

# *Scarlet Letters*

*Number 17 September 2020*



*Top row: Lynn Freydborg Warshow, Mitzi Drucker Jonas, Carol Schiff Strauss, Ellen Birk Kallman, Heidi Nitze, ? Bottom Row: Carol Metzger Vaneck, Merle Golden Bogin, Joanne Banks Matthews, Ann Terry DeLuise, Jane Kentnor Dean. Joanne thinks that this was a mini reunion at Ellen's.*

*Photo courtesy of Toni Holland Liebman.*

## **Our 65th Anniversary Record Book**

Can you believe that it is almost sixty-five years since we left Wellesley College, graduating from our gorgeous campus to the wide, wide world? This is an anniversary to which attention must be paid. Our reunion may or may not take place at the college, but we will certainly produce our every five-year Record Book.

You will soon receive a communication inviting you to send in information about your location in life and your opinions on various things. We hope you will respond to the communication to ensure your place in this coming significant publication.

Our class is full of very smart people, but thanks to our faraway birthdates, many of us are not fluent with the language of the internet. Please make a strenuous effort to complete the questionnaire and send it in. If the language and demands put you off, try again. And if you still have difficulties, call us up or send us an email and we will help you through.

Many from our class are now gone, but we hope to record information on all who are left, providing a

record that will live on in the hearts of those remaining, and in our libraries and in the college archives.

So, when you hear the call, listen and respond.

Join the conversation. Let us hear from you.

**Claudia and Sheila**

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

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## Poetry by Sheila Owen Monks Paintings by Jean Fairgreave Granum

*I've been writing poems since Wellesley days...or earlier...but not on a regular basis. I write only when prompted to by some sort of inner voice, so sometimes months go by and nothing happens. I never know when a phrase or a thought or a feeling will want to become a poem, so I try to listen. I seem to be obsessed with insects and death: not exactly how I had hoped to be remembered! —Sheila Owen Monks*



### MAIZIE

Will the spider,  
coming to the end of her days,  
ask to be forgiven for the way she killed the fly--  
not quite stunning him,  
pulling his legs off one by one;  
As I now ask forgiveness  
for taunting Maizie about the way she dressed.  
Not that I ever met her again after eighth grade, of  
course,  
Except  
that I have visited her sad bewilderment  
Every day for more than sixty years.

### KATY

Oh, Katy--  
did the little fiddles of your wings  
sound in my summer dreams?  
Did you startle me with songs  
and was your music bold and joyful?  
Were you carefree, light and easy,  
did you serenade your lovers all night long  
and were you sure that it would never end?  
When you were faint and chilled  
did you keep calling on and on?  
Was yours the last voice in the woods  
and did you die still scraping out your song?  
Oh, Katy---yes you did, you did.



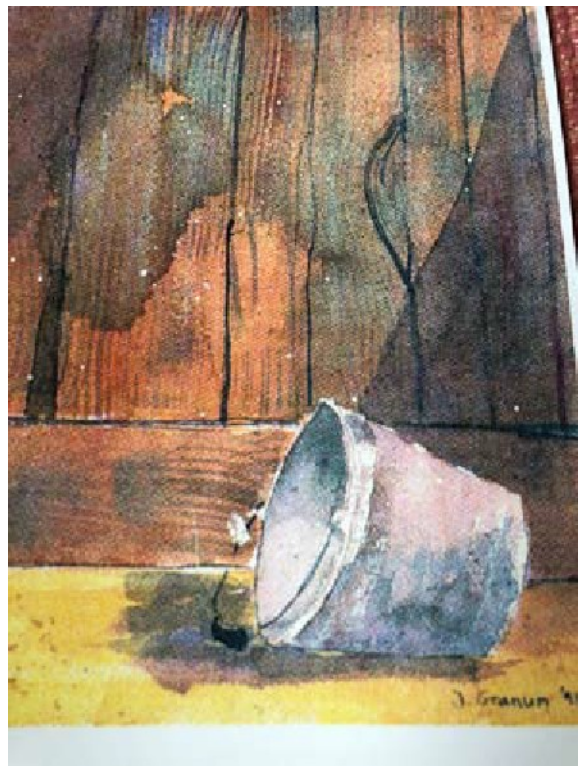




## The PiRATE

He's quite an imposing presence and  
 ---dare I say it? a little swashbuckling.  
 He's telling me about his latest trip  
 but instead of listening, I am thinking  
 no eye patch, no wooden leg,  
 but I could swear you just got off a pirate ship.  
 Yes, it makes sense: big voice  
 and just a touch of menace in the laughter.  
 He's planning his next adventure, maybe a cruise this  
 time.

Too bad I happened to notice  
 the pale parrot of death perched on his shoulder.



## NeW FRieND

On my way to the supermarket  
 I often passed a huge apartment building  
 with decks hanging  
 like necklaces of iron beads from its side.  
 Only once  
 I saw a person on one of the decks.  
 It was a young girl, so high up  
 she seemed to me to be flying, like a bird, or an angel.  
 She was waving and calling, was it to me?

Years later  
 I sometimes wonder what she was trying to tell me.  
 It was so long ago, and she was so small  
 there on the deck  
 And I, I was so careless.

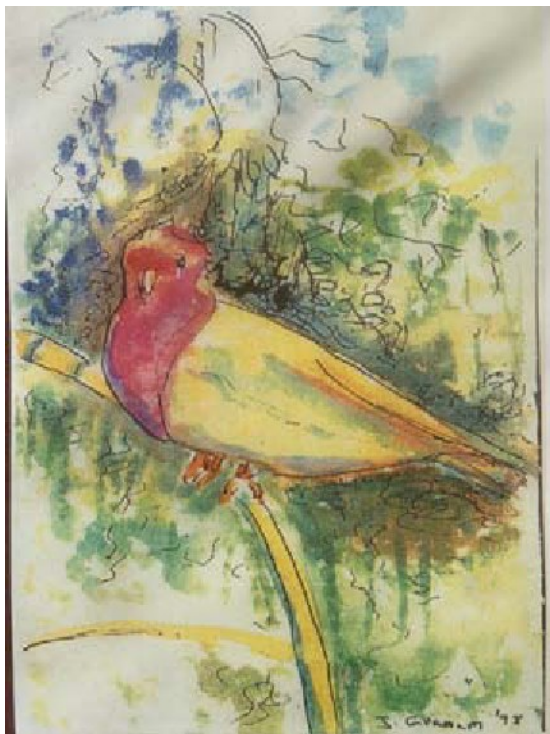
## The iCe STORM

After the ice storm  
 I saw that  
 the old tree  
 was wearing a jacket of diamonds  
 dazzling in the light  
 As if it had split open and turned inside out  
 so that for a moment  
 I saw its soul.  
 I only know  
 that if I were turned inside out  
 I would not be as clean and white as this.

## SOuP FROM TheSe BONeS

Little bird,  
I am making soup from your bones  
i fish the brittle sticks from the broth;  
I will take your wishbone and  
Dry it.  
We will make our wishes and  
Snap the bone.  
We will be happy in the cracking.  
Your breastbone is the magic wand  
That brings us lovers, fortune, longer life.  
Was this why you lived, so we could hope?

Here is my wish for you:  
That you felt the sun on your feathers  
Even for a moment  
That your feet touched some earth and not always  
The cold metal of your cage  
I wish that your heart did not beat in fear  
When they came to take you—  
And not too much pain, at the first breaking.



## WelCOMe ABOARD

In the event of an emergency, abandon all  
possessions.  
We will now collect any devices you wish to  
discard.  
You may not bring your keys or the book.  
Your phone must go, and of course  
all the papers in that pouch.  
How fortunate that your suitcase is on another  
flight!  
A wallet can be heavy  
and I'd advise you just take off that bracelet and  
the shoes.  
It makes it easier to swim.



## THE VISIT

The first time you visited me  
I was surprised that you had no wings  
and for that matter, no white robe,  
although there was a fine gold line around you  
as if someone had outlined you with a pen.  
You still had that old blue sweater on  
the one you wore on Saturdays  
the one I tried to throw out.  
I noticed the hole in the sleeve  
Had been repaired.



## The PAle BROWN MOTh OF lONeliNeSS

Trying to get some rest on the couch,  
I shift a pillow and  
without warning  
The pale brown moth of loneliness flies out.

I thought I knew how to keep him quiet.  
Sometimes I bribe him with phone calls, a book,  
even a bowl of ice cream.  
It doesn't work tonight; he's growing restless.  
He's getting bigger, too.  
Slowly he fills the whole room with his melancholy  
presence  
and I, still on the couch,  
feel his dusty wings wrap around me.

## IS THIS THE NIgHT?

Is this the night you will come  
and beckon me to follow you?  
Is this the night you will gently take the spoon  
from my hand  
and lay it on the counter, saying  
"You knew I was coming. Say goodbye now  
to your favorite pink sweater  
the squirrel on the front steps  
and that geranium in the clay pot.  
There's no time to comb your hair  
or turn the light out.  
Someone else will do that for you."



## The Mother of the House

Who among us remembers their dorm housemother? Let alone kindly?

One Friday in late November of my junior year, I used my last one o'clock signout for a spontaneous date with an old high school friend from Boston who had graduated from Princeton to be drafted as the Korean war ended, and stationed at Ft. Bragg, N.C. As things turned out, I stayed at his home Friday night, and we left for Princeton Saturday morning. I never signed back in, nor returned until 3 am Monday morning, through our basement dorm window.

First thing the next morning at breakfast, our housemother Mrs. Myers invited me to her room for a talk. I had an 8:30 a.m. English class, so our little chat waited until lunch time.

We sat opposite each other on upholstered, tufted French chairs in her small sitting room. She was a petite, pretty lady with short wavy white hair, always dressed in hose, a straight soft skirt, and a long-sleeved blouse with a throat tie, or a sweater. She balanced a white saucer and teacup on her knees and held her ankles together as if bound by an invisible rope, her toes poised on the floor. I shuffled and slouched in my knee length shorts, my feet spread apart, as she deliberated my fate. Of course, she had little choice. I had violated every rule in the books. The whole dorm, if not campus, knew I had not signed back in Friday night, and then had deliberately walked out for the whole weekend without permission. As if missing, in fact I was still signed out.

I had no excuse. I sat up straight, planted my heels into the carpet, and held my teacup on my lap. All I could offer was the special circumstance of a drafted soldier's first home pass from a far-away army base, with no advance notice. No, my parents did not know him. Yet. At least she had met and liked him. What had I to say for myself?

Only that I was willing to accept whatever I must. I began crying softly. I was sorry it happened this way. I was so in love. I would do it over again, but not again. I would comply with anything and withdraw at the end of the semester. If my record remained clean, I could transfer to the University

of North Carolina and be nearer to him.

She could have called my parents. She could have recommended expulsion. But she did neither. It was my first recorded offense. She revoked all sign-out privileges to leave campus for the rest of the year. I didn't mind. There was nowhere I wanted to go, no one else to be with. And always, of course, still the window.

Our garden level window had been much used. One time, sophomore spring, three of us had left in dark blue jeans and jackets, to discover the outside real world. We ran to the town bus station, and into the women's room. There, we put on deep red lipstick, slicked back our hair with grease, and sauntered out. We bought round-trip tickets and rode to Framingham, chewing huge wads of gum. We watched Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront*, and then threw darts and drank beer and talked tough in a little dive by the railroad tracks close to the Raytheon watch-making plant. We returned as we had come, on the last bus back.

I was outside after ten only twice after that, for fire drills.

We married the following winter and I became a Wellesley car-pooling commuter. I wonder if Mrs. Myers realized that the Wellesley Family Hostess to whom she let her seniors sign out for overnights, this Mrs. Grozier, actually was her disciplined Estill Henlein?

I regret never knocking on her door some of those Saturday nights, alone in the dorm, to ask about herself at our age. She too was alone, sitting upstairs in her first floor apartment off the Reception Hall. Had she, when young, once been in love with a soldier being shipped out to the trenches of France? Did he return?

None of us bothered to know our housemothers, did we? Yet ours at Severance, Mrs. Myers, and likely the others, did try to get to know us. They gave unrecognized kindness in the face of ourself-centered avoiding or ignoring them.

Odd to realize--our daughters could now be Wellesley dorm housemothers.

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Ed. Note: Do you have a memory or story about your housemother you would like to share? Please send it!

# JAG'S PHOTOGRAPHY

## Jane Atwood Godfrey

I have always loved having a camera in my hand and a lens to look through - sometimes to record what is on the other side and sometimes to allow the imagination to interpret what one sees. Is the resulting photograph reality or a fantasy? What defines it? Is it the subject matter, the composition, the light, the color, a particular moment or a pattern, an abstraction or perhaps some combination of the above. Whatever the end result, the process of creating should be challenging and fun!



This enhanced to

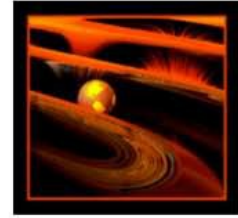


this

or  
this



abstracted



to this



Patterns found on the ocean at sunset



or going through the car wash



or standing by a flooded field



... Lighting caught at the right moment ...



..... or the moment caught at the right time .....



# Let Me Through, I'm a Grandmother!

I always had a real problem with authority.

Not being a rebel against it, no. Quite the reverse. My problem was, I never felt like I had any authority, and I always wanted it. Or more precisely, felt like I needed it to be able to speak for myself.

After college I had a choice to make. I aced the Law boards, but I was tired of going to school. Not a lawyer, then. I get weak at the sight of blood. Not a doctor, neither of those authority figures. A policeman? I actually did flirt with that idea, but back in the day policewomen hadn't been invented yet.

Instead I followed the path that had always been defined for me, the path of least resistance. I became a wife. A token amount of authority, a token amount of status. Not much.

My husband joined Merrill Lynch as an investment trainee. As a woman in those days, I couldn't. Later I wanted to become a rabbi; later still, a priest. As a woman, I wasn't allowed either of those. (Still aren't, that latter.)

There remained the defining woman's occupation, motherhood. But we weren't able to have children. We adopted ours, a girl and then a boy, but honestly, I never felt fully authentic as a mother. I always felt Less Than, not quite entitled, not like the other Real mothers.

So, no authority there. Like the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*, I guess I needed a diploma and there was none available or forthcoming. Until my daughter had her first baby, my first grandchild.

Suddenly I felt a great surge of power, a realization that If I were to come across an accident scene, for example, and felt I were needed, I would stride confidently in, brooking no opposition. Let me through, I'm a grandmother!

Seriously. I mean it: Let me through, by the power vested in me by my grandchild! I felt equal to anything. I've never lost that sense of authority either. I still feel that way.

I remember what a young priest told me long

ago when I was struggling resentfully against the ban on women in the priesthood. He said my problem was that I kept looking for authority somewhere outside. But real authority, he said, comes from inside you. You have to claim it for yourself.

I wasn't ready or willing to accept that, I guess, because I was never ready to look in the right place or, maybe wasn't ready to take the responsibility. My lack of authority went on rankling me until Samantha's birth activated my own birthright. Authority at last.

My conclusion after all these years: we all have authority vested in us as our birthright, but we have to claim it for ourselves. It's taken me a lifetime, but I got there at last.

**Judith Mandell Bruder**  
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## What's Cooking?

### Chunky Blue Cheese and Yogurt Dip

1/4 cup finely chopped shallots  
1 t minced garlic  
2 T lemon juice  
7 oz. greek-style yogurt  
1/2 cup mayonnaise  
4 oz. sharp gorgonzola cheese, crumbled  
5 dashes Tabasco sauce, or to taste  
1/4 t kosher salt  
1/2 t freshly ground black pepper  
3 T minced fresh chives

Place all ingredients but chives in food processor. Pulse about 12 times, until mixture is almost smooth but still a bit chunky. Add the chives and pulse a few times. Chill for at least two hours before serving.

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