

*The Wellesley College Class of 1956 presents*

# **Scarlet Letters**

*Number 23 - April 2022*



## **Dear Classmates:**

On Feb. 7th your class officers met via Zoom to review the past year with our 65th Reunion and to plan ahead. We agreed that maintaining connections with each other should be our prime focus, and that Scarlet Letters is an important factor. Here is the 23rd issue, with thanks to the team. Consider contributing an article yourself, or a poem, or some art. Send it to [claudia.bushman@gmail.com](mailto:claudia.bushman@gmail.com) or [smonks341@gmail.com](mailto:smonks341@gmail.com), our co-editors.

In the spring, we will organize mini reunions, Zoom "teas", and other gatherings. Meanwhile, think about writing something and make an effort to access our website.

Stay well, stay safe, and stay in touch.

With hugs all around,

**Anne Sinnott Moore,**  
**Class President**  
[djasmoore@gmail.com](mailto:djasmoore@gmail.com)

Did you get your 65<sup>th</sup> Reunion Record Book? If not, please contact [claudia.bushman@gmail.com](mailto:claudia.bushman@gmail.com)

Are you not receiving **Scarlet Letters**? Call or write to Wellesley to update your information. To sign in on the website:

Type in **Wellesley 1956** on any browser. Click on **Wellesley Class of 1956, Wellesley College Alumnae Assn.** to see almost everything that is on the website.

To access everything (record book directory, photo albums) you will have to use your new Wellesley college login, username and password.

For help, contact the Wellesley College help desk at [helpdesk@wellesley.edu](mailto:helpdesk@wellesley.edu)

Activity for a snowy day: Watch the wonderful photo montage that Toni Liebman prepared for our 65<sup>th</sup> Reunion, using music from our junior show, *Infernally Yours*, and her many class photos. It's great!

<https://alum.wellesley.edu/fs/resource-manager/view/efab36f0-9612-4bd7-9341-a696d84dca1a>

## A Close Encounter...of a Different Kind

Years ago, when I was driving down a country road in Maine, a chicken-sized wild bird trailed by a convey of tiny chicks leisurely sauntered across the road in front of me. I watched with delight until the last baby had disappeared into the tall grasses bordering the road. Wanting to be sure that I'd been watching a ruffed grouse and her brood, I described what I'd witnessed to a local neighbor. "Oh, no, deah," he said firmly. "That was a paatridge." As we all know, in England, partridges enjoy sitting in pear trees. The only partridge existing in America is a bird known as the gray (or grey) partridge, a Eurasian species imported into this country in the early 1900's. And yet in rural Northern New England, the old colonial name persists.



Most of you, I am sure, are familiar with the ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*). The bird we've all seen is approximately 17 inches long. Although there is a gray morph in NH, I've seen only brown-striped individuals. The sexes are nearly identical with a head crest that can be raised or lowered at will, generous neck ruffs, heavily spotted and barred feathering and a long, flat, black-tipped tail. They favor mixed woodlands from which, in the spring, one often hears the

wonderful sound of their drumming. Each male stakes out his own boulder, fallen log or stump to perch upon as he challenges his rivals with the strength of his drumming. He makes this surprisingly loud sound by cupping his wings against the air as he beats them rapidly. I've been told that the bird "explodes into flight" with a great rushing of wings if you come upon it camouflaged on the forest floor. The ruffed grouse is omnivorous and non-migratory. It subsists on buds, leaves, berries, seeds, and insects. The female lays a large clutch of eggs which require 23 days to hatch, and the chicks stay with their mother for approximately four months.

My Winter's Tale is strange indeed. It began on a cold December afternoon when I stopped to pick up my mail. As I approached the tilting row of mailboxes, I glimpsed something out of the proverbial corner of my eye. Astonished, I looked more closely and there, standing beneath a mailbox was a ruffed grouse. It stood there calmly, looking up into my face and did not move as I stepped from my car. I moved cautiously toward it, fearful of scaring it into flight. And it walked up to me! I had never been so close to a ruffed



grouse. I could see the white eyeline, the buffy throat feathers, the intricate pattern of spots and stripes. It was amazingly beautiful. The bird cocked its head, staring at me with its shiny dark eyes as if it were expecting something. Across the road, two men were working on a neighbor's electric fence. Perhaps they could tell me something about this bird. It had been "keeping company" with them for several days, they explained. They'd even been offering it crumbs from their sandwiches, pieces of trail mix bars. One of the men told me how astonished he'd been when, as he was driving his tractor, the bird flew up to his shoulder, remaining perched as he drove around the field. I squatted down to talk to the grouse, dazzled by its beauty, fascinated by its tameness. At last, I picked up my mail and walked over to my car, followed closely by the grouse. Had I encouraged the bird to jump in, perhaps he would have.

On my way home, I passed my neighbor. She leaned out of her car window and asked, "Have you met Rudy yet?" She explained that about three weeks ago, a brown something had rocketed over her car's hood as she approached the mailbox. And that was the beginning of her friendship with a grouse she nicknamed Rudy. Anne had no idea whether that was the day he arrived on Bible Hill. But she did know that the bird was there every morning when she dropped her boys off to catch the school bus. And he was waiting faithfully when her boys leaped off the bus at 3:30 pm. The family was enchanted with Rudy, but worried that he'd starve as winter deepened. Perhaps they could capture him somehow and keep him penned up until spring. Alarmed, I contacted the NH Fish and Game representative in Keene. We talked for a long while and he assured me that a grouse will certainly survive the rigors of winter. I



pressed him about the grouse's unnatural behavior, and he admitted that he was stumped. He was probably a youngster who might have been hand-reared and released. This would explain his apparent yearning for human companionship. His concern, of course, was the ease with which a predator could approach such an unwary bird. Meantime, I discussed this bird with other "birdy" friends. Only one told me that he'd heard similar stories of people-oriented grouse.

Armed with the knowledge that the species was able to endure winter, Ann agreed to leave him at his self-selected station. My husband, Len, was let in on the excitement. One afternoon, he agreed to photograph Rudy. As you can see, Rudy accepted seeds from this child, although the boy was startled by the strength of his pecking. Two days later, Christmas vacation began. Rudy's fans agreed to appear at the mailboxes at his regular 'viewing times,' but apparently this wasn't good enough for Rudy. Perhaps he missed the noisy approach of the old yellow school bus. Perhaps his curiosity about humankind was satiated. Perhaps he had become someone else's dinner. At any rate, Rudy, the Mailbox Mascot was never seen again. But this little bird will not soon be forgotten. To be so close to a beautiful and trusting wild creature was a rare and meaningful close encounter.

**Meredith Johnson Allen**  
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## Woodcuts

Occasionally I like to make block prints as a change from my usual painting and drawing. I taught myself the technique. The process is actually quite simple. Children often learn to dig or cut a pattern into the flat side of a peeled potato cut in half. Then they press it on an ink pad and onto a piece of paper. Block prints--linocuts, woodcuts and wood engravings--follow the same principle.

I use both wood and linoleum but prefer linoleum because it is so much easier to cut. The design is developed from one of my drawings, drawn onto the block and then cut with special gouges, knives with either a "V" shaped or rounded blade in a variety of sizes.

Block printing is an effective way to teach design because one has to deal positively with so-called negative space that has to be removed by the gouges. A thick viscous ink is rolled onto a roller or brayer on a glass top table or palette and then rolled evenly over the uncut portion of the block. A piece of paper, either rice paper or a sturdy paper with a soft tooth, is placed over the block and in my case rubbed with a spoon.

Because of the nature of the materials, especially wood, the technique lends itself to rough, somewhat abstracted designs. The Japanese printmakers, who are incredibly skilled, manage to cut fine lines and very detailed, complicated designs, but most Western artists use a rough style.



What I do is relatively simple. There are other possibilities, like wood engraving which is done on the end grain of wood to produce fine line and color printing with multiple blocks, which I haven't explored. The style of my work varies because of both subject matter and materials. My figurative paintings are quite realistic because the difficulty of getting the figure accurate pushes me in that direction. My landscapes fall between prints and the figure. It's impossible to depict every tree, leaf, or blade of grass so I have come up with a visual equivalent, a calligraphic texture, which lends itself to abstraction.







Now one of my challenges is to fully integrate landscape with groups of figures, probably by tightening one and loosening the other. I've been painting and drawing going on seventy-five years and there's no end to the things I want to do.

**Eunice Agar**

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*Shelly Pugh Wolfe came to Wellesley from Columbus, Ohio, where she was her senior class valedictorian. While at Wellesley she majored in History of Art and lived in Severance. After Wellesley, she returned to Columbus and taught at the Columbia Art School. She married Richard Wolfe in 1959. They had two daughters, Lucy and Betty. After the marriage dissolved, and while working on her Ph.D in medieval art, she met Dr. Yoshio Kusaba. She settled in Chico, California and married Yoshio in 1987. Shelly was greatly influenced by the works of Gauguin. She left a large body of work, mostly in oils and pastels, a few of which we show here. Shelly died in February, 2021.*







## Sailing to Tonga

Most of our adventures have been skiing and hiking all over the world. A few have been sailing outside of our country. In 1992 we joined four other couples (all of whom were close friends) for a sailing adventure in Tonga. Tonga is a Polynesian kingdom consisting of 176 South Pacific islands. Only 36 of them are inhabited.

After arriving at the capital, Nuku'alofa, we flew to one of the outer islands, where we

rented two sailboats and stocked up on food. Besides visiting many islands, we enjoyed windsurfing, snorkeling, and meeting other sailors from all over the world.

One of the highlights of our trip was attending a church service on one of the islands. As we approached the church, we saw men in grass skirts ringing huge bells. The service was in the Tongan language. Afterwards a family who spoke English invited us for lunch. Their yard was inhabited by all sorts of domestic animals. Inside about sixteen of us sat on the floor, while eating a delicious meal. The children especially enjoyed showing off for their guests. It turned out that this family had relatives living in East Palo Alto, CA near us. Many Tongans come to our country to work as caregivers and yard workers.

Needless to say, our sailing experience in their far-off country exceeded our expectations and was well worth the effort.

**Ann Cleminshaw Limbach**

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### **Letters Home**

*Some excerpts from letters written in 1952 during her freshman year by Maggie Daniel Russell to her parents in Shelbyville, Kentucky*

“Dear Mommy and Daddy: So much has happened that I’m probably skipping a lot—we’ve been really busy every minute. How are you all? I miss you, but at the rate we’re going, Christmas will be here in almost no time. . .

You all just have to come up here sometime. This is really one of the most beautiful places I’ve ever seen. It’s entirely different from the way I imagined it, but every day you see more and more of its beauty. From practically anywhere you can get a breathtaking view.”

“You can stop worrying now. Everybody has been so nice—and the campus is so beautiful! Mother, we have to sign slips when we go out for anything at all, even something on the campus; and tell when we expect to be back, then sign in the actual time we get in. You have to have permission from the House Head to be out later than 10:00. . .

We got our gym stuff and tried it on to be sure of the fit. They’re really pretty (for gym suits!) The shorts are a light blue with white tennis shoes, shower sandals and two pairs of socks. The tennis shoes and sandals are really nice and I can use them at home, too.”

“Do you think I could have eight or ten more dollars? Everything I’ve gotten has been something I’ve had to have. I’ve written it all down in a little book and will show it to you at Christmas. I have \$16, but I want to get a slicker (\$11) and I’m sure \$8 more will last me at least till the end of October and maybe longer. It’s just having to get so many things at the first (I hope). More soon.

Love to all, Margaret.”

**Margaret Daniel “Maggie” Russel**

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