

MHEAC FALL NEWSLETTER

Connecting Alumnae Across Europe

Welcome Message

A Word from the European Council Chair

Dear All,

Three months have gone by since our latest newsletter, and it is so incredibly sad to see that almost all of us are back again to a life marked by lockdowns, travel restrictions, and all sorts of limitations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am sure we all hoped for better times by now, especially thinking ahead to the upcoming holiday season.

All we can do is abide by the rules, stay inside, focus on people and activities we truly love, drink and eat in moderation... and stay in touch with Mount Holyoke friends near and far. I trust our amazing e-cookbook, [Uncommon Kitchens](#), which is now available for ordering, will bring some solace and inspiration to your life in the kitchen. I also hope you will respond enthusiastically to our new culinary project, which aims to collect mouthwatering "festive" recipes in preparation for our "new normal style" holiday season.

If recipes are not your thing, I am sure that reading about life "on the red carpet" and the travels of Laura Aimone '04 will brighten up your day and that listening to the recording of Jane Robinson's literary talk, held in August, will offer some good reading inspiration. The stories of Mountain Day present and past will put a smile on your face and bring back unique and cherished memories of long walks, log cabins, and lazy talks in the sun with friends.

One thing that we all have learned in the past few months: (virtually) reaching out and staying in touch can be a source of deep joy and can add so much to our lives. At our recent MHEAC meeting, we reflected on this and committed as a group to continue to offer all European alumnae plenty of opportunities to network and connect. Our Sunday M&C calls will continue throughout the winter, complemented by new and uniquely inspiring literary aperitifs, starting with a special session with Patricia Brooks '85 in late November.

Stay safe and keep in touch, via our [FB group](#), [email](#), or our [website](#). I look forward to your recipes and your back stories for our new festive cookbook, as well as to seeing many of you soon at one of our events. We are quite an amazing bunch of people and nothing can stop us!

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Alumna Spotlight

Mount Holyoke Alums shine on the red carpet in Venice... virtually and in person!

Laura Aimone, Class of 2004

© Andrea Paoletti

The 2020 Venice Film Festival, the first major film festival post-Covid to take place completely "live" this year, saw the triumph of "Nomadland", a film directed by Mount Holyoke alumna Chloé Zhao '05. (see insert below).

While Chloé could not attend the festival and receive her prize in person, another MHC alumna, Laura Aimone '04, was very much present on (and behind!) the Venetian red carpet, using her professional talents and expertise to ensure the success of the event.

Laura, a talent handler, festival organizer, and film director, has been working in the film industry for many years. Her intellectual curiosity and love for travel and adventure have brought her all over the world, but our alma mater still holds a special place in her heart.

Read more about her exciting professional life and her memories of Italian Gracious Dinners at Ham Hall in this interview.

Can you tell us a few words about yourself?

At a conference, I would introduce myself like this: my name is Laura Aimone, I was born and raised in Piemonte in the north-west of Italy, I chose to live in Venice, but I spend most of my time traveling the world; I've worked in the film industry for the past 15 years. If we were sipping a Nilgiri white tea from the Blue Mountains in an Indian teahouse, I would tell you: Namaste, my first ever friend was a foreigner, I've always been attracted to cultures other than mine and to listening to different stories; just like the main character of the first short film I wrote and directed last year is learning, **I'm trying to live my life leaving the "what if" aside and just going for it.** If we were in front of a canvas, I would use a mix of orange, red, pink and dark yellow, with dots of marine blue and green.

Did you have a vision of your career when you were at Mount Holyoke? How did that vision change over the years?

When I was at Mount Holyoke I still had not discovered what exactly I wanted to do when I would "grow up", but no matter what I would end up doing, it was imperative for me to do it with passion. One of my goals in life has always been to wake up and be happy to go to work, so I have tried to tailor made my job around my biggest passions. This has been the *leitmotiv* throughout my whole career with the result that, in most cases, the boundaries between doing it for pleasure or doing it for work are blurred. How lucky is that?

Was there a particular event or time that you recognised that being in the film industry would be your life and your living?

When I graduated in Foreign Languages and Literatures in 2002 I knew exactly which elements my dream job should have: international context, the possibility to travel and to be in touch with different cultures, a very strong connection with the arts, interesting and stimulating people around, organisational elements. I was just not sure this job existed! After some rambling around between international holiday resorts in Egypt and the Dominican Republic and a teaching fellowship at Mount Holyoke College, the teacher I had graduated with asked me if I was willing to give a hand to the Director of the Women's Film Festival in Torino, who was looking for someone who could speak English. **I still remember the feeling on the first day of work: it was exactly like when you enter a house for the first time and you just know that's exactly where you want to live.**

What's your favourite part of your job and why do you love working in the film industry?

Without any doubt, the chance to meet likeminded people from all over the world and to be surrounded by stimulating minds. This happens when I'm working as talent handler on red carpets, when I'm discussing the logistics of a Festival with agents/pr managers, when I'm interviewing a director during a Q&A session, when I'm on set shooting my own film and, more indirectly, when I'm selecting films for a Festival program or watching them as part of the Festival jury. No matter how long you've done it for, **it is a job that can always surprise, challenge and enrich you.** Dull moments are just not contemplated, the only downside is it's addictive!

To continue reading the full interview and to find out which 3 movies that should be on every MHC alum's "must watch" list.. click below!

[Click here for the full interview...](#)

NOMADLAND

Last September, at the **77th Venice Film Festival**, the first A-list festival to happen since lockdown, *Nomadland* by **MHC graduate Chloé Zhao** was awarded the **Golden Lion** for best film, shortly followed by the **People's Choice Award** at the Toronto Film Festival.

Zhao thus becomes only **the fifth female director** – after Sofia Coppola, Mira Nair, Agnès Varda and Margarethe von Trotta – **to win Venice's top prize**.

The film portrays the story of Fern, a strong-minded and free-spirited lady, who, following the economic collapse of a company town in rural Nevada, packs her van and sets off on the road exploring a life outside of conventional society as a modern-day nomad. Frances McDormand's performance is extraordinary and she fluidly melts in with the real nomads in the film that serve as mentors and comrades in her adventure through the vast landscape of the American West. It is a subtle exploration of loss and grief, but also a celebration of how much little details and trivial encounters can add colors to the shades of grey.

Ultimately, it is a hymn to a lady who seems to know herself very well and always looks ahead, even when the road is not pointing anywhere.

The film is scheduled to be theatrically released in the United States on December 4, 2020.

ready for ordering . . .

Uncommon Kitchens Cookbook

A Collection of Recipes by Mount Holyoke Alumnae and Students from, in or in Love with Europe

Order your **FREE** copy of our *Uncommon Kitchens* cookbook by clicking [here!](#)

The next classic for each (virtual) kitchen shelf is ready! Make sure you order your own copy of *Uncommon Kitchens*, a fantastic cookbook which gathers all the 86 recipes and fascinating backstories submitted earlier this year by Mount Holyoke alumnae from, in or in love with Europe. From comforting breakfast specials to delectable desserts, this cookbook offers you an array of amazing recipes from all over the world that will keep you busy and happy in the kitchen in these dark winter months.

Uncommon Kitchens is available in Kindle, Epub and Pdf formats and can be ordered [here](#). Make yourself (or a dear one) a FREE present and order soon, the book will be emailed to you within 7 days. This offer is available for MHC alums and students only and is valid for 1 copy per order.

Kindly note: The cookbook is attractive and unique, so you may wish to order extra copies for friends and family - please do! The EAC and alumnae have made this extraordinary cookbook possible through their donations of treasured stories and recipes and by time freely given in compiling, editing, and judging, so that we can offer complimentary copies to all alumnae. If you order extra copies, a donation to the MHEAC "Graduating Senior Award" would be most appreciated.

Details will be supplied when requesting further copies from mhceuropean@gmail.com.

Well done and thanks to **Lauren Leese '23, Elizabeth Ta'eed '09, Silvia Maulini '80, and Virginia Ross '66** for making this cookbook possible!

Uncommon Kitchens – Holiday Season Special

Let's celebrate the Holiday Season together: festive recipes wanted!

The holiday season is approaching and this year we all know that "celebrating together" will be challenging as never before. While our "new normal" is neither pleasant nor desirable, we can still try and celebrate in true Mount Holyoke spirit, by sharing recipes and dear memories which belong to all the different seasonal and festive traditions cherished within our group.

All sort of "festive recipes and memories" are welcome, from traditional family dishes and drinks to sophisticated and extravagant culinary adventures. It will be wonderful to be able to celebrate together in this unique way and to enrich our *Uncommon Kitchens* collection!

The **Uncommon Kitchens** Holiday Season special is not a competition, but instead a just-for-fun chance to share recipes and memories! All Mount Holyoke College alumnae or students may submit, so long as you are from, in, or in love with Europe!

How to Enter:

- 1) Visit the [website](#) to download the recipe template.
- 2) Write up your recipe, being sure to complete the template in full.
- 3) Email your recipe to mhceuropean@gmail.com. Voila! Done!

All recipes will be posted on the website and shared with you all via Facebook and special editions of our newsletter.

Upcoming Events

Literary Aperitif

Saturday 21 November 2020

@6:00-7:30 pm CET

**Literary Aperitif with
professional coach and
writer Patricia Brooks '89**

The European Alumnae Council is pleased to invite you to an online literary aperitif with **Patricia Brooks '89**, an alumna living in France. Known as the Courage Catalyst, Patricia helps women **believe in their dreams, build confidence in their abilities, and develop actionable plans** so that they can achieve what they once thought impossible and feel empowered to tackle their next feat. In 2018, she started anew at the age of 51, following advice from her first book, **Growing Bold**. Patricia set a meaningful goal, created a plan, and followed it. Then she leapt, leaving her job and the US behind to live in the South of France. Patricia, a Certified Professional Coach, is the host of the **Discovering Courage Podcast and author of two books**. She is currently working on her third and building an online program to help women move abroad confidently and sustainably.

Patricia will share her story, outline the "Three Catalysts for Cultivating Courage," and provide tools that will help you **navigate uncertainty and change** so that you can find ways to turn obstacles into opportunities. Afterward, there will be a live Q&A session.

To register for the event please click below:

Register to the event

While we aim to accommodate as many requests as possible, the number of spots available is limited so we strongly advise you to respond ASAP. Within 48 hours of receiving your RSVP, you will receive a confirmation of your spot via email, and a few days before the event you will receive the link to attend the talk.

Please do not hesitate to ask if you would like technical support in using Zoom.

In preparation for Patricia's talk, should you be interested in purchasing a copy of either of her books (Growing Bold and Live a Bold Life), they are available on Amazon.

Virtual M&Cs

In late March, when most European countries started to embrace more and more social distancing measures, Corinne Morgan '13, President of the Mount Holyoke Club of Britain, thought it would be nice to set up a weekly virtual Milk and Cookies to help stay connected to one another and share thoughts and experiences in these difficult times.

The sessions, originally promoted to the British Club, were soon advertised to all members of the European Alumnae Community.

If you would like to take the opportunity to connect with other MHC alumnae, please feel free to join every Sunday evening at 8:00 PM (CET) 7:00 (GMT) at

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/685524164>

The link to the sessions is also pinned in our [Mount Holyoke European Alumnae Facebook](#) group page each Sunday morning, together with a yummy cookie recipe, courtesy of Corinne.

Italy - Virtual Aperitivo

Tuesday, November 3rd @ 6 - 7 pm (Italy)

Kate Mc Elwee '07 and Rachel Xin Zhu '13 will host a virtual aperitivo on November 3rd at 6pm. It will be election day in the U.S., so they thought it might be a good time for those connected to Mount Holyoke to not only get to know one another, but hold South Hadley (and the U.S.) in their thoughts. Feel free to drop in or out anytime during the session - this is an informal gathering!

ITALY VIRTUAL APERITIVO
03/11/2020

[Join via Zoom!](#)

MHC European Alumnae Council Meeting

The annual meeting of the European Alumnae Council took place on 17 October via Zoom.

The 19 Council members present engaged in fruitful and animated discussions, which focused on evaluating the virtual activities and outreach since the highly successful European Alumnae Symposium in Athens and on drafting new plans and projects to support our European Alumnae network.

Eleanor Chang '78, Director at Large, Global Strategy at the Alumnae Association, joined the group for part of the meeting, bringing everyone up to speed with the latest developments at the Association.

During the meeting, Silvia Maulini '80 (Chair) and Virginia Ross '66 (Treasurer) were unanimously confirmed for a new four-year term. The Council also acknowledged the past contributions of Maya D'Costa, former MHEAC liaison officer at the Alumnae Association, who left the organization at the beginning of the year.

Update on the next European Alumnae Symposium

In view of the complexity of the current health situation, all members agreed to defer a decision about the date of the next European Alumnae Council until an extraordinary council meeting in January 2021.

Wrap Up of Literary Aperitif

Jane Robinson, *Ladies Can't Climb Ladders: The Pioneering Adventures of the First Professional Women*

Jane Robinson, *Ladies Can't Climb Ladders: The Pioneering Adventures of the First Professional Women*

As a child Jane Robinson was banned from her local library for using a jam tart as a bookmark. Undeterred, Jane started her **own book collection; studied English as an undergraduate at Somerville College, Oxford; became an antiquarian bookseller;** and began writing about social history through women's eyes. This trajectory embodies the spirit of earlier women pioneers, and makes Jane the perfect author to launch the **first EAC Literary Aperitif**, which was Zoomed to two dozen alumnae on August 29, 2020.

Jane's tale begins in the gas-lit dust of a March evening in 1920, as women arrive at the Palace of Westminster, London, for a dinner to celebrate the passage of the **Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919)**. This decree enabled women to join the professions, to receive degrees, and to sit on juries. The celebration was short-lived. Even with this historic legislation, **women had to battle to overcome** the prevailing attitudes that a woman's place is in the home or that thinking too much shrinks a woman's womb.

Jane introduces us to women who took advantage of the act to become a lawyer, a medic, an architect, an academic, an engineer, and to enter the clergy. One pioneer, Ida Mann, rejected a career in the Post Office Savings Bank and daringly studied at the London School of Medicine. Ida made her own uniform, a jacket with multi-pockets for medical equipment, a sturdy skirt, and "had her own skeleton, probably dug from the battlefields of the Napoleonic Wars." Stockings of emerald green, purple, or scarlet completed her outfit.

These pioneers, **entering fields newly opened to women**, were pestered and mocked, but stood up against an entrenched patriarchal culture, each in her own unique way. As a fellow alum remarked, “**these are nice stories with a wow factor**. There is a warmth about these women, who feel like a friend along the road”, but they also persevered and pioneered, forging into their respective, professional fields.

Following Jane’s talk there were Q&As from alumnae, followed by our enthusiastic thanks. **A literary aperitif toast to Jane** for revealing the engaging stories of these women pioneers!

To meet Ida Mann and other extraordinary pioneers and to find out who thinks “ladies can’t climb ladders”, watch Jane’s recording of her talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1NdnbREGsU&app=desktop>

– recording on YouTube

written by Virginia Ross '66, with thanks to Jennifer Ransom '65, and Corinne Morgan '13, our Zoom master

Mountain Day Across Europe

Great Britain

The Club of Britain had their virtual Mountain Day on Saturday 10 October. It was a blast seeing new and familiar faces! It was truly a fantastic opportunity to connect with our wonderful alums around the UK and celebrate a well-loved tradition.

Greece

The MHC Alumnae of Greece had their virtual Mountain Day gathering on the sunny Sunday afternoon of the 11th of October. There was no hiking involved, but at least some members of the group enjoyed delicious ice-cream as the tradition calls. The group explored the zoom backgrounds powered by MHC and gave a possible date for their next virtual gathering. That was a wrap for a well-spent Sunday afternoon in good company and strong Mt Holyoke spirit!

The Netherlands

On Sunday 11 October alumnae in the Netherlands gathered for a virtual Mountain Day celebration on zoom. It was great to chat with new and old friends and to catch up with a former member of our group who joined us all the way from the United States!

Sweden

Alums in Sweden had a virtual Mountain Day Memories reminiscing on cosy memories at Mount Holyoke College. Some actually climbed Mount Holyoke, others got lost along the way, one alum remembered sleeping through the free day, most ate ice-cream or Atkins donuts, walked, or had picnics by the lakes or relaxed on Skinner Green.

Lovely to see old and new faces.

🍁🍂 Happy Fall! 🍂🍁

Past Events

Germany

The German alumnae community remained connected over the summer by holding regional events in the open air and in small groups.

In July [Marcia Schenck '09](#), Regional Head of the Berlin group, got together with three alums for a walk in the beautiful **park of Schloss Sanssouci in Potsdam**.

Meanwhile, the Munich group headed by [Nancy Kuehler '65](#) was keeping in touch via different online channels. Most recently the The Düsseldorf - Cologne Regional Group met for a **guided tour of the Skulpturenpark in Cologne**. Holding this event was possible due to the joint effort of the Regional Group Head, [Vanieta Canonico-Jahn '77](#), and the special Cologne Liaison of the Group, [Imke Kahlenberg 'MHC](#)G.

In Memoriam Ilse Peschek Lerche `51

The Mount Holyoke European Alumnae Community mourns the passing of [Ilse Peschek Lerche `51](#), who died in her home on September 14, 2020, at the age of 91.

Ilse was the **first German student to attend MHC after World War II**, and her year on (and off) campus was a life-changing experience. After the massive destruction and many deprivations she had experienced in Germany during and after the war, she delighted in the lighthearted jauntiness of her classmates, the serene beauty of the campus and the wonder of having chicken three times a week. Throughout her life, Ilse maintained strong ties to the **MHC alumnae in Munich** and was a very active and important member of the planning committee for the **European Alumnae Symposium in Munich in 2000**.

By chance, Ilse, a Chemistry student whose institute had been bombed, discovered a sign for a scholarship to the USA posted on a door at her university shortly before the 1pm deadline for oral interviews. After knocking on the door spontaneously, this student of natural sciences impressed the American interviewer with her realistic views and desire for new academic experiences and was accepted.

With a refugee passport and a scholarship thanks to her excellent grades, Ilse set forth on her great adventure on an overnight train ride to Cannes, France, and then a ship under Panamanian flag to NYC via Lisbon, Portugal, the first city on her way that hadn't been bombed. Imagine her surprise to be housed in a dorm near a lake in a double room as big as her family's apartment for four. To Ilse's amazement, Gracious Living, elegant dining in the dorm once a week with the students as hostesses to professors, meant dressing in evening gowns with petticoats. With the help of classmates, this problem, too, was surmounted. In her eyes, all her classmates seemed to come from wealthy families while she was the poor little thankful church mouse who knitted old sweaters into new ones. Ilse's roommate, Jean Redding, became a wonderful bridge to American life, once taking her along on a blind date to West Point, and, after graduation, Ilse became her bridesmaid, wearing a dress given to her by Jean's parents. Another classmate invited her to the opera in NYC, her first time ever due to the massive bombardment of Germany.

Equipped with a solid basis in Chemistry and a love for America that had begun with American CARE packages and school lunches, Ilse, who had already been taking university courses in Germany, easily **became a top student in sciences at MHC**. What a surprise it was to learn about an academic honor code, an anathema to German students who grow up with a "code of friendship" and "honor" helping one another during tests. At MHC, the honor code became stamped on Ilse's soul. At the end of the academic year, Ilse's classmates voted this one-year student to be a member of the Class of '51, so she was able to take part in the Commencement celebration. **She was offered a scholarship** to continue her studies at Mount Holyoke, but could only think of her family in their one-room apartment and how her fatherland needed her help in rebuilding every facet of the country while she was enjoying beautiful experiences. She decided to turn down the offer and think no more of her own advantage.

After graduation and the extension of her visa, Ilse set forth on a Greyhound bus trip throughout the USA from the beautiful Berkshires and Rockefeller Center to San Francisco, enjoying the hospitality of one alumna family after the other and thankful for help from the Methodist Church. Again and again, her hosts tried to understand nights spent in bomb shelters and life in a destroyed Germany after the war. During storms, she still woke up thinking of soldiers at the front moving nearer. Ilse felt humbled to be able to exchange stories of the “old country” with a lovely old Jewish couple for whom she was a welcome connection to the past, someone with whom they could speak German and rejoice in old memories of times before the war. **She met with friendship and acceptance everywhere.**

During her academic year at MHC, she had even fallen in love with a French student at Amherst College, but then she returned to Germany and continued her studies of Chemistry and Biology to get a doctorate. There she met and married Peter Lerche (deceased 2016), who became one of Germany’s foremost constitutional lawyers with a chair for constitutional law at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. Ilse and Peter enjoyed 61 years of marriage and had two sons, Wolfgang, a nuclear physicist at CERN, and Clemens, then a legal adviser to the Bavarian State government. For the European Alumnae Symposium in 2000, Clemens kindly arranged a diplomatic reception at the seat of the government in Munich.

Ilse was an extraordinary person and carried memories of Mount Holyoke College in her heart. We miss her.

Get to know the European Council Country Delegates

Looking for a group near you?

[Click Here for Contact Details](#)



Mount Holyoke European Alumnae Council

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