it happen. It's not just that we have a wonderful mix of talents. We had the capacity and took the time to appreciate one another's contributions." And Bobbi's gracious leadership contributed much to that good feeling.

Tour of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Next on the agenda was a tour of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum (MHCAM). Because most of our class had not had a chance to visit the Art Museum (thanks in part to multiple rainy reunions) and were not aware of its growing presence in the multi-disciplined college curriculum, Bonnie Stretch

offered to organize a tour for classmates who were interested. Nearly 30 responded via the email group within days. Many thanks are due to Jane Gronau, the Museum's Education Director, who agreed to put together a tour of the Museum and its current exhibitions, with support from docent Betty Romer to help out with the large number. Together they introduced us to "Transported and Translated: Arts of the Ancient Americas," a five-college collaboration, and "Reconstructing Antiquity," a collaborative project between MHCAM and the Yale University Art Gallery supported by a grant from the Mellon Foundation.

Curator and Interim Director of the Museum Wendy Watson gave us a special welcome and talked about how multiple recent grants have enabled the Museum to greatly expand its collaboration with all academic departments at the college. Only days before Reunion, the College announced that John R. Stomberg, previously deputy director and chief curator of the Williams College Museum of Art, would be the new Florence Finch Abbott Director of the MHCAM.

Dee Abrahamse summed up many classmates' responses, saying, "The art museum was an excellent tour. It was amazing to see what a good and innovative museum this is, and how creatively it is used for teaching in so many disciplines. I don't remember whether there was an art museum in our day. There must have been, but I don't think I ever went there. Now I'd make a special visit to it." In fact, as a student today, you'd probably take several classes there, regardless of your major.

"Staying Connected: A Conversation about Graceful Aging in Place"

Nancy Dingwall Platt, former Director of "At Home in Greenwich," a non-profit in Greenwich, CT dedicated to helping seniors age in place, brought together and moderated this wonderful panel.

"The panel was excellent and stimulated many discussions at the reception afterward," said Jean Castleman Chase. "By including information about a national support program and small community possibilities, as well as the individual needs of mind/body/spirit, we had lots to consider." Dee agreed: "I had never heard of some of the options discussed, and it was really impressive to hear what some classmates are doing – things to really consider. It led into good conversations at the reception in the atrium about our present and future concerns for ourselves and our families."

"My new mantra is 'I do it because I can'," declared Jane Kaplan Yendell. "Thank you, Barbara Hartt Hise, for the words I now say to myself each morning as I do my exercises and then my walk." Barbara explained the source of her motto: "Thirteen years ago I was diagnosed with a degenerative, terminal motor neuron disease. After nine months the diagnosis turned out not to be true, but it was a life-changing event. I walk because I can and feel very lucky. My advice is if you are able to exercise, you certainly should."

The range of the other panelists is evident in their titles: Ruth Cooney Young, Director of the Council of Aging, Winchester, MA; Betsy Karch Wilson, Board President of ShareCare, Leelanau County, MI; Carol Bloomberg Glassheim, Founder of Casa Clara Community, Albuquerque, NM; and Meg/Maggie Moses Gat, retired Episcopal priest, who spoke on the importance of the mind/body/spirit connection. "As we age," said Meg, "we need to tend all three. All three have been buffeted by the winds of chance

throughout our lives. So spiritually I am urging us to make connections and help each other make connections that keep pulling us into our own tomorrows with hope and grace.”

Saturday Night Dinner - Honorees

Our honorees have changed quite a lot over the years. But Meg Moses Gat rounded up a marvelous group, some with strong connections to our class, others bringing in new energy. Fortunately **Joan Grenier** continues to maintain the special bond our class had with her father Romeo. It meant a lot to her that many in our class sent cards and messages to the Centennial of Romeo’s birthday last year. The Odyssey Bookshop, Romeo’s dream, continues to thrive as the largest independent bookstore in the Pioneer Valley.

An honored guest beloved by all English Lit students was **Marjorie Kaufman**. Now 89 years old, she was as challenging and embracing as when she taught us American Lit. The competition to sit at her table was fierce. After reunion a friend reported, “She just loved being with your class!” The feeling was definitely mutual.

Long time honoree **Donal B. O’Shea**, Dean of Faculty, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Elizabeth T. Kennan Professor of Mathematics and Statistics, was warmly received by classmates. As always, he brought his renowned sense of humor and great insight into the college, much appreciated by those who sat with him.

Patty Albright, Head of Archives, has worked closely with Rocki Hill Hughes and was very helpful in providing archive material for our class memorabilia table.

Sally Lemaire, former Executive Director of the Alumnae Association and member of class of 1968, continues to live nearby as an involved alum and had lots of stories to share and times to remember.

Saturday Night – Another Opening of Another Show!

In the grand 1961 tradition, Saturday night entertainment showed off the endless pool of talent among class members. This year’s show featured oldies-but-goodies and some outstanding new acts, with Kay Cromb Brada serving once again as the sparkling mistress of ceremonies.

Among the Oldies:



Amazing Grace (aka Carol Schwartz Haag) returned to demonstrate how to make her awesome potato chip sandwich, which brought down the house 10 years ago and did it again. The V-8s sang three songs from their original repertoire, followed by “Our Favorite/Least Favorite Things,” a new proprietary version by Liz Hottel Barrett, Kim Kimball Holmquist, and Susan Griffin Meeker.

The Turkey Basters performed on their instruments with customary panache.

[Photos: Chris Hamilton]



Among the New Acts:



[Photo: Sue Carr]

Karen Johnson gave a passionate rendition of Joyce Kilmer's poem "Tree", in memory of the long lost Class Tree that Karen planted 50 years ago, which apparently vanished into a revised campus construction plan. She also performed a foot-stompin' rendition of "Conjurin' Blues" from Junior Show, composed by Rocki Hill Hughes, whose terrific lyrics ("It's a hard road to travel, a mighty rough life to lead") and keyboard accompaniment brought down the house.

Sally Stearns Gipson and Kim Kimball Holmquist performed what appeared to be the mating ritual of a couple of adorable cats.



[Photo: Chris Hamilton]

Speaking of Cats, Kim sang "Memory" from the musical – but with words more appropriate to our times: *"Midnight. I wake up and remember/ that I left the door open with the groceries outside. / Where the hell did I put my keys? / Oh look! Here they are – underneath the TV guide."*

The tour de force of the evening, however, was "Swans Out of the Lake" (a water ballet without water), conceived, choreographed creative Liz Hottel Barrett, the original class team, the feel of every stroke as



[Photos: Chris Hamilton]



[Photo: Sue Carr]

Sunday Morning - “Celebration of Life Gathering”

Early Sunday morning, many gathered to remember classmates we have lost since our last reunion. Dee (who seemed to get to every event) wrote, “It was very meaningful – poignant to hear about classmates I hadn’t known through the memories of their close friends and room-mates, and learn how important those friendships had been, and how intense the sense of their personalities remained. It was especially nice to share with Jane Kaplan Yendell memories of two classmates – Laura Bruton Coelen and Sammy Morton Smith – who had meant a lot to both of us. Cindy Yee did it just right – nothing religious, just a time for sharing.”

The Party’s Over but the Beat Goes On!

Tired and needing to move on to further plans and obligations, classmates nonetheless departed reluctantly. Charlotte Potter Wolter observed, “Nobody said the Reunion was too long. Everyone wanted more time – to see more of the campus, to talk with more old friends, and new friends.”

And even as they departed to far-flung parts of the US and the world, classmates were quickly back on the email Chat List, discussing the weekend, talking about places they were traveling to, responding at length to this Scribe’s requests for impressions and memories about our four days together.

“Who knew our wonderful reunion would keep on giving us a lift (without surgery) long after we left campus!” Charlotte declared.

“I came with high expectations for a wonderful weekend,” Judy Weinstein Segal recalled, “and much to my surprise the weekend actually exceeded my expectations.”

“On a personal note,” wrote Jane Kaplan Yendell, “I finally feel like an uncommon woman. The weekend confirmed how happy I am in the final part of my life. And the journey began at MHC, where I learned, made friends and succeeded in graduating. As I processed the weekend after I got home, it seemed to me I had come full circle.”

Each reunion is different but almost always enriching, no matter where we are coming from in our lives. The connections get longer and deeper, and we are surprised by how much those four short years have meant over a lifetime. It must be said that the Class email Chat List has contributed immensely to that sense of extended community, and this is the on-going contribution of its founder, Carol Sweeney Benson, who richly deserved the Alumnae Loyalty Award this year for her efforts.

The email List has sustained Dottie Smith Mann through the long nightmare of her husband’s battle with stomach cancer. And through her emails we learned just how much grit and courage a battle like that requires. Just weeks after Reunion, we rejoiced as a community when Dottie announced that E.D. was at last able to take sufficient food by mouth to eliminate the constantly dysfunctional feeding tube. “This is truly the end of treatment,” declared Dottie, “a day long awaited. Hallelujah.” And the List replied, “Hallelujah!” In the coming years more of us are likely to need this community’s sustenance to get us through dark times. May we have the courage to reach out to each other. May we have the compassion to respond. Reunions like this one help build those possibilities. # # #