

# *Scarlet Letters*

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*Betsy Cassel Stern, Mary Russell Oleson, Mimi Gorn Tausner, and Arlene Gumbiner Block, a quartet of 1956 Wellesley beauties at their 60th college reunion. Picture by Toni Holland Liebman*

## **Comments, Contributions, Inquiries Invited**

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## **Meatloaf**

In a large mixing bowl put about one pound of 85% lean hamburger. Add about one cup of Pepperidge Farm Herb-Seasoned Classic Stuffing.

Mix hamburger and stuffing. Add enough Clas-sico Tomato and Basil Sauce to even the mixture. Stir in one egg

Use butter to grease the four sides of a meatloaf pan. Put fully mixed ingredients into meatloaf pan. Cover top of meatloaf with a small amount of Clas-sico Tomato and Basil Sauce.

Depending on your oven, bake at 340 or 350 de-grees for about forty minutes. Serves four.

*This recipe was given to me by Suzanne Hewitt Low-ell, Wellesley 56. Suzanne got it from her mother.*

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## A Family Trip

In the spring, Peter and I offered our daughters a family trip. They had to pick the time and place and plan the trip. They decided to go to Germany, so that our grandchildren could see the place of Peter's birth. Peter and I had gone to Stuttgart, the city of his birth in 1932, twice--once when we were married in 1962 and he was working in Europe for eight months, and again with Carolyn and Diana in 1986. This time we were eight people--Carolyn and Owen, her 16-year-old son, and Diana and Kevin with their girls, Ruby Rose, 10, and Gemma Grace, 8.

Peter's father was the third-generation head of a cigar manufacturing company that employed almost 2,000 people. His family had been located in the Stuttgart area as long as anyone could remember. With the advent of Naziism in 1933, he began to have difficulties. All Jewish businesses had to have Nazis on their boards. Newspapers refused to accept advertising from Jewish businesses. My father-in-law had a non-Jewish friend who was equivalent to a secretary of the interior. He took the train to Berlin to meet with him. After some desultory conversation, the friend said that if there was a problem with the government, he could be helpful. Then my father-in-law asked, "but if the problem is with the party?" His friend said he was sorry that he asked the question. My father-in-law got back on the train and told his wife that he would have to find a way to sell the business and leave. He had complete clarity and he knew that his Iron Cross from the First World War when he was a teenager in the trenches would not save him. And he would have to leave what he referred to as "our beloved state of Wurttemberg", the homeland of his family. It took a year. Peter's mother had relatives in New York who had a successful business and agreed to be their sponsor. His father sold his business at a rock bottom price to a Swiss company--many of which, we later learned, were buying Jewish businesses at bargain prices because if Jews wanted to leave, they had no choice. So they left--Peter was three, his sister was seven. Their father got work as a \$20 a week tobacco packer in an American company--essentially a laborer. And their life completely changed. No nurse, no maid, no piano, no ski vacations or family visits to resorts. No friends, no language, no nearby relations. They accepted this enormous life change with grati-

tude for their freedom. They did not look back and at the very last minute, they managed to persuade their parents to come--a difficult task.

On our trip we were in Munich for three nights and then took the train to Stuttgart. The children saw Peter's house--the end house of eight row houses, with a small back garden, looking just as it did in photos from 1932. Even the cobblestone pavement looked the same. My letter to the owners (I did not know their name--I just wrote to the address) had not arrived--but we were very fortunate--they came back to the house while we were standing there, looking into the back yard. The owner and her husband now live behind this house and their son and family live in Peter's house so we could not enter it. However, there was a construction staircase rising to the third floor of Peter's house, and our group was welcome to climb those stairs and enter the third floor of the house. Most did so and saw a beautiful finished attic. For Peter, an emotional experience to set foot in the place his family had to leave so many years ago. Of course, he remembered nothing, but we have pictures from long ago.

For me, the emotional complication of this trip was seeing the metal tiles inset in the pavement of the adjoining house. They had not been there on our two previous visits, but now Germany is willing to confront the atrocities of the past and the inset tiles across the country are one expression of this. On these tiles were the names, birth dates, and deportation dates of the couple who were the neighbors--they were deported in 1941 and killed in 1942. When you see something like this, the impact is far greater than perceptions from years of reading history, novels, and memoirs. You recognize that an accident of birth has saved you from a terrible fate. And in Peter's case, he was saved by the clear sight and courage of his parents. I wish that all endangered people could have this luck. But that is seldom possible. I hope that our grandchildren will embrace this memory. Then the purpose of our trip will be fulfilled.

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*Our family in front of 18 Emserstrasse, Stuttgart. Back row, Kevin Morris, Diana Strauss, Peter Strauss, Carolyn Strauss, and Owen Strauss*

*Front row, Gemma Grace Morris 8, and Ruby Rose Morris 10.*

*Addenda from Laura: Kevin was born in Thailand, the child of evangelical missionaries (he is detached from all religion) and Owen was adopted at birth--of non-Jewish parentage.*



*After Peter has walked into the third floor of his former house, he is greeted by Birgit Rothfuss, the current owner.*

*The metal tiles in front of the former neighbor's house*



*Pictures by Kevin Morris*



## Pyramids, Pharoahs, and Pita Bread

Pita bread, fresh from an Egyptian clay oven, is the world's best bread. Warm, soft, and fluffy, it puts our western version to shame. A great way to start off your day in Cairo, accompanied by hummus, black olives, sliced cucumbers, and creamy feta cheese.

Cairo is a vast, bustling, dirty, overcrowded city where the traffic is horrendous and the call to worship sounds five times daily to summon the faithful to prayer. The sound is haunting, otherworldly, but it feels right in this city on the Nile where you can see the outlines of the pyramids across the river in Giza on a clear day (the Egyptians call it fog, I call it smog).

Cairo is a city of ancient mosques, minarets, modern buildings, horrendous slums, donkey carts vying with cars, street markets, galabayas (long dresses) and burkas mixed with western dress. We were surprised to learn that wearing traditional dress is not a religious mandate. It's a personal decision.

The treasure-laden, world-famous Egyptian Museum will be soon moving to its new home in a huge building with better lighting and greatly expanded

exhibit space. It houses statuary, mummies, and art from the ancient kingdom forward, encompassing 4,000 years of history.

In a country where only 2 percent of the land is arable, the rest being desert, 99 percent of the population lives on 3.5 percent of the land, mostly along the Nile River Valley and its fertile delta. The Sahara Desert with its swirling sands and deceptive mirages comprises the bulk of the country.

An occasional river boat plying the Nile with foreign tourists reminds you that January is high season in Egypt. After the brief uprising in 2011 and subsequent events, tourism stopped completely. Tourists have returned since 2018. Security is tight. Each tourist bus has an armed guard. Each hotel has stringent security measures. The huge police and military presence on the streets is no nonsense. Foreign currency provides much needed revenue to boost Egypt's coffers and the current government is taking no chances with the safety of visitors.

Floating down the Nile south from Luxor to Aswan is nothing short of amazing. Bulrushes line the



*Making pita bread at hotel in Cairo*



*Abu Simbel*

riverbank, with mud huts nestled among the stately date palms (the fresh dates are superb), and a backdrop of stark sand mountains. Black-garbed women with only their eyes exposed cluster in circles, surrounded by barefooted, playing children, cows, water buffalo, horses, and donkeys. Life has changed little in the past 4000 years.

The main attraction in Egypt is the antiquities. They do not disappoint. From the enormous reconstructed temples at Abu Simbel to the tombs continuously being excavated in the Valley of the Kings, the entire country is a museum of ancient wonders. Huge statues, cartouches, and hieroglyphics tell the story of many great kingdoms and the pharaohs who ruled them. Outstanding among them are Ramses II, his beloved queen, Nefertiri, and the bold queen, Nefertiti, who ruled like a man. Cleopatra's fame and exploits have been forever glamorized by Elizabeth Taylor. Tut, the boy king, ruled only a few years before his premature death, but his fame overshadows his achievements and his tomb is one of the most frequently visited.

The population of approximately 98 million people is called a democracy, headed by a former general, but in reality, it seems closer to a dictatorship. People are reluctant to complain after the chaos following the uprising and are quick to point out the much-needed reforms and stability. Guides are careful not to criticize the current regime. One reform which has not happened is garbage collection. It piles up everywhere and is left to rot and feed the huge population of stray cats and dogs.

Surprisingly, the divorce rate is 60 percent. In rural areas, most marriages are still arranged, and interestingly, the divorce rate is lower for them than for couples in the cities who meet and marry on their own. The law dictates that you must be twenty-one to marry, but people manage to get around it.

The Egyptians we met seemed to be excitable, affectionate, outgoing people, quick to greet a stranger and offer help. Sometimes they offer more help than you want or need. Street vendors accost you, appearing out of nowhere. "La shakran" (no thank you) becomes your favorite phrase, which doesn't even slow down their relentless pursuit. Still, shopping/bargaining is fun and friendly. Our dollar is widely accepted, and it is easier to use than



*Looking across Cairo toward pyramids in Giza*

the Egyptian pound which is worth approximately 17 cents. Goods ranging from eyeglass cases to Arab headgear to galabayas to scarabs to necklaces, etc. are for sale at every historic site and in towns along the river. One enterprising entrepreneur pulled his rowboat alongside our river boat and threw merchandise up to our balconies, barking out his prices. It was all great fun. Bargaining ensued along with an impressive number of purchases of towels, tablecloths, scarves, etc.

Egypt assaults your senses and enhances your appreciation for the ancient kingdoms that flourished along the Nile. It's a living history lesson, an experience entirely foreign to our American lifestyle. It's well worth a visit.

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THE DEER PARK  
*by Joan Miles Oliver*

We come to know her through her fawns, triplets, perfectly identical. Led by  
The doe, they make a mini-herd, a satellite of the herd of perhaps fifteen deer who  
Live on the fringes of our suburban existence.  
She is gaunt. I worry, silently, about Chronic Wasting Disease.  
But she gains substance. She is svelte, sedate  
But not matronly, leading her mini-herd with a hint of self-importance.  
For the first month, they travel en masse, a tight cluster. They visit  
Our back yard, the doe perusing the thicket at the back, the fawns lying on the grass,  
Composed, grazing, gazing nonchalantly through the Pella French doors  
Into our family room, where my son and I sit on the sofa gazing back at them, rapt.

The following month, the ties binding the mini-herd together begin to  
Loosen. The quartet drift across our back yard and those of our neighbors  
On either side. They are uncannily aware of each other's presence,  
Staying together using cues not available to us. They drift left or right,  
Never spread over more than three back yards. It is as though there are  
Invisible cords stretching between them--they are a single one-celled organism, an  
Amoeba, with ectoplasm flowing now to one node, now to another.

One day, in desultory conversation on the family room sofa, my son and I are startled  
By sudden flashes of white outside in the back yard.  
It is the doe, alone, and she is running amok. The white is  
Her upraised tail, her underbody, the inner sides of her legs.  
Oblivious to her surroundings, she is plunging, bucking, wheeling, thrashing, her legs  
Flailing. She briefly subsides on a bare spot in the thicket on her knees, heaving. Then  
She renews her frenzy. My thoughts race down an inner telegraph line:  
Self-injury—rabies—glass Pella doors—Wildlife Animal Control.  
Where is the phone? Then, as suddenly as she has begun,  
She vanishes, soundlessly.

Stunned, my son and I sift through our deer epistemology and  
The litany of possible causes: the deafening clang of a trash truck;  
Barking of the Golden Retriever next door; a dog in a neighboring lot;  
A whole swarm of hornets if she disturbed their nest;  
A deer fly stuck inside her ear.  
None of these fit; there is nothing to support them.

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Myself, I think for a time  
 She could not find one of her fawns,  
 The invisible cord stretched too tight,  
 The membrane finally tore, and  
 From her mother's heart some vital liquid spilled  
 And burned white-hot in the  
 Secluded crucible of  
 Our back yard.



*The beautiful women in this Munger group, photographed in 2014, are L to R:*  
*Front row: Ethel Larrabee, Lannie Burritt McNichols, Jo Smith Hunt, Jan Patton Gardiner,*  
*Sue McTighe Berkeley.*  
*Back row: Ann Terry DeLuise, Pat McLaughlin Cavanaugh, Chen Rogers Bell, Valerie Brown Stauffer,*  
*Ibby VanAlyea Weber, Kay Wood McCrillis, Betsey Loud Detwiler, Pam Denny Blackford,*  
*Cynthia Molson Baxter, Anne Sockol Segal, and Nancy Selin Hudson.*  
*Thanks to Toni Holland Liebman for the picture.*  
*Thanks to Anne Sinnott Moore and Sue McTighe Berkeley for the identification.*

## My Journey on the Fast Train of Computer Science

I've had a great journey. I am one of those lucky persons who loved my professional life. That's not to say I didn't also have a great personal life—a loving husband, two great kids, and now four teen-aged grandkids. But this is about my life as a computer scientist.

After graduating Wellesley as a math major, I became a Bryn Mawr grad student in mathematics. When about to graduate with a mathematics M.A., I had to figure out what to do next. The question was—what does a nice Jewish girl do with a math degree? The answer seemed clear—teach school. So I accepted a job to start teaching junior high school math the next September. Meanwhile, summer was coming and I needed money. I interviewed for a summer job building computers at Philco Corporation in Philadelphia. I had never even seen a computer. I was offered the job, but I didn't really think I would like it. Who wanted to work with impersonal machines? I wanted to work with people.

The job entailed laying out components on circuit boards so that the circuits did what they were supposed to do and the wires didn't cross. It was like solving puzzles and I loved it. The computer we were building was one of those huge ones that were so heavy they needed to sit on a reinforced floor. I learned all I needed to from the people I was working with. We were called Computer Engineers. Somehow that was really like a joke. I decided to stay there and backed out of the teaching job.

A year later, I decided to move back to Massachusetts and got a job programming the one big computer at MIT Lincoln Labs. I had never written a program, but I did know how computers were built and what they could do. They gave me a book explaining what instructions in the Fortran language could be given to a computer and some examples of programs. We were writing programs to calculate the trajectories followed by space capsules as they reentered the atmosphere. Again, I learned everything else I needed to know from my officemates.

Fast forward ... I had gotten married, moved to NY/NJ, started a family, all the while working as a computer programmer (first full-time, and then part-time when the kids arrived). When my kids were four and six, a friend who was teaching computer science in a New York City college told me about a job opening teaching computer science for a semester to fill in for someone on leave. I felt I was too shy to stand in front of a class to teach, but my husband and my friend encouraged me to try and I decided to go for it. The first day I wrote out complete lectures for the two classes I was to teach, so that I could read those lectures if I got tongue tied standing in front of the class. When I got to those classrooms, I never looked at my notes. I just took off. I learned from the textbooks I was using, just keeping ahead of the students. That temporary job turned into a tenure-track faculty position.

Several years later I decided that it would be good for me to take some graduate courses so I could see how others taught computer science. I registered as a grad student in computer science at Stevens Institute of Technology which was on the route I drove between my own college and home. I took a few grad courses, and I exempted out of quite a few I had taught on the undergrad level. The faculty at Stevens told me it was time to write my dissertation. I really didn't think I had registered for a Ph.D. program! Ten years later, I had completed and defended my dissertation on Artificial Intelligence. I graduated with a Ph.D. the same time that my daughter got her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania. We had a joint graduation party.

Now I'm a widow and I've moved to a Senior Community. I still enjoy keeping up with developments in the computer field. I just finished teaching a short course in Artificial Intelligence geared to be understood by people living in my community, even those who know nothing about computers.

It's been a great ride.

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