

Mount Holyoke College Class of 1977 Reunion Weekend, May 19–21, 2017

It is a pleasure to be writing up a recap of our wonderful Mount Holyoke College 40th reunion, which took place over graduation weekend, May 19–21, 2017. A total of 116 of our classmates and 31 guests attended. The hard-working committee and many of the class officers arrived on Thursday to take care of the myriad of last-minute preparations.

Our class was fortunate to be housed in Mead Hall which, of course, could not be more centrally located. The majority of folks rolled in on Friday and by Friday dinner we had a good representative of attendees. After a spirited cocktail hour, we had a casual dinner in the dorm organized by Susanne Duncan and Sue Wuerthele, and good conversations lingered into the night. Susanne also put together a “Then and Now” slide show (1drv.ms/p/s!AtmhrT3r6m3XoGTP5ICibIMrzdXO) which looped throughout the evening and was a fun walk down memory lane. Quite a few people only had a marginal night’s sleep as Friday had been extraordinarily warm. Saturday dawned with much cooler temperatures and bright blue skies. It was truly a perfect spring day and the campus sparkled with lush foliage.

After breakfast at Abbey Hall, our class donned its whites and Star War themed costumes of sashes and light sabers. Quite a number of our classmates also wore Princess Leia costumes—’77 was hard to miss! The parade snaked through campus as usual; the Leias amongst us drew a great amount of excitement from the crowd, as did our creative signs. Some favorites were “Uncommon Wookies”, “Class of 1977 and Star Wars – Both Celebrating 40 Years!”, and “The MHC Force is With Us!” Our class wound up in front of Porter and we cheered on as the younger classes came through with the seniors, bringing up the rear. Many of the 2017 soon to be graduates had tears in their eyes as the realization dawned on them that they were joining this wonderful group of impressive alumnae. The seniors wrapped Mary Lyon’s grave with the laurel chain. Following remarks by Acting President Stephens, and a few verses of “Bread and Roses” as well as the Mount Holyoke hymn, the paraders disbursed.

Many alums proceeded to Mary Woolley Hall for the 145th Annual Meeting of the Alumnae Association. The speakers were inspiring and each reunion class gave a small snippet of the events that were current on campus during their four years. In terms of awards for giving and participation, our elders by 10 years, the class of 1967, blew it out of the water. They had approximately 175 reunion attendees and close to 90 percent participation in their alumnae giving. We have some big shoes to fill in 10 years! BUT, Class Co-Agent Deb Ditzler reports that “our class has donated the most money in the 40th reunion year ever, ever, ever, \$433,000 and counting.” So major congratulations are due all around!

Our class then proceeded to the steps of Skinner Hall for the annual class photograph. It’s always a challenge for a lone photographer to corral this many uncommon women into a workable pose. But he succeeded. Another long-standing tradition, the picnic on the green, followed.

The rest of the afternoon was free time to pursue individual interests. One of those was a class Fun Run around Upper Lake hosted by Annie Marshall. Eighteen of our classmates participated and the top 5 finishers were Anne Waters, Cathy Gibson, Ginny Loughlin, Margery Wasko, and Maureen Harrigan. Your scribe took a wonderful tour of the library, which now features a central courtyard and café showcasing a lovely Chihuly sculpture. The bridge building to Dwight Hall with its cooperative learning spaces is very impressive.

At 4 o'clock, we again gathered in the Mead living room for our class meeting. At the meeting our President Liz Gershon presented a number of awards, including acknowledgement of outgoing officers: Vice President Nancy Friedrichs O'Sullivan; Secretary Betsy Meyerdricks; Treasurer Susan Pardo Hardy; Class Scribe Betsy Williams Menzel; Co Class Agents Suzanne Lufkin Weiss and Debra Ditzler; Nominating Committee Chair Lisa Perreault Ireland; and Reunion Co Chairs Judith Flynn and Catherine Whelan Kligler. Judy and Cathy in turn acknowledged Liz for the commitment and energy that she devotes to serving as our Class President. And the entire reunion committee was thanked for all their hard work: Adrienne Skinner (social chair), Sue Wuerthele and Susanne Beery Duncan (Friday dinner co-chairs and "The Uncommon Woman of 1977: Transitions" slide show), Cynthia Reiche Schumacker and Merry Galassi Hampton (Saturday dinner co-chairs), Susan Saxe (parade costume chair), Jules Dickinson (nametag chair), Nan Haley Redmond (communications chair), Susan Sokoloski (hospitality chair), Annie Marshall (silent auction and Fun Run), Cathy Kowal-Montecalvo (trivia contest), and Betsy Menzel (reunion scribe).

Two representatives from the Alumnae Association came by to present the Loyalty Award from the Alumnae Association to our classmate, Stephanie Jaffe Green, for her longtime support of the College in a wide variety of ways.

Mid-meeting we were joined by Margaret Ayer, class of 1947, who is the mother of our deceased classmate Meg Ayer. Ms. Ayer, impressive at age 92, was attending her 70th reunion and walked over to Mead to talk with us. She spoke a few very poignant words about Meg and about how she (Margaret) feels as if she is a mother to our entire class. Quite a moving moment. At that point, we observed a minute of silence and then Liz read the names of all seventeen of our classmates who have left this Earth too soon.

Our longtime treasurer, Sue Pardo Hardy, presented the class financials. It was proposed, seconded, and approved that the class dues be raised to \$50 (total) for the next 5-year period, i.e. \$10 per year. Dues can now be paid online so if you weren't able to do so at Reunion, please go to our website and pay up. The balance in our account as of reunion weekend was \$12,885.73 with a number of reunion expenses outstanding.

Class officers for the next five years were also proposed and elected. They are: President Liz Lewis Gershon; Vice President Merry Galassi Hampton; Secretary Susan Saxe; Treasurer Sue Pardo Hardy; Scribes Nancy Herman Jarrett and Andi Popik Taber; Nominating Chair Lisa Perreault Ireland. At the time of the meeting, there were no nominees for head class agents or 45th Reunion Chairs. Subsequently, Susan

Sokoloski and Susan Graves have stepped up to fill the class agent role. If you are interested in chairing our 45th reunion, contact Liz or Lisa.

During and after the meeting, the class hosted a silent auction organized by Annie Marshall. The proceeds (\$1,160 total), were split between our class treasury and a contribution to the Alumnae Association Founder's Fund.

Beer and wine resumed at 5:00 and we were treated to a spectacular cheese reception organized by Adrienne Skinner, her sister Lassa, and daughters Catherine and Alex. Lassa is a cheese purveyor and rolled out an amazing spread. Both the cheeses and seeing the stellar "Skinner women" was a treat!

By 6:30 it was time to troop next-door to a dining room in Blanchard for our lovely sit down dinner organized by Merry Galassi Hampton and Cynthia Schumacker. At the conclusion of the delicious meal, we heard remarks by two of our outstanding classmates, Debra Martin Chase and Valerie Barr.

Debra, a graduate of Harvard Law School, is a well-known motion picture and television producer in Hollywood and currently serves on the Mount Holyoke Board of Trustees. Debra gave us a brief update on the state of the College as well as a short talk on the trajectory of her career and how much she feels her Mount Holyoke education contributed to her success. (N.B. our class also has two other members serving on the Board of Trustees: Barbara McClearn Baumann, chair, and Jeanne Amster. Neither Barb nor Jeanne were able to attend this weekend.)

Valerie received her master's degree from New York University and PhD from Rutgers University. She is currently on the faculty at Union College but will be returning to Mount Holyoke in July as the first person to hold the Jean E. Sammet '48 Chair in Computer Science. Valerie talked about the importance of intertwining computer science with all of the liberal arts disciplines. It's exciting to know that she will be at the helm of this important department for the College. (Note: Sadly, Jean Sammet passed away at the age of 89 on May 20th, the day we were on campus. Valerie posted, "I was very sad to hear the news that Jean Sammet had died. I was hopeful that MHC and the CS dept. would be able to honor her at her 70th reunion in 2018. Nonetheless, I will definitely use my position as the Jean E. Sammet Prof. of Computer Science to do what I can to make sure that Jean continues to get the recognition she deserves for all of her contributions to computer science and to MHC!")

The evening wound up with a rollicking trivia contest back in our dorm hosted by Cathy Kowal-Montecalvo. Teams competed on both college and *Star Wars* trivia—many of the questions proved to be a real challenge but in true Mount Holyoke spirit, the competition was fast and furious. The winners received Holyoke "to-go" mugs.

A few intrepid classmates headed out to the canoe sing on Lower Lake, but many of us fell asleep (or not!) to the sounds of seniors serenading.

Sunday morning came all too soon. A number of our classmates took a bird walk around Upper Lake hosted by Cathy Klinger (with beautiful photos captured by Anne Webster) and/or scaled Mt. Holyoke in Skinner State Park. In a flash, it was time to say goodbye. The friendships formed and reformed over the weekend gave all the attendees many happy memories and have inspired us to stay in touch both with each other and with our alma mater. Many classmates posted pictures and comments on our Facebook page so take a look. Judy has created a shared album that others can add photos to at this link: <https://goo.gl/photos/8XYhqgveYAwxtvu16>

Additionally, classmate Chris (Bryce) Sass is compiling a directory of attendees with contact information for those wishing to participate.

Submitted by Betsy Williams Menzel, 6.05.2017