

A hand is holding a white sign against a vibrant, abstract background of colorful brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, yellow, and purple. The sign features the word "NOT" in large purple letters, followed by "by Chance Meetings" in bold black text.

NOT
by Chance
Meetings

55 notable encounters
Jini Jones Vail

Not by Chance Meetings
by
Jini Jones Vail

2023
www.jinijonesvail.com

FOREWORD

The only way to explain these exciting meetings is that before I was born, God made up the appointment book of my life. So, in the simplest of terms, He planned these encounters and I just “showed up!” It has been a thrilling ride, so I invite you to sit back and enjoy!

This collection of my “Meetings” began as hastily written notes over a period of 20 years. Although most are actual meetings with people whose names most of you would recognize, some are not about people at all, but *inanimate* places such as islands, or edifices that impacted my life.

I finished writing the biography of French General “Rochambeau, Washington’s Ideal Lieutenant”, my “Summering in Frances Loire Valley” and beyond, a composite of my decade of summers in France and finally, a three-act play, “Conversations with Queen Alienor” about my half-dozen encounters with my 29th generation grandmother into the past, Alienor of Aquitaine.

Like most of us during Covid from 2019 on, I was cloistered at home. I decided to seek out my “Meetings” notes to bring them to light. My file grew until I had a fat pack of these stories. As I re-read the circumstances around these “Meetings”, I decided they were worth the time spent organizing them. I continued by adding the many pieces of ‘realia’ from my files that accompanied each one. Gradually, I placed them in binders, only to discover that I had enough to fill four fat, bulging binders! Some of these early “Meetings” happened while spending my formative summers on an island in Northern Ontario, Canada; some during summers spent at Brown Ledge Camp on the shores of Lake Champlain, VT and my four undergraduate years at Sweet Briar College in Virginia, followed closely by even more “Meetings” during my years living in New York City’s Upper East Side after college graduation. Some “Meetings” occurred while living on the west coast with my first husband and two daughters, on an Air Force base in the High Desert of California with regular trips into the newly built Music Center in Los Angeles, and into the northern California mountains. Even more “Meetings” came after my son was born, followed by moving to the Litchfield Hills of NW Connecticut where I now sit in front of my computer.

A precious few of my meetings have continued since the original per chance encounters in the 1970s – 1990s have flowered into lifetime friendships. For one, see Francophile Jane Cook, wife of Peter Steiner. Also, today, October 15, 2022 we celebrated the 90th birthday of Francophile, Ann Lorusso, while next to me at the table was Leonore, widow of portraitist, Robert Templeton, see above list. Leonore appeared in my life across the counter of the ski area where I worked in the 1970s. Also, at the birthday table was Marcy Jackson, another longtime Francophile and bridge friend. As I review the above list, sadly, many of my NOT by Chance Meetings and special close friends, i.e. Eleanor Anderson, Lea Winslow and Abby Grondona, have passed on into the next world.

CHRONOLOGY

Part One

page 6

1. (1947) Guy Lombardo
2. (1952) Valcour Island- inanimate
3. (1953-54) Brooke Hayward
4. (1954) McLaren Island-Inanimate
5. (1955-1962) Edward Pye Chamberlayne
6. (1956 & 1967) Buzzed by 2 Jets-Inanimate
7. (1958-1959) Ted Kennedy
8. (1958-1959) John Tunney
9. (1958) Dr. Daniel A. Poling
- 10.(1958-1996) Lady Liberty- Inanimate
- 11.(1959) President Dwight D. Eisenhower
- 12.(1959) Former Prime Minister, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill
- 13.(1959) Elizabeth Taylor
- 14.(1959) Eddie Fisher
- 15.(1959) Ingemar Johansson

Part Two

page 39

16. (1960) Arthur A. Houghton, Jr.
17. (1960) Robert Frost
18. (1960) Roger Blough
19. (1960) Leonard Bernstein
20. (1960) Hunter Thompson
21. (1960) Van Cliburn
22. (1960) Andres Segovia
23. (1961) Oleg Cassini
24. (1962) The Tishman Building-Inanimate
25. (1963) Lucille Ball Ricardo
26. (1962-63) Gwen Verdon
27. (1963) Bob Fosse
28. (1962-963) Dr. Vincent du Vignaud
29. (1965-67) Roy Rogers
30. (1965-67) Dale Evans
31. (1965) Trigger Jr.
32. (1966) A Meteor Falls-Inanimate

- 33.(1971) Lift Off - Inanimate
- 34.(1972) Paul Newman; Joanne Woodward
- 35.(1974-1995) Arthur Miller et al (+11)
- 36.(1976) Twin Towers - Inanimate
- 37.(1986) John Denver
- 38.(1987-1999) Yuri Bashmet
- 39.(1993) President Bill Clinton
- 40.(1993) First Lady Hillary Clinton
- 41.(1993-2007) Michel de Rochambeau
- 42.(1993-95) Madeleine de Rochambeau
- 43.(1996) Francine du Plessix Gray
- 44.(1997) Sam Waterston
- 45.(ca. 1999) Brooke Hayward, Hopper, Peter Duchin

- 46.(2003) Harlow Giles Unger
- 47.(2004) Paula Dean
- 48.(2008) Stuart Woods
- 49.(2011) Celeste Holme
- 50.(2015) Raphael de Gouberville
- 51.(2017) Lyman and Eliot Orton
- 52.(1995-2022) Leif Bjaland
- 53.(1960's-2022) Jane Cook and Peter Steiner
- 54.(1970's-2022) Leonore and Robert Templeton
- 55.(1990's-2014) Eleanor Jane Firke Anderson

#1 1947

GUY LOMBARDO (1902-1977) – band leader

You know how I love to dance. This account revolves around my love of ballroom dancing and my favorite dance partner, as a young girl, my father!

My parents took me for my first visit to New York City on a DC3 propellor-driven airplane out of Rochester,, NY. I was 10 years of age and quite ready for a trip to the big city! We checked into the Plaza Hotel on Central Park South where we had a lovely suite of rooms furnished in the style of Louis 16th. I truly felt like Eloise at the Plaza reincarnated. It may have been our first night out on the town after a several hours of shopping on Fifth Ave. in our favorite stores – Saks, Best & Co, B. Altman’s and Lord and Taylor’s. I had been catalogue shopping from these stores for years! My first Mary Jane black patent leather pumps had been ordered from Best’s!

I felt like a princess on my father’s arm walking beside my fashionable Mother as we entered the Roosevelt Hotel Grill after dining on frogs’ legs at La Grenouille, a French Restaurant my parents always liked, to find a table with a small light overlooking the dance floor. After Mother and Daddy danced, Daddy asked me to dance with him. By then I was already taking ballroom dance lessons at home in Hornell. Anyway, I was a natural at dancing. I inherited it from my parents! Daddy took me in his arms as he guided me around the floor to the tunes of Guy Lombardo. Everyone has heard of him, his music was so familiar to us all, especially his Auld Lang Syne which he played on TV every New Year’s Eve!

In 1902, Lombardo was born in London, Ontario, Canada. He formed his first band in 1921, moved to the United State in 1924 and named his band The Royal Canadians. His recordings began about the same time. Guy led the band and his brother, Carmen, wrote and sang the solo vocals. By 1938 he became a U.S. citizen. Lombardo himself liked to brag that he and his band were a fixture at the Roosevelt Grill, New York City, for more than 30 years, beginning in 1929. Secondly, he was proud to say that he and his Royal Canadians introduced more than 300 new songs, many of which became hits, and lastly, that more than 100 million of his band’s recordings were sold. In his free time, he indulged in speedboat racing on the New Jersey coast. Guy Lombardo reigned as the national speedboat champion from 1946-1949. To please his fans, he used to arrive in his boat at Jones Beach where he was producer musical director at the Jones Beach Marine Theatre just for his enjoyment in the mid 1950’s. The theatre was built specially with him in mind by Robert Moses. A song often associated with Lombardo, and one that you know I am sure, was *Red Sails in the Sunset*.

Returning to my ‘chance meeting’ with him in New York ...dancing at the Roosevelt Grill, I was so excited just to be there surrounded by his familiar “big band sound”. Next thing I knew, Daddy had danced up to the bandstand. We stopped between songs so Daddy could introduce me to Guy Lombardo. He extended his hand to us in a gracious, friendly welcome. We shook hands. We chatted a few minutes, and then he asked me what I would like to have him play for me?

I was stunned by the question, being such a neophyte at meeting band leaders, and wracked my brain for the name of a song, any song! Suddenly I blurted out, “Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered” by Cole Porter which was popular at that time. Thank goodness a title came to me! Guy nodded his head and said he would love to play it just for me, asked me my name and announced it to the entire supper/dance club.

All that was in front of the entire supper/dance club. Daddy whirled me back on the floor in his arms. We spun off, flooded with Lombardo’s familiar dance music. I felt a thrill rush up my back when the song began. I had just met a world-famous bandleader, and I was thrilled to pieces!

Up periscope: With this image in our minds, we say farewell to Guy Lombardo who died in 1977. I shall never forget him.

#2 1952

Valcour Island, Lake Champlain , VT

This 968-acre island, two miles long and one mile wide was indeed a surprise that keeps on surprising me. This sliver of an island is located near the western shore Lake Champlain, in Clinton County, New York. It is situated within the Adirondack Park. It straddles two towns, (only an island can do that peacefully!) Peru and Plattsburg, NY. The fish in the lake and the boats on the lake meander between them without problem. Valcour is the fourth largest island in Champlain after Grand isle, North Hero and Isle la Mount, all in Vermont.

I, on the other hand, not being a fish, only a summer camper in 1952 at Brown Ledge Camp in Burlington, VT. on the opposite side of the lake, had to put the muscle to the paddle of my canoe in order to get there. Our canoe counselor chose to take the morning in transit then, to set up camp and spend at least one night on this island I had never heard of before. I loved water sports, especially canoeing. I packed a change of clothes, my military green hooded poncho, prepared my bed roll and headed out on a clear morning in July. We were planning to explore the other side of Lake Champlain from our canoes and spend the night on Valcour Island. What an adventure this would be!

When we headed out from Brown Ledge waterfront, we turned our backs to the rising sun and the towering Mt. Mansfield on the east side of the Lake. We had learned on our previous overnight pack trip to the summit of Mansfield, that the silhouette of Mansfield and surrounding peaks as seen from a distance resembles the profile of a person lying on his back. So, leaving the quiet shores of Malletts Bay behind, we paddled west. We could see the Adirondack Mountains rising up before us.

Before long the island came into view. It was only 100' plus at the highest point and there was a tower light to warn ships away at night or in poor weather. We tied up our boats in a nice inlet and stepped ashore. It felt like discovering a distant land. I could not see any homes or buildings of any sort. It was basically uninhabited, a wilderness. We explored all over and set up our camp. Made a fire ring, collected dry wood and bundles of tinder to make our fire for cooking supper. I seem to recall a sign, telling us that this was the site of an important battle in the American Revolutionary War (1776). It was hard to imagine something of great importance, such as a battle, happening here where it was so peaceful and quiet. I, therefore, surmised the island was much as it had been nearly 200 years ago.

Fast forward to the early 2000s when I was doing research for a biography/ military history I was writing. John and I covered the northeastern section of America as well as the eastern coastal regions from Bunker Hill, Boston, Massachusetts to Yorktown, Virginia. My study included Fort Ticonderoga and Lake Champlain. John and I started on the New York side of the lake, with Fort Ti, (pronounced like the word, 'tie') as the locals call it. We took a car ferry across the lower Lake Champlain to Vermont, making notes and talking to local historians along the way. My book was about French General Rochambeau who helped George Washington to win the final battle of the American Revolution. I had to replenish gaps in my memory regarding events that led up to Rochambeau's arrival at

Newport, Rhode Island in 1780. I needed to know what happened along the important water highway from Canada, south to the Hudson River and finally to New York Harbor. Nothing better than feet on the ground. .

When I learned there had been two fleets of tall ships fighting along this important waterway, I wanted to go there, spend time following how the British ships entered and exited Lake Champlain for starters. Looking at maps. And seeing it in person, I realized that it was not a 'piece of cake' by any means. It was not simply a question of opening a gate for tall ships of those days to pass into America via the back door so to speak. In fact, I learned that, entering from the north, the British ships were disassembled and re-assembled in order to gain access to America via 'portage' to the deep-water of Lake Champlain, named after the French explorer, Samuel de Champlain (1609).

I found that The Battle of Valcour Island was one of the first naval battles of the Revolutionary War. It followed closely behind the failed American invasion of Quebec, just north of Vermont and Lake Champlain. The British were set on holding sway over the lake and river highway between Canada and New York Harbor. This was not an original idea with them, it had been used as a main means of ingress into the heart of America going back to the 1600s at least. I was surprised to hear it mentioned at the time of the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers as a route to be guarded in case of further aggressive action. The Continental Army had prepared for this eventuality and made fortresses at Crown Point and Ticonderoga.

The small American fleet in Lake Champlain in 1776 was led by Brigadier General Benedict Arnold, and the British ships were under the command of General Guy Carlton, led by Captain Thomas Pringle. The British included the command ship and 50 support vessels. Impressive. Wish I had been watching from Valcour itself, or even safer, from my cabin at Brown Ledge Camp, high over the lake. Imagine watching that number of tall sailing ships with canon booming and dark smoke rising in clouds from across the lake. It was not a spectator sport at all but dead serious stuff!

Most of the battle of Valcour was fought in Valcour Bay, the narrow strait on the west side of the island. Benedict Arnold began by lining his ships up across the narrow strait, out of sight. He waited there for the British to find him. Two days went by. After a while, Arnold sent out two of his ships, the 'Congress' and 'The Royal Savage' to tempt the enemy. Unfortunately, they both went aground and had to be scuttled.

When the British finally showed up, they maneuvered into place in order to launch the battle at broadsides. Rarely from my point of view, does any sea battle go as planned. For instance, let me refer to the sea battle fought between the French and the British 'Off the Virginia Capes', 1781 in my book on Rochambeau. Numbers of ships were incorrect; the wind pushed one line of ships off course; broadsides were nearly impossible. In order to hurt the enemy, one must be in the line of fire, broadsides, but the wind, other ships and weather, are responsible for unplanned results at sea. This was also the case at Valcour.

It had taken Carlton's fleet two days to find Arnold and his ships. That, in itself is a coup. I cannot imagine it would take that long, but Champlain is a very long body of water, and winds can be fickle as we know. I used to drive the length of the Lake Champlain in a short time when I often drove up to see my daughter, Heather, at The University of Vermont back in the 1980s. Sailing is much, much slower and less predictable.

Arnold had hidden his ships behind the island. A clever plan. He chose the location of the battle that would surely come. It always takes time to line up the ships for battle. When the two fleets were able to fire directly, the battle heated up quickly. Arnold fought a fierce, difficult, mostly defensive battle against a much larger fleet. He had to make many split-second decisions which, in the end, served his purpose: to thwart the British from bringing the battles further into U.S. territory. Arnold lost 11 ships, his entire fleet, and 200 men either captured or killed. Arnold left no ships to the enemy. Either he grounded them and/or burned them. He did succeed, however, in blocking the incoming British in whatever way he could. He finally fled on foot to the protection of Fort Ti.

Up periscope: It is 1972. Here I am again on Lake Champlain remembering my first, peaceful exploration of Valcour Island twenty years ago. It is all about time travel, after all. Isn't it? My camping days at Brown Ledge are far behind. I am no longer canoeing, but on occasion, still kayaking. The blue skies are clear, and the sun warm. There is a steady breeze pushing us from aft toward the New York shore. I am sailing with friends across Champlain from Burlington in their sloop. We see Valcour on our right; we enter Valcour Bay to put in on the Adirondack shore. We will hike up the hill and over the train tracks to their secluded Adirondack Mountain log cabin for lunch.

Today we are vaguely reminiscent of the fierce inland sea battle fought here in 1776. I have had an update on this all-but-forgotten early battle. And there were scores more to follow over the years. Divers have found some of these tall ships that fought so valiantly here above water in 1776 and beyond, making history. These same divers and scientists are sure the water has preserved them far below the surface. They have decided to leave some of them in their watery graves since bringing them up into the air would only cause them to deteriorate faster than they would in the deep. Knowing this, I suppose I have sailed over them without realizing it. Their story of sacrifice remains in our memory, safely tucked away with hope for peaceful centuries to come here at Valcour Island.

#3 1953-4

Brooke Hayward (Hopper) (Duchin) b. 1937

When I was a young teenager, I went to Brown Ledge camp on Lake Champlain, Malletts Bay, north of Burlington, Vermont, for several summers. First, I was an ordinary camper, then I became a Junior Riding Counselor. It was the early 1950's. My first year there I had a Bunkie named Sheila Dorval from Quebec, Canada originally, then living in New Jersey. We lived in the "Dungeon" in the bottom of a three-tier cabin. Above us lived two sisters from Brentwood, California named Brooke and Bridgit Hayward.

My first recollection of Brooke was that her face resembled that of a cupid, round with soft, dancing, slightly mischievous eyes framed with curly light brown hair. Her sister had much the same appearance. They were adorable girls. Both were self-assured and fun-loving. I wish I could remember the pranks they used to pull in their section of our cabin, but they were always "in the news" around camp in a fun way.

I recall especially the sailboat races on Saturday mornings in which they always took part. I recall one Saturday when the winds were especially challenging as many of us gathered to watch on the point at the waterfront. Not being much of a sailor myself, I was amazed to see Bridget climb the mast when one of the halyards flew out of her hands. She somehow scrambled up that mast in high winds with the sails luffing and whipping all around her in an effort to maintain her crew's place in the competition. At that time, I observed a strong sense of competitive spirit in Bridgit. I can see Brooke now in her riding outfit sailing over the fences on the outside course on her favorite camp horse.

Our final summer at Brown Ledge, 1955 I think, was the last time I was to see the sisters for a long time, unless we met at one of the camp reunions in NYC in November when we all went to the National Horseshow as a group each year. At any rate, that would have been a brief encounter at best for there were always so many of us at reunion time.

It wasn't until 1977 that I saw that Brooke had written her memoir, "Haywire". I immediately bought the book and read it with much interest, hoping to catch up on her life over the past 20 years. What I found out was not nice. She had wed and divorced Dennis Hopper, after having at least one daughter. Brooke lost her mother, Margaret Sullivan to an accidental drug overdose in 1960 and later that year, lost her sister, Bridget, to suicide. Both her parents had divorced and remarried a few times. Her brother, Bill, was in an insane asylum and died of a self-inflicted wound in 2008. All in all, a terrible outcome for a famous family. Brooke's mother was Margaret Sullivan, movie star extraordinaire, in the 1930's, 40's and 50's. And her father was Leland Hayward, Hollywood agent and film producer, also famous worldwide.

I kept her book, *Haywire*, for 30 plus years, got tired of dusting it off and finally donated it to the local Watertown Library Book Nook for resale. I did so, knowing that Brooke had married Peter Duchin and was living not far from me in New Preston, CT, only 20 minutes from our house.

Then one day I read in the Litchfield County Times that both Brooke and Peter were to be featured speakers at a writers' forum /class at the UConn University, Torrington Branch this November. I saved the clipping, which was sent to me by a friend, not realizing that I knew one of the speakers, albeit ages ago. I put the date on my calendar but could not realistically feature myself driving up the Torrington in the evening for this event. Then my friend, Genie Rigopulos, called and asked if I would like to go with her. She wanted to see Brooke again since she, Genie had worked at the Mayflower Inn in Washington, CT managing the gift shop there and had made Brooke's acquaintance over a number of years that she worked there. I said yes, let's go. The night was very foggy and very dark as we made our way to the campus managing to find seats near the front of the auditorium just as the lights went down.

Brooke and Peter were seated on either side of the professor who would be leading the discussion. She started the evening by asking each one to read from their work to give us a feel of the writer and their respective works. Peter had written a memoir also, "A Ghost of a Chance". Brooke began by reading about some instances in her life when they grew up in the Brentwood section of Hollywood, California. Their house was surrounded by so many stars names that I could barely recall some of them. Jimmy Stewart was one who popped in often. Also Fred Astaire Jane Fonda, Henry Fonda. She recounted a story of a family party on the lawn on a summer evening with all the neighbors making a list of movie stars we would all recall with no problem, dancing under the stars and pulling shananigans all evening. The kids were relegated to "the other house" during parties. Their section of the house had been added on to the main house just for the three of them. Brooke described that "other house" as a huge area, about 50 x 60 feet with a huge open ground floor surrounded by a balcony with their rooms leading off from it, each with brightly painted primary color doors plus a sewing room and room for their nanny. On the main floor was a long table where they ate.

Brooke described the preparation for this particular party with how she helped her father pick out his clothes for that evening. She said that he had a collection of 300 pairs of shoes, of which he wore only about 5 or 6 all the time, that he had huge drawers just full of handkerchiefs and even more for his huge shirt collection. When he went away on a trip for a week or two, he would pack about 40 shirts. That night Brooke picked out a pair of light brown and white saddle shoes, a wild handkerchief and shirt, all of which he wore, just for her.

She spoke to us of her father, even though he did many things that were not all that nice and that she did not approve of. She indicated that her feelings for her mother were lukewarm. I know that their family was the happiest when they lived in Brookfield, CT.

Perhaps there was something special for Brooke, in Brookfield – some magic from their early days as a family when Brooke was young. Did her parents name her Brook because they loved the location so much that their first born, should be a reminder?

After the discussion and questions were at an end, Genie and I approached Brooke and Peter as they leaned up against the stage talking with some of the students. Brooke recognized Genie immediately and then Genie introduced me saying that I was someone from her past. Giving my maiden name, I mentioned our being at Brown Ledge together and she showed a glimmer of recognition which was amazing to me after 50 years! We talked for a while and Brooke mentioned that she lived on Church Street in New Preston overlooking the falls. I said that I knew those falls and loved them. I always went to see them and pointed them out to friends when I was in New Preston. I told her how much I enjoyed her book and that I was writing something like a memoir myself these days. She said to both of us please come up and knock on their door sometime for a visit. Genie and I were thinking that was a great idea and that we most definitely would. Genie asked Brooke to sign her book for her, and I brought a card for her to sign. She wrote “Dear “Jini, Good to see you again. All the best...”.

Regarding her career: TV appearances and small parts 1961-1964.
Film: 1961-1993.

Up Periscope: Her childhood country house was in Brookfield, CT. It was on Whiscommier Rd. A friend who knows Brookfield, lives nearby and passes the address from time to time. Just memories now.

It has been many years since I saw Brooke again, but I have not felt comfortable knocking on her door, invading her privacy, as she suggested, so have not done it. John and I were at the Falls this fall 2021 and again in 2022. I thought of her, now divorced from Peter. That is all I know. I only hope she has found peace and happiness after all these years of difficulty and loss.

#4 1954

McLaren Island<Parry Sound<Georgian Bay<Lake Huron, Ont. Canada

When I was in Hornell High School, my parents built a small island home on McLaren Island in Ontario, Canada. It was 150 miles north of Toronto and seven miles by water from the town of Parry Sound. We had friends who had a similar house on the island. Daddy loved to fish with his pals up there. The island was sparsely occupied. Most dwellings were not visible from the water. One family owned a lodge where visitors could stay when they came up to fish.

It was time to name our new abode. Let me describe the setting of the cottage first. The property was set in a nice-sized cove on the south side of the island. There was a sandy beach, all natural, that descended slowly into deep water. On the left side of the property, as one approaches the cove and the house, there is a type of long peninsula that rose up out of the water, underpinned by a large rock outcropping interspersed with lush greenery, a vernal pool, and loads of wild cranberries just waiting to be plucked and eaten, whether by us or by a fortunate deer who could curl up on the high spot for a safe night's sleep. The high outcropping served a protection for our cove, our beach and dock. So, we called the property, 'Cranberry Cove'. Mother made up new stationery and notepads with our new address and appellation.

My father oversaw the building of the cottage. We employed a number of local Indians from a nearby reservation to bring in the building supplies by scow from the nearest sawmill. It was an exciting project for my father, a designer and builder, to draw the plans and for my mother to decorate the interior. My mother decided to decorate in pink and black, made curtains, decorative pillows, tablecloths and bought the many accoutrements she would need to make the cottage cozy. Daddy concentrated on the interior finishes, like the knotty pine walls, cupboards and doors.

First, and foremost, Daddy oversaw the building of a long, wide dock, large enough to park our boat and a neighbor's launch. It was necessary to have the dock in place before the building commenced. Large scows arrived with building materials. They could easily dock alongside. It was a perfect off-loading spot for supplies during construction. It was painted grey. Swimmers could dive from the end of the dock without worrying of hitting a rock. The water was plenty deep enough for our needs. We used the extra broad, extra-long dock for picnics, for sunbathing and welcoming friends, as well as receiving deliveries via small seaplane.

As time went on, it became more and more interesting to see what we had to do to 'immigrate' to Canada. That was the term, 'immigrate' they used even as we were taking up only part time residence there. Because of this law, and to make it easier when we got there, we were told there would be a heavy tax added on if bought new appliances, but we could bring in used ones with no tax. Fortunately, we knew of a secondhand appliance store

in Hornell where we purchased our appliances. They were just like new, but had a ticket showing they were 'used'. Great plan.

Then, there was the question of the boat we were bring in with us. Daddy had built the small motorboat that would be essential transportation to and from the island. Our new address on McLaren Island would be seven nautical miles from the nearest town, Parry Sound. Daddy loved this part. He was an 'old salt' anyway and would love the challenge of building his own boat at home, mostly in our cellar or barn. He would Christian it in nearby Loon Lake, New York, and then trail it across the border into Canada.

The plan was to prepare all furnishings ahead of time and bring it all into Canada in one fell swoop in early June of the first summer 1951. I recall it must have taken at least one full year to make all our preparations. It was an exciting time for us. Then came the day of immigration. Suddenly, Daddy had a conflicting obstacle. He cud not come with us the on our big day. In his stead, he sent one of his workers to drive the moving truck. Mother and I would take turns driving our Oldsmobile, trailing the boat.

It was a fine, warm June day, and all went according to plan. Amazing! Daddy soon arrived and helped us at the other end: at the dock at Parry Sound. It was so exciting to see all our household belongings for our new cottage in Canada. Everything fit into the rooms: beds, chairs couches, tables, fridge, stove and innumerable boxes, all well marked by Mother.

Following the example of others on the island, Daddy arrange for our drinking water (actually, it included water for all uses), to be pumped directly from the Sound or the Bay (we never knew where the water from Parry Sound ended and the water from Georgian Bay began) into our house, kitchen, bath, shower etc. I always liked the soft lake water when I washed my hair.

The thing I liked best about the generous-size dock was that it the right length for the small seaplane that occasionally parked there. Sometimes, Daddy would be out with the boat, and Mother and I wanted to go into town to shop. or at other times Daddy would drop us off in town and we would go our separate ways. There was a terrific British shop that carried women's clothing from England and Scotland. Once I bought a matching Black Watch pleated skirt with a matching jacket. It was the era of Bermuda shortsw. I got a pair in Black Watch also. I recall that this purchase had been just before I left for college.

Part of the fun of going up to the cottage, was the trip itself. I was a competent driver, thank goodness, and we often drove the six-hour trip with our friends, the Toppings, in two cars.. We never missed stopping at the hugest fruit stand on the way. It was in an area of broad fields on either side of the highway, where the fruit growers sold their crops all summer. We soon became 'habitués' of their fresh blueberries. We bought the berries on the way north and spent the better part of the next day baking the pies. And, on the return trip south, we did the same. It makes my mouth water to think of those berries in pies and on cereal on both sides of the Canadian border! The rest is history. It was a miracle that we found that very special, untouched island of called McLaren. We thank God for all the joy it has brought to our family.

Up periscope: I just (2022) discovered that my great friend from Hornell, Jackie Stempfle, had visited our island when our two Dads went on fishing trips together with the Toppings who built up there first! Jackie said that the fish virtually jumped into their boat up there! That was certainly true. I would drop the line over the side and bingo, I had a good-sized fish to cook that night for dinner.

#5 1955 – 62

Edward PYE CHAMBERLAYNE (Eddy Pye) (1938-2006) College friend, actor, dancer, Journalist, United Press International, National Public Radio News announcer from the Capitol building, DC

This one goes back to my Sweet Briar College days. Pye Chamberlayne became a household name starting in 1962 until his retirement in 1999. Yes. He became famous over the years after college as a regular radio newscaster on National Public Radio. He worked for United Press International (UPI). According to a UPI estimate, he was probably heard on any given day by several hundred million people around the world. I could listen to his reports daily whenever I wished. Mostly I listened to him when driving home from work: Bridgeport, CT to Watertown, CT. Pye always concluded his report with “Pye Chamberlayne, Capitol Hill”.

Now I will tell you how I met him and the details of our friendship over the years. It was early in my freshman year in September 1955, that the college hosted the first MIXER DANCE of our young careers. It was for Freshmen only, designed to help us to get to know guys at a nearby college. In this case it was a get-to-know-you dance with University of Virginia. I soon learned that you do not say University of Virginia, or even UVa , you just use the abbreviated term, Virginia, when referring to that particular school. OK, all those details set aside, I recall it being a warm evening and I was a little nervous to meet my first southern guys. But, actually we were all in the same boat. I reminded myself that it was a new experience to be away at school for all of us. It was exciting too. I always loved to try new things and eager to chart new territory.

I only recall one thing about that dance, that I met two guys who seemed very nice. One was Bob De Maria from New Jersey, not exactly a “southern beau” at all, and the other was Pye Chamberlayne, from Richmond, VA. Now Pye was really southern by tradition, but thankfully lacked the drawl. I danced with them both and liked them enough to want to see them again. Bob was tall and dark, Italian features, black curly hair. Both were good-looking and good dancers. I went out with Bob a few times, even went to a formal dance with him at Sweet Briar later that fall. I have an 8x10 picture of us, otherwise I might have forgotten him. Anyway, he soon faded from sight for one reason or another. But Pye was to pop in and out of my life for the next 7 years.

Pye was an outstanding dancer. I loved that about him right away. Oh, and yes, he was knock-‘um dead handsome! He called me for a date at Virginia not long after our meeting. I learned some interesting things about him right away. He had grown up in Europe which intrigued me. He attended school in Paris for four years and spoke French like a native! The reason for this was that his father was the head news editor of the New York Herald Tribune, French Edition (I thought he was the head of Radio Free Europe). And since his parents were often on the move they sent Pye back stateside to Richmond to live with his grandmother just before enrolling at Virginia. He had an air of international intrigue about him, was worldly, well-informed and well-traveled. He gave an air of being super self-assured, even to the point of egotism. I kind of

liked that about him. He was Episcopalian, like me and we both used the word, “neat” as our favorite adjective!

We two had such fun dating those first few times back and forth between our two schools. By the way Virginia was located in Charlottesville, just up rte 29 north of Sweet Briar about an hour. After he pledged Sigma Pi it was much more fun to visit him at Virginia than vice versa. A typical weekend would be as follows: I would drive over to Charlottesville with someone who had a car, an upperclassman from SBC or one of his friends who would take 3 or 4 of us over on Saturday after classes. We girls would have made reservations at a local Sweet Briar-approved boarding house for girls in Charlottesville for the night. The rules were strict, but less so than if we dated at SBC. We had a curfew time, 1AM (At SBC it was midnight).

Pye would pick me up at the house in his Jaguar XJ sedan, dark green and take me to his fraternity for cocktails on the lawn and white colonnaded front porch. I met all his fraternity brothers, of course. They were a motley bunch – rather on the dramatic side. Then, one of his brothers would bring out the “polomobile” and we would all head out to the polo field, just outside of town. This car was a Bentley with the top sawed off and four posters added, one at each corner. The guys had stretched a chenille bedspread across the top like “a surrey with the fringe on top”. I usually sat in the rear with Pye. The car was packed full with the brothers and their dates, some with drinks in their hands. We most likely had too many in the car, but off we went singing and having a blast. For me, it was a really shocking experience, terribly daring! I knew it was a bit naughty to be riding around like that. We pulled into the polo field and found a place in the front to park along the fence and watched Virginia play Yale, its biggest rival! After the game we did not leave right away, but partied a while before returning to the “house”.

Since Sigma Pi was not an eating club, we went out on the town for supper. Pye did not spend too much cash on these meals, but we had fun. It never occurred to me to pitch in. I did pay for my room. Maybe \$10 a night. After dinner we went back to the “house” for the evening’s festivities. Music and dancing to live local rock and roll bands mostly. I called that “low down” music! I loved this part of the weekend date best. Pye and I danced for hours and hours sending everyone else off the floor till the last song. We danced in a most athletic style and put on quite a show I am sure! I followed his lead in all the latest dances, some were revivals from the 30’s and 40’s.

For the jitterbugs we got very show-off! And I loved it! He would extend his left knee to one side and swing me over his knee with my legs pointing almost to the ceiling. Then, like a pendulum, he would swing me back to his right knee and, again, on the third swing, I would go straight back and up followed by a swoosh downward between his open legs and back up, landing on my feet. It was great fun. We danced lots in those days and spent some fun weekends together. I also went to his plays from time to time, ones that he starred in, that is. He sang Tom Lehr songs and danced on stage with great aplomb. I was proud of him and his talent. He played the guitar and sang for me often. We did not go steady for whatever reason, but always kept in touch. Now that I look back, I think he may have been short of funds and that was the reason he didn’t call me every weekend. I seem to recall that his father died shortly before college. I only

found out now that he was paying his way through college by “covering the various police forces in Charlottesville” for the local newspaper. Little did I know!

After college we went opposite ways for a time. He went back to Paris to work for Agence France Presse for 2 years. I was employed by the French Embassy, Presse et Information, Fifth Avenue, NYC. Then, when I was working at Air France, and my engagement had been cancelled by Rick Dyer, my Sweet Briar friend, Claire Devener, saw in the NY Times that Pye was in town working for the Associated Press. She called him and she put us in touch again for an albeit short time. We went out a few times. He told me he was about to be shipped out to Milwaukee with his job. Then one night he popped the question quite suddenly! He asked me to marry him! He asked me to move to Milwaukee! I liked him very much, but I was not in love with him, so I had to give him a negative reply. Besides, I remember thinking, you would have to love someone an awful lot to move to Wisconsin! To leave the center of the universe, New York City, for the hinterlands??? I do not think so. And I did not. I was truly flattered that he asked and have always considered it to be a “feather in my cap”, since he was my college flame.

I had not word about where he was or what he was doing, thinking of him still in the Midwest, until I turned on the radio in the 80’s. There was Pye on NPR news reporting from Washington, The Capitol, no less! At one point I was making a trip to DC and decided to call him for the fun of it. It took a lot of courage to make the call, but I am a risk-taker at heart. (not enough so to move to Milwaukee!) I did and he was delighted. He asked me out to lunch. It would be interesting to see how he had changed and how he was faring in life.

Pye asked me to take a cab to the Senate side of the Capitol Building which I did. Then he said to get out and go to the elevator inside the Senate door and take it up to the third floor and that he would be there to meet me. Sure enough, there he was! It had been 20+ years! He looked much the same except that he had lost some of his shiny dark hair – I knew then that he would never be a TV news anchorman (A disappearing hairline would not do! Unless, of course, he began to wear a toupee or get hair implants!) Though he was super qualified. He showed me the sound-proof cubicle where he filed and recorded his reports. It never occurred to me that he was beamed all over the world! Then took me through his office and introduced me to everyone as “the girl he almost married”!! I was surprised he would remember that, let alone tell his buddies!!! It was fun for me. I remember I wore a pale beige linen pants suit with shoulder pads and puffy fashion plate long sleeves, small heel shoes and a lavender silk flower in my hair. We had a nice lunch together and talked non-stop for three hours. Said goodbye and have not set eyes on him again. Only heard him on the radio! Now, not even that since he retired in 1999. I have such good memories!

Up Periscope: According to his website which I just got the idea to try to find today, Pye has a wife named Mary, a married son, Ed, now in Afghanistan and formerly in Iraq and is living at Calmes Neck, on the Shenandoah River in Virginia, only 70 miles west of DC. He had told me about his wife and son and that they had a hideaway in Shenandoah country. I pray that his son returns home safely! T.B.T.G 8/16/2005 To my great surprise, he died in the fall of 2006. I believe it was suddenly of a heart condition. Sadness and woe.

#6 1956 & 1967

Have you ever been 'Buzzed' by a US fighter jet?

I think you know by now, dear reader, that I have had some rather rare experiences. I have been buzzed twice. Once was by chance + a prank and the second was by design. One happened in Virginia and other in California!

Buzz meeting #1

The first buzz was in 1956 when I was a sophomore at Sweet Briar College in Virginia. Our third-floor dorm room faced the 'arcade' far below. My roommate, Sheila Kerlin, from Tulsa, OK, had a reel-to-reel tape recorder.

I remember the day well. The tape was rolling when suddenly there was a noise in the sky. The noise swiftly turned into a roar as 2 jet planes sped over us. The noise was deafening, only lasted a moment.

Later I learned from my Mississippi 'big sister', who was a senior, that it was her boyfriend and his buddy who buzzed Sweet Briar that day. Most all of the girls were in class at the time. "Not to worry." she replied in her sweet southern drawl, "That was just a prank." And I was thinking, that guy must really love her!

Sheila and I had no idea at the time, that our tape recorder had been on when the prank passed over us. Then, a month or so later, on a day when Sheila left early for lunch and I was still in the room getting ready, I had an idea! I do not know where on earth it came from! This is what I did in a flash.

I turned on the tape to the section just before the fly over noise. It was a lovely, warm, sunny, early spring midday. I lifted our dorm window that gave onto the arcade below. Only this time the open arcade was jammed full of girls waiting for the dining room doors to open for lunch. Then, I turned on the recorder at the loudest pitch and let her roll!

In a matter of seconds, the sound of low flying jet engines got louder and louder, closer and closer. It was deafening for me too as I watched the reaction of the students on the arcade crouch and cover their ears and heads. Some had hit the ground. Then it was over, even faster than it began. Total quiet returned as the frightened students stood up and began to chatter, wondering what had just happened! I told my 'big sister' what I had done. We both laughed heartily. Sheila and I thought it was a real 'coup' but told no one! Sheila did not want her tape player to be confiscated by Dean Jester!

Buzz meting #2

The second time was in 1967 when I was a young bride and mother of two girls, Heather and Amy. My husband, Rick, was stationed at George Air Force Base in Victorville, CA where we lived on base for 2 years.

During that time our lives centered around his job as class D Surgeon in Orthopedics at the Tactical Air Force Base Hospital and airplanes, to be specific, jet fighters. Our neighbors were pilots of these jets as took their turns of doing 6-month tours of duty in the Vietnam war in SE Asia. As an Air Force wife, I was a member of the Officers Wives Group. One day we, the AF Wives, were given the opportunity to tour the Flight Line on base and to climb up into the pilot's seat in one of the planes on the flight line. That was indeed a thrill for me. As I sat in the pilot's seat, I looked to my right and watched planes readying for take-off. I could see the pilot nod his head to the tower when he was ready. Then he gunned it to take off speed and lifted into the air like a bird. Like my mother and my Nanna Aulls, I admired airplanes and flight itself. Nanna was on hand at Hammondsport, NY Airport when Glenn Curtiss the first planes took flight at the time of the Wright Brothers ca 1908. And, lest we forget, I worked at Air France in NYC during the first years of my marriage.

The pilots' families were our neighbors on both. Their young teenagers, our baby-sitters. We were blessed that Rick did not have to be stationed at a hospital in Vietnam.

We and our best man, I think it was also his wife from Pasadena, decided to make a trip to Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in California. There may have been others with us that day, but I cannot recall for sure. Before leaving the base, Rick was talking with one of the pilots and told him we would be climbing the lower section of Whitney on that particular day. I was game for the hike but not sure what kind of strength it might take on my part. *I was game for my debut mountain climb. Why not start with one of the highest?*

Backpacks were 'de rigueur' for everyone. We each had to carry our own. Most were about 40 pounds. I started out OK, but it was not long before I could not breathe properly with it on my back. So, we shifted around and carried on up the easy trail. I recall the point when we were able to see the twin peaks of the mountain and being very impressed that I had made it that far. Rick had mentioned on the way up that he had spoken to a pilot who would be out on practice flights that morning and might be near the twin peaks. Then, at the perfect moment, twin jet fighters flew, I should say, roared, into view at a high altitude. They caught our attention, and as one, we raised our eyes just in time to see them fly between the tall rock peaks as if they did it every day.

It was not by chance this happened so beautifully in time with our hike. The pilots buzzed us a couple of times, dipping their wings in salute so we would know for sure it was our friends from the base. It was indeed a thrill for me. This buzz was much more exciting and on a much higher level (pun) than my first one at Sweet Briar. Chalk it up as yet another memorable experience for me.

Up Periscope: It is now 2020, and looking back, it was a full day hike, halfway (so to speak) up Whitney and back down. Another one for the memory book!

#7 & #8 1958-59

Ted Kennedy (1932-2009), UVA Law School student, U.S. Senator, Massachusetts

John V. Tunney (1935-2018), UVA Law School, US Senator, California

In my junior and senior years at Sweet Briar College, Virginia (1958-59) I met and dated Charlie McKenney, a second and third- year law student at Virginia (known to most as UVA). I recall that he often picked me up at Sweet Briar in his red Sprite, and we drove the hour trip up route 29 to Charlottesville for parties at “Virginia”. Sometimes, after the Virginia/Yale polo game, we were invited to parties by one of Charlie’s classmates, Ted Kennedy. Occasionally we accepted. Even then I knew the Kennedy name from Massachusetts. His brother, Jack, was a U.S. Senator at the time, having been elected in 1953 after serving in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1947-1953. Jack had married Jacqueline Bouvier in 1953.

During his three years of law school, Ted shared a house on the Farmington Country Club golf course at Virginia. It was a good-sized brick home with a gorgeous view across the golf course. His housemate was John V. Tunney, son of the Heavyweight Boxing Champion of the World, Gene Tunney, who had challenged world Heavyweight champ, Jack Dempsey. The fight was scheduled for September 23, 1926. Jack Dempsey was the 3-1 favorite that night. We are of the age group to remember these famous names, right? My father used to watch the fights on TV, 9 Ted and John entertained lavishly, both inside the house and on their broad lawn in good weather. They had a ‘colored’, uniformed wait staff that prepared and served food and libations. By the time I was included on their guest list, Ted had married Virginia Joan Bennett. Joan, who had married Ted in 1958 joined Ted and John in their house in Charlottesville where I met her. Ted had met her when he was his brother, Jack’s, campaign manager for his re-election as US Senator. Joan was a senior at Manhattanville College in 1957 when Ted came to give a speech there. She was unsure about marrying him since she did not know him that well, but her father insisted that she do so. She later became an alcoholic, probably he did too, judging by the lifestyle I viewed firsthand and read about in the newspapers. Their marriage ended in divorce in 1982. His second wife was Vicki Reggie Kennedy.

Joan may not have known the details of Ted’s prior life, the ones that may have portended poorly for her, that is, he had cheated on a Spanish exam at Harvard, having a friend take the exam for him in his freshman year. The two were found out and both expelled with possibility of reapplying in two years. He did a stint in the Army for two years with help from his father on his assignments. Although it was during the Korean War, Ted did not serve in Korea. He was reinstated at Harvard in 1953 where he played on the Harvard football team.

In 1970, at 36, John V. Tunney was one of the youngest U.S. Senators in the preceding century ever elected and one of the youngest in recent history to lose his seat after just one term. Following his successful campaign for the U.S. Senate seat, his story was portrayed in the Robert Redford film, “The Candidate”. He died of prostate cancer at 83.

After graduation from Harvard, Ted Kennedy enrolled in the [University of Virginia School of Law](#) in 1956. While there, his fast automotive habits were curtailed when he was charged with reckless driving and driving without a license. He was officially manager of his brother John's [1958 Senate re-election campaign](#), and Ted's ability to connect to ordinary voters on the street helped bring a record-setting victory margin that gave credibility to his brother, Jack's, presidential aspirations. Ted graduated from law school in 1959. Overall, I was not impressed with Ted, the law student - even his wife who seemed distant and detached when I spoke with her. Most of their guests were heavy drinkers and lived a lifestyle to which Charlie and I did not subscribe.

Subsequently, only three years after graduation from law school, Ted was elected United States Senator in 1962 until his death from a brain tumor in 2009. His former housemate at Virginia law school served as a representative in US Congress from California from 1965 until his resignation in 1971, then as U.S. Senator from California 1971-1977. The two men followed similar paths in serving their country as Democrats in Washington. After the death of Ted's two brothers to assassins' bullets, Ted chose not to run for President, but remained in the Senate.

Of course, you know that on the night of July 18, 1969, Ted was responsible for the death of Mary Jo Kopechne at Martha's Vineyard only ten years after I met him. The incident occurred after a party held for a group of young women, "The Boiler Room Girls," who had helped in the presidential campaign for Ted's brother, Bobby. As the story goes, after a night of partying he was driving her to the place she was staying - to his place or to hers - when he drove off the bridge to Chappaquiddick. The car, a '67 Olds 88, went off the short bridge where he left her in the sinking car to die, never notifying the police till the next day. Although responsible, Ted was never charged with her death. He pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of an accident and was given a sentence of two months that was suspended. He denied driving under the influence of alcohol and denied any misconduct as far as he was concerned with Mary Jo. Ted asked the Massachusetts electorate if he should remain in office; their retort was yes, and he did. His brother, Jack, became US President, and Ted, a US Senator from the state of Massachusetts for life (nearly 47 years).

In the early 2000's Ted has been shamelessly mendacious, spouting off to the press and the senate about our president, George Bush, blatantly calling him a liar. Such is the credibility of our "upstanding" politicians in America - namely one I had the occasion to meet in the late 1950's.

Up Periscope: Many years later, John and I were eating at Cavanaugh's Steak House in NYC when Ted walked in, passed our table and disappeared behind a closed door. He looked as he did on TV, red-faced and much overweight, white hair all askew. While John and I ate our juicy steaks, many well-dressed men followed Kennedy through the mysterious door to a private dining room over the course of the next hour or so. I always wondered what went on there! Ted died of brain cancer at 77 at his home in Hyannisport, MA. Both Ted and John Tunney had also served in the U.S. House of Representatives prior to being elected to the U.S. Senate.

#9 1959

Rev. Dr. Daniel A. Poling (1884-1968)

Preached at Marble Collegiate Church, Park Avenue

Dr. Normal Vincent Peale said of him: "One of the greatest servants of Jesus Christ in this age, or any other." Was editor of The Christian Herald for a long period. President Harry Truman named him investigator into tax scandals in his administration. See letter to him from President Truman.

In 1958 Dr. Daniel A. Poling played an important part in the wedding of my 2nd cousin, Carolyn Norris Bryan in Washington DC. Her father, Rev. Dr. Ernest R. Bryan had passed away in December of 1954. So, as a close friend of the family, Dr. Poling walked my cousin, Carolyn, down the aisle. Carolyn graduated from Mount Holyoke College and went on to achieve a Masters' Degree in Education from Harvard College. She was marrying Jack Veerman, a Cornell graduate, who eventually took the reins of the worldwide company, Tico Tiles. His tiles were used in decorating home interiors, exteriors of buildings, sidewalks, subways, and more.

My parents and I drove to Washington to attend this wedding. I was one of her bridesmaids at the society wedding. My gown was a heavy satin, teal blue with a large bow of the same material that rested just below the waist in the back. As I recall, the service was either at the Washington Cathedral or a smaller church not far from her family home in northwest DC. We then proceeded to a well-known hotel for the reception. It was at the wedding that I met Dr. Poling. He had been a friend of Carolyn's parents (Mildred and Ernest) for years. What a wonderful choice to take the place of her father. I was blessed to have met him that special day as a part of the wedding party.

Daniel and Ernest had worked together with the Christian Endeavour Society. The society was founded in 1881 to encourage youth to become followers of Jesus. Both Ernest served as President, International Society of Christian Endeavour, while his friend, and associate, Daniel, was President, World's Christian Endeavour Union. According to my research, they oversaw, planned, and opened many far-flung youth group gatherings each year in various cities around the globe. I know it was a lifetime commitment for both men, to work with the youth of the world with the common goal, to instill in the younger generation, a firm faith in our Lord.

Sadly, I never knew my cousin Ernest as he suffered a sudden thrombosis of the lung while playing baseball and died instantly. He and his family lived in Washington, DC, and I grew up with my family in Hornell, NY. When I attended Sweet Briar College in Virginia, 1955-1959 and had the opportunity to spend time with my cousins, Ernest had already passed away. I grew up hearing about his work and that of his friend, Dr. Poling, but knew very little of what it entailed. Now, only Carolyn and I survive, and she is very ill. Thus, the lack of information to pass on to you, the reader. Today, The Christian Endeavour movement still carries on but is much diminished in numbers.

Daniel was born in Oregon, and in 1906 he was ordained as minister in the United Brethren Church. His father was one of the ministers who helped to found this sect.

He was a prohibitionist. During World War I he helped to create a unit of chaplains who would serve with the American Expeditionary Force in France. He served near the front and was exposed to an enemy gas attack for which the U S government gave him recognition. From 1922–33 he was the minister the Marble Collegiate Church on Park Ave., New York City. While there, he broadcast weekly radio programs. He met Dr. Norman Vincent Peal during this period. In 1927 he was the editor of the Christian Herald, a non-denominational, Protestant journal, until 1966. That same year he became the Head of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour, continuing his work that he had begun years ago while working hand in hand with my cousin, Ernest Bryan.

#10 1958-1988

Lady Liberty

See also later account including 1986 meeting John Denver

As I look back over the span of many decades, I find I have had some unusual connections with this seemingly inanimate object, I call **Lady Liberty**. I have added her to my **Not By Chance Meetings** writings. The **first: (1958)** connecting cord I found my visiting Belfort, France, learning about her sculptor, Bartholdi. The **second: (1958)** was when I dressed like Lady Liberty in Belfort, France, same year. The **third: (1958)** was seeing the statue the first time in person from the ship that brought me home after my summer in France, same year. The **fourth: (1986)** was July 2nd, the day I met singer/guitarist John Denver who was en route to New York City to emcee the TV special of the Centennial Celebration and the re-dedication of Lady Liberty. The **fifth (1988):** was when I taught my High School French classes about the statue and then led them to her island and into her arm, head and torch to meet her up close and personal.

It was my first trip to France 1958. I traveled in a group of 10 Americans as a part of the summer program offered by the Experiment in International Living. Each of us was placed in the household of 10 host families in Belfort, 'Territoire de Belfort' in northeastern France. I lived with the Andre Weber family.

My host family was a delight. There were two daughters around my age with whom I grew attached that summer. Their father was director of Alstom, Belfort, France. Alstom is a multinational company dealing in passenger transportation, the manufacture of locomotives and signals. The matching of the host family with me was flawless. Believe it or not, in those days, there was a division of Alstom in my hometown of Hornell, NY. Mme. Weber was very much like my mother. She was a fine cook and loved to entertain as well as to plan family hikes and picnics in the nearby mountains. I was already thinking in terms of French cuisine thanks to my real parents. I loved helping out in the kitchen and preparing new recipes with the Weber daughters and their Mother.

I was enchanted with France and her melodious language long before my set my feet upon her soil for the first time that summer. I began my formal study of French in high school and continued the same during my four years at Sweet Briar College where I majored in French. With this background of the language under my belt, I began my real, hands on discovery of France, her most famous iconic structures, her pure language spoken by natives, her welcoming and friendly people, her folk songs, her art and her cuisine. I adored them all that summer with The Experiment in International Living four-month program.

(My **first** meeting with Lady Liberty 1958). Now, to reveal the circumstances of how my stay in Belfort connected me with the Statue of Liberty. In a word: it was **unavoidable**. I discovered that Belfort was the town where the sculptor of Lady Liberty, Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904) had lived and plied his trade. He designed and constructed the

Statue of Liberty right there in Belfort. He assembled her in New York in 1886. Also, in the center of Belfort, there is another huge Bartholdi sculpture of a seated lion called, 'Le Lion de Belfort' which he completed in 1880. Surely it was NOT by chance that I landed in this small town in eastern France to absorb all I could about Bartholdi and his Lady Liberty. Now you, the reader, know why I added her to my list of inanimate objects **Not By Chance Meetings**. How could I leave her out?

In 1879, Bartholdi was awarded the design patent to build the Statue of Lady Liberty. It was to be his 'chef d'oeuvre', a feat of his talent and hard work. It was planned to honor the centennial of American Independence. In 1886 the massive figure was completed and shipped to America part-by-part and re-assembled. When received there was a celebration in October 1886 with a great deal of fanfare. The ambitious project had been a joint effort of the French and American people.

(Second meeting 1958) On our last night in Belforr, our small group presented a farewell performance in remembrance of our wonderful summer with our new French families and acquaintances. For some unknown reason, probably, because I volunteered, I was the appointed Statue of Liberty. That is to say that I would dress up like her and strike a pose like the famous sculpture in New York Harbor. I wore a bulky, long dress I made from white, bath towels. I fashioned a fake torch handle with the fake flame at the top. It was a good facsimile considering how little I had to work with and how little time I had to pull my costume together. The local newspaper was on hand and captured us all on stage in our get-ups. They snapped a photo of the scene and put it on the front page! I have the clipping and the photo itself as a reminder of the fun we had. In a sense, I became Lady Liberty that night!

(Third meeting 1958) Now, ready for my next chance meeting with Lady Liberty: At the end of my stay in Belfort, I returned home after nearly four months abroad as an exchange student on a student ship. I was en route to the NYC pier where I planned to meet my parents. On my eastward bound passage, I had not seen the Statue of Liberty as our ship had departed from Montreal, taking a northly track exiting the St. Lawrence Seaway into the Atlantic Ocean. I clearly recall the moment our ship passed the statue on the port side. We were all thrilled as Lady Liberty appeared in the early morning fog. This was my first sighting of the real Lady Liberty. The timing was perfect as now I had a good sense of how France and America worked in tandem to raise the funds for the enormous project, how she came to be sculpted by Bartholdi in Belfort, and how our two countries decided to bring her to her new home, New York Harbor, America. I cannot think of another such cooperative creation that was brought to fruition between two countries as amiably as this one! As we sailed silently by, Liberty was majestic and beautiful in every way, even more so in person than I could have imagined. She now stands guard at the port of entry into our freedom-loving country. As a child, I was always a flag-waver, very patriotic, but that day my heart swelled with pride to be in her presence. Vive la France! Vive l'Amerique!

To read about my **Fourth** meeting with Liberty, perhaps the most thrilling, I beg you

to take a deep breath, then skip to my **Fifth** meeting to allow me ample space to fill in all the exciting details of the **Fourth**. I promise I will crown this inanimate object with one of my most exciting NOT By Chance Meetings!

(**Fifth** meeting 1988) After that first summer in France, I was strongly rooted as a Francophile and still am at 83 in 2020! I became a high school French teacher many years later. Every year I received mailings from France sending me ‘realia’ to use in my classroom. About the time of the Centennial of America’s receiving the gift of Lady Liberty from France (1986), I opened a box of pertinent information and posters on the great lady. Was I thrilled! During the following two years as a French teacher, I spent as much time as needed in my French classes to teach my students the importance of the Lady Liberty, how and where she was built and of the years of friendly cooperation between the French and American governments. I concluded our study by taking my students by bus to New York City for a boat trip out to view the Statue of Liberty up-close and personal. Most of my students took the elevator, but some climbed up to her head at the top. Some students even walked up further, into the arm and the lamp. It was a most fulfilling trip for all of us; myself included. It is often said that teachers themselves learn from teaching their students. That was the case for me. Thus, was fashioned another cord in the bond between Lady Liberty and me.

I was drawn to the words carved into the plinth of the statue upon which Liberty stands. My friend, Roberta, a Poet and Professor at UConn Waterbury, CT, urged me to tell others about the “poetess” who wrote them. They were penned by 34-year-old Emma Lazarus, daughter of well-to-do New York City Jewish immigrants, who had fled Russian anti-Semitism to make their home in America.

In 1883 Emma was asked to submit a poem in a fund-raiser auction along with well-known poets such as Walt Whitman and Mark Twain. Only one poem, the one sold at the highest price, would be chosen for the prestigious new monument. Some called the gigantic statue a new “Colossus” or a contemporary “Wonder of the World”. Emma’s poem was the resounding winner! Who knew that in the following century, her words would indeed fulfill the promise of hope and shelter for countless emigrants? Here is Emma’s poem:

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses
Yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of
Your teeming shore.
Send those, the homeless,
Tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

How propitious was Emma in writing these words? Who would not be drawn to our shores by this heartfelt plea of sanctuary? In this poem, Liberty is like the eternal, harboring, loving mother figure.

At the original dedication of the statue in 1886, boats ferried the important speakers out to Bedloe's Island where the statue was just getting her footing. Then word spread that no women were to be included. I read contemporary news articles about a group of women who decided to make their own way to Liberty, not to be left out. Let us not overlook the obvious. The statue **is** a lady! It made quite a stir, but the women were accepted. Our first note of disturbance and inequality, even at the foot of Lady Liberty. It was worked out without difficulty.

Lady Liberty stands guard over the main port of entry into our land of liberty. She represents freedom to all those who flock from afar to enter her gate. Countless are the refugees who have yearned to feast their eyes on her torch as she beckons them to find succor in America. Lady Liberty bids them welcome from countries with oppressive governments rule, not by law and order, but by oppression, fear, imprisonment and even death.

My **Fourth** meeting with Lady Liberty follows:

NOT By Chance Meetings - John Denver, (1943-1987).

Finally, I invite you to read about the day I met him in Litchfield County on July 2, **1986** and learn of his part in the 'centennial celebration' of the famous statue. It was held July 3,4,5,6,1986 as a re- dedication of Lady Liberty. Proudly she still stands for liberty and justice for all as she welcomes the downtrodden and the lost into America's waters. It is truly one of the wonders of the world.

'Only in America'. And this statue has guarded our shores for 100 years in proud remembrance of the close connection between the French and the Americans. On that beautiful day in New York Harbor, John Denver stands before "one of the largest crowds ever assembled in the whole" world, as he sang 'America, America, The Dream Goes On.' It was written, conducted, and played by John Williams, with the Boston Pops Orchestra.

I have seen John Williams (composer/conductor) in concert for many years at Tanglewood and in Boston. John and I also saw him in person at Tanglewood, not conducting this time. when conductor Seiji Ozawa was introducing Williams' composition of the music from the hit film about WWII, "Saving Private Ryan" that had just opened in theaters. Ozawa asked Williams to stand up, whereupon the audience gave him an appreciative hand. To our surprise, Williams stood up directly in front of us! He turned to give us a big smile! That night was also the debut at Tanglewood of the super large screens, both inside and outside the shed for a closer look at the stage. Well, we really got an 'up close' look at Williams plus seeing him beaming down at us all from the gigantic new screens. Such is the excitement of my life, especially around music. My "**NOT By Chance Meetings**" go on and on. I love it! God works in wondrous ways that we will never understand. T.B.T.G.

Finally, I reveal the entire story, beginning with the day I met Country Singer, guitarist, movie and TV star, **John Denver**. As mentioned above, there is one more point of connection in my story of Lady Liberty. I guess it should not be a surprise, that Lady

Liberty, John Denver and me, fell in together that July weekend in 1986, wild as it may seem.

My friend, Christa Holl, then owner of The Birches Inn on Lake Waramaug, Washington, CT, called me one afternoon to say that John Denver had just driven into their Inn to stay two nights prior to his engagement in NYC. He was to be the central, opening vocalist on 'Liberty Weekend', July 3, 1986. He made no prior reservation. He simply pulled up in his black Porsche. (He told me he always rented a car just like the one he drives at home in the Rockies.

Christa said to come up to the Inn asap!!! She knew that I loved Denver's music and that 12 of us, on a sailing trip to the Grenadine Islands in the Caribbean, had played his new songs non-stop, especially his big hit, "Sunshine on My Shoulders" until we all memorized every song on his album. Needless to say, I drove up to the Inn and met John one-on-one in their restaurant after his lunch. We spent about two hours together sitting and talking at the bar with no one else around except Christa and her husband, Heinz. The full story is in the above-mentioned section of my book where I concentrate on John Denver. His visit to Christa's Inn kicked off one of the biggest American celebrations in recent time.

A little background about the event John was going to attend is very exciting. It centered around The Statue of Liberty and the re-opening of visiting Bedloe's Island where she stands. There was an extended period of restoration to the statue. It had been closed for a couple of years at least in preparation for this grand re-opening. The world had been watching for the scaffolding to be taken down to reveal Liberty at her finest. The plan was to be a four-day celebration on the July 4th weekend 1986. It would be a grand centennial observance of her 100 years since installation on Bedloe's Island 1886. Wow! Was I excited!

July 3 - Opening Ceremony – John Williams, composer, conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, played the opening theme song as they orchestra paraded onto the enormous waterside stage in front of a stadium-like area that held many important famous attendees of the weekend's ceremony. Liberty will be unveiled to show off her newly polished welcoming visage. President Reagan and First Lady, Nancy, unveiled the statue. Referring to our freedom in America, Reagan pointed out American freedoms granted to her citizens: the freedom "to have before one no impediments, to chart one's own course and take the adventure of life as it comes...to be free as the wind". He then passed the microphone to the President of France, our partner in the building of Lady Liberty, French, President Mitterrand and his wife were honored guests to symbolize the enduring friendship between our two countries for all these years. Gregory Peck, Elizabeth Taylor and Frank Sinatra spoke. Neil Diamond sang his wonderful: "They Come to America". The Supreme Justice swore in immigrants on Ellis Island. The rest of the opening ceremony took place mostly on Governors' Island, NYC. Where some 1,000 immigrants will be sworn-in as citizens of America, including dancer, Baryshnikov.

July 4 - Operation Sail, American Music Concert, Fireworks-From the USS Iowa, Pres. Reagan reviewed the largest flotilla of tall ships ever seen sailing from the Hudson River

into NY Harbor. President Ronald Reagan reviewed the ships from the USS IOWA and called them the “personification of freedom and liberty. To have before one no impediments; to chart one’s own course and take the adventure of life as it comes, to be free as the wind – as free as the tall ships themselves. It’s fitting then, that this procession should take place in honor of Lady Liberty.” Later John Williams conducted the Boston Pops Orchestra At Liberty State Park, New Jersey. This park was chosen as it is the closest land to the Statue of Liberty. The opening performer was John Denver who sang Williams’s patriotic song written especially for John: “**America, America, The Dream Goes On!**” The crowd was huge; thousands of thousands of proud Americans, all cheering for John and Liberty!

I saw it all on TV back then and again today (July 2016) on my computer. John Denver wore a white dinner jacket, blue shirt and Navy bow tie, black pants. As he sang, with the huge chorus behind him, the wind blew his hair non-stop. The same with Gregory Peck the night before as he did his emcee bit introducing featured guests, his graying locks blown to and fro thanks to the stiff breeze coming off the New York Harbor.

It was a thrill to watch the festivities for Lady Liberty and at the same time grateful for having met John Denver, with whom I chatted just two days before, face to face in CT. (Please refer to my “Not by Chance Meetings” with John Denver to learn more about our relaxed time together at the Inn of friends on Lake Waramaug, CT). He emceed TV coverage for the July 4th once-in-a-lifetime celebration from land, sea and air, showing all the boats of all sizes, from individual put-puts, to U.S. naval ships, and a plethora of tall ships gracefully exiting the Hudson River into NY Harbor, to blimps and flyovers.

On stage were famous personages from ALL walks of American and French life, even the Kissingers, whom I had met when I worked at the White Flower Farm, stars of film and stage, Country Music singers, Alan Shepard, whom I had seen in a ticker tape parade up Fifth Avenue, politicians and Coretta King. President Reagan closed the festivities that evening with a speech from the USS John F. Kennedy. The evening finale was a Fireworks show, touted to be the largest in the world.

July 5 - Grand Reopening Concert presided over by First Lady, Nancy Reagan along with the Paris Boys Choir and the Harlem Boys Choir. There was a Charity Blimp Race of Four blimps from the George Washington Bridge to Battery Park across from the Statue. At night there was a concert by the N.Y. Philharmonic and the U. S. Marine Band joined under the baton of Conductor Zubin Mehta in Central Park. In attendance, among others, were Placido Domingo, Marilyn Horne, Itzhak Perlman and Yo-Yo Ma (I had seen Mehta as a regular subscriber to the LA Philharmonic when we lived in CA.; saw Itzhak in intimate rehearsals at Tanglewood, MA and Yo-Yo and Yuri Bashmet when my friend, Lea and I were given comp tickets to sit in the only box seats in Ozawa Hall, Tanglewood). There were an estimated 800,000 people reported to have attended this unique and marvelous line-up of stars to pay homage to Lady Liberty’s unveiling. It was the largest crowd recorded worldwide up to this time, and the largest in US history until 1994.

July 6 – Closing Ceremonies On last day of full out celebrations.

The finale was held at Giants Stadium in New Jersey with a full rostrum of outstanding names from sports and Pop Culture: Willie Nelson, Kenny Rogers, Patti LaBelle, Charlton Heston, Gene Kelly, Gerry Mulligan, Manhattan Transfer, Shirley Maclaine, Liza Minnelli, Frankie Avalon and more.

Up periscope: Beginning in 1989 John Denver introduced a series of wonderful, musical concerts: “Christmas at the White House” in Washington, DC. In 1990 he hosted “Christmas in Washington”. This series was produced for television and featured John Denver as host. He sang before the President, his cabinet and staff and their families. It became a Christmas tradition, one that many Americans came to cherish. In 1996 John Denver put on his final Christmas concert in DC with the National Symphony Orchestra. Tragically, he died in a private plane accident October 12, 1997. So very sad.

So ends my glimpse of **John Denver** and **Lady Liberty**, from 1958-1988 both American Icons, much beloved by us all. God is great!

Up Periscope: Again, in 2022, Jackie Stempfle and I just reminisced about our similar summers on The Experiment in International Living. I went to France; she to Germany!

#11 & #12 1959

IKE & CHIRCHILL: US President in office 1952-60 & former two time English Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill

Singular face-to-face encounter 1959

It was a lovely, warm spring day in 1959. I was riding with my Sweet Briar classmate, Claire Devener, in her red TR3 (Triumph sports car) heading into Washington DC to study for our senior French comprehensives at my Aunt (really a cousin) Mildred Bryan's house in NW Washington, on Quebec Street to be exact. It was about 2 blocks from the Washington Cathedral where I attended services when in DC, sometimes even with my parents. The architecture is breathtaking, and the choir music is heavenly. It is much like Notre Dame in Paris, only about 1,000 years younger. In fact, the Washington Cathedral was not finished in 1959 despite 100 years under construction.

On the road again, Claire and I were listening to some great songs by our favorites of the era, the Four Freshman and Johnny Mathis when there was a special news announcement, taking preference over our music, stating that Sir Winston Churchill, former Prime Minister of England, was arriving at National Airport in DC momentarily and that sitting President, Dwight David Eisenhower, would be on hand to welcome him.

Claire and I looked at each other and spontaneously decided to head toward the airport. Oh, the joys of being young and footloose! We were already quite familiar with that airport and many others since we traveled a lot up and down the east coast. We often took the shuttle from New York City to DC or vice versa. When we arrived at the flight line, it was not a problem finding the gate where Churchill was disembarking.

We parked the car nearby and walked over to the chain link fence to take a gander. There was a simple, temporary podium built on the other side of the fence from where we stood. We could see that a microphone had been placed there as well. We would even hear a speech! Lucky us! There were not that many people since it had not been announced in advance.

We saw Sir Winston Churchill come down the stairs of his airplane. I do not recall what airline it was, but of course it was a private plane, his conveyance most likely. Ike waited for him at the foot of the steps leading down from the plane.

When Churchill touched the ground, we could see that he was quite elderly and looking his advanced age, but chipper nonetheless. I read later that in 1956 he had suffered a

stroke. He wore his signature bow tie, an elegant British derby, dark suit with white a handkerchief in his breast pocket. His typical fat cigar, nowhere in sight. Churchill opened an ear-to-ear smile when he greeted Ike, his old friend and ally of WWII. He did not come to America very often, so this was a special occasion most likely his last such trip.

I do not remember a word of what they both said over the microphone, just the usual welcoming words I suppose. I was too overcome in the presence of these two outstanding heroes of our time.

Eisenhower was in his second term of office as Republican President of the United States, this, his eighth and final year. Of interest to me now, December of in 2021 after reading Brett Baier's book on Eisenhower: Three Days in January, I found that our President was already deep into writing his farewell speech. I learned from Baier's book that Ike's brother Milton, was one of his best confidants on most subjects. The president felt safe having Milton read his speeches to add his opinion into the mix. It was Ike's pattern to write most of his speeches himself, though he had speechwriters who proffered their thoughts on his speeches as well. It was Eisenhower's duty to read theirs, then write and re-write his own version many times until he was sure he had on paper exactly the points he wanted to make. Surely his farewell address would be one of the most important ones he would write, so he started EARLY, over 2 years in advance. I mention this by way of pointing out that when we saw him that day in spring 1959, his departing speech, marking the close of fifty years of military and presidential service to his country, would have been one of a multitude of important things on Eisenhower's mind.

He and Churchill spent many years working closely together to bring World War II to a successful end. The depth of their relationship produces chills up and down my spine without knowing all the overwhelming details and hard choices they had to iron out together. I am truly thankful to them. I thank God for bringing Claire and me within a bird's eye view of these two remarkable world leaders.

Back to the tarmac at National Airport: Soon Claire and I could see that the two men were ready to depart. The famous bubble Cadillac belonging to our American President, had pulled up behind them. After a few minutes talking with a few invited people near the podium, the two dignitaries got into the familiar bulletproof black limo with see-through top -section and began to drive very slowly toward a gate in the chain link fence at some distance to our right. I guess they wanted to avoid the small crowd who had gathered with us at the fence.

Again, Claire and I exchanged looks and jumped into the car. She and I were used to traveling together and doing impulsive things on a moment's notice. She revved up the motor and steered toward the opening in the fence where it was obvious by then that their limo would exit the airfield. We pulled up near the gate, jumped out of the car and walked to the opening in the fence to get a closer look at these two men. First, we see Sir Winston Churchill, now 85, the former British Prime Minister, known for immeasurable

strength and tenacity during the war and second, seated beside him, is Ike, now 69, the world-revered West Point-trained officer, former five star American General. Together they master-minded the “D” Day Normandy Invasion made up of the largest such force ever launched by sea, land and air, crossing the English Channel to surprise the enemy, Hitler, in spite of poor weather conditions. On June 6, 1944 their combined forces dived into German-occupied France to pulverize Hitler’s Army. The two men we see before us today are regarded as war heroes of the highest caliber. These brave and able men were without question the two most powerful men in the world.

And here were we, two young college seniors, studying French language and history, who loved everything that was French, looked, smelled or tasted French! Our two heroes who had together saved France, rescued her from the Germans were about to ride right in front of us as we stood there, unaccompanied, un-guarded and totally alone, as were they! Did somebody goof? We were the benefactors of someone’s goof in that case, for no one came to shoo us away or tell us to step back or to leave.

Instead we held our ground by the open chain link fence and waited for the two leaders of the now free world to pass by us no more than an arm’s length away! As they came slowly toward us, they stopped talking, turned to face us and both, at the same time lifted their hands in the form of the famous “V” for Victory sign. (show pictures). I saw Eisenhower shower his beaming, toothfull grin our way as the car moved away. We have been blessed indeed this day!

Mission accomplished. That made our day! We proceeded on our way to study for our French Comprehensives. Too bad our subject was not Government or International Studies, like my roommate, Sarah Jane!

There is not much more to be said about these two great men and our great good fortune that day, to pay our respects to them privately, if just for a precious moment in time.

Up Periscope: When we saw Ike as US President in 1959, he was 69 years old. He died in 1969 at the age of 79, ten years after our chance meeting. His wife, Mamie, died in 1979. Twice I visited their Gettysburg, Maryland, retirement home, then a museum.

Their niece, Ruth E. Eisenhower, and I attended Brown Ledge Camp on Lake Champlain, VT, together in the early 1950’s. We rode horseback together there. She was the daughter of Ike’s youngest brother and close confidant, Milton, President of Johns Hopkins University in Maryland.

Ruth wed Dr. Thomas Shide in 1982 and then died of cancer in 1984. Such a sad story for a nice girl I knew for a short time. I just now learned of her untimely death.

In 1959 when we saw Churchill age 85, he had already served as English Prime Minister twice and held that office during World War II from 1940 – 1944 and then again from 1951 – 1955. By 1959 Churchill had retired from politics, and shortly after returning home, he may have suffered more strokes, easing into a wheelchair permanently.

Unable to accept the honor in person, on April 9, 1963 Churchill and his wife remained at home when he was awarded honorary citizenship of the United States of America. Sir Winston was recognized as a “defender of freedom, orator, statesman, artist and historian”. President Kennedy who bestowed the honor in the rose garden at the White House said of him: “He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.” Churchill died in 1965 at the age of 91.

Lest I forget, later, in 1960 at the close of Ike’s second term, on the night before Inauguration of the incoming President, there is one last item of interest that I might add here. That night one might say, was the new First Lady’s “coming out” onto the stage of glamour that would surround her the rest of her life. Jaqueline Kennedy stepped into the limelight at her husband’s inauguration Gala, thus creating the “Camelot” dream of the perfect couple.

With the TV cameras rolling and millions watching, Jackie represented the epitome of fashion, wearing a gown designed by Oleg Cassini. As outlandish as it sounds, Oleg is one of my Not By Chance Meetings in 1961. I met him in the Hamptons, Long Island, NY. This introduction landed in my lap as I was chatting with a Frenchman I knew from the City. It was precisely because we were speaking in French that a stranger came over to join us. You guessed it! I was Oleg Cassini! In short, we were invited to dine at his house that night. It is a small, small world, and Disney nailed it! And, timing is everything! (Please see my list of Meetings to read of this one.)

#13, 14 & 15 1959

ELIZABETH TAYLOR - actress, 'most beautiful woman in the world'

EDDIE FISHER – crooner, popular singer on the 'Hit Parade'

INGEMAR JOHANSSON – boxer & heavyweight champion of the world

As a member of Sexta Fiera Literary group, I started my annual paper asking the group: “Can you name this tune? And “Can you name the singer?” As an opener, I play: “O My Papa” with Eddie Fisher singing. The following is the story that goes with the song.

Beginning in June of 1959 my mother and I went on a whirlwind continental tour of Europe. It was my graduation from Sweet Briar College gift. We left from New York City on the 'Flandre', French Line Paquebot, disembarking at Le Havre, France. After nearly three months of tooting around Europe in a Citroen ID19 sedan, we returned to Paris to rendez-vous with my father. I also had the opportunity to meet once again with my friend of 2 years, Paul Marcel Chabrieres whom everyone called, Kim. Kim planned a special night out for my parents and me. He took great care to pick a favorite restaurant where he said, “It is a favorite of mine, a typical French restaurant of the old school. We won't run into any Americans here”. Famous last words! We had not been sitting long when an entourage of people arrived to sit along side us on the banquette. Mother and I noticed Elizabeth Taylor and her current paramour, Eddie Fisher. In fact they were on their honeymoon. He had just secured a divorce from Debbie Reynolds whom everyone loved. I could never see what anyone saw in Eddie- yes, he had a great singing voice, but he also had acne and a pock-marked face!

Sitting on the banquet, “O My Papa” was all a flutter trying to whisper to us that he was elbow-to-elbow with the heavyweight boxing champion of the world!!! To him this was beyond amazing! Daddy was a fervent boxing devoté and had been for years. Never mind Elizabeth Taylor who was known as the 'Most Beautiful Woman n the World' – he was rubbing elbows with Ingemar Johansson.

Elizabeth Taylor was not at her best by a long shot. She was short, wore a babushka around her hair and looked considerably plumper than I had seen her in recent movies. I think she was making a film in Italy that summer. I was not impressed at all. Furthermore, Eddie Fisher was never a handsome type. He always looked as did that night, skinny and pimply. But, oh well, he did have a TV show and was at the top of the charts for best songs. He had an engaging smile and that was all as far as I was concerned. I did not see what Elizabeth saw in him or why she would break up his marriage to Debbie Reynolds. Now, Debbie was classy – she was darling and could sing and dance like crazy. Well at any rate, there we were in this marvelous French restaurant where 'no Americans would ever be seen'. Kim was dashed and discredited. Note aside: This

restaurant was later written up in my Gourmet magazine. It was Chez Raffaten. Apparently it had been discovered!

After dinner, Kim and I had a lovely evening, starting at the disco, 'The Scotch Club', and then on to other of Kim's favorite haunts. He had loads of fun showing me his Paris Mother and Daddy already knew Kim. I had met him the previous summer of 1958 on a student ship, the Arosa Kulm, returning from my Experiment In International Living, three months in Belfort, France. He had come to Hornell during his year of American and Mexican travels to visit us. (earlier in 1958-9). In point of fact, my parents were rather afraid that I might decide to marry him and never come back home. They were getting more and more protective by the time we were in Paris with him.

Mother and I had seen Kim when we first arrived in Paris in June, had had tea at his grandmother's, then saw him again in Cannes where his mother invited us for luncheon one day (My mother balked and regretted the invitation for herself. I accepted of course.)

At the time of this trip, it was our last stop in France, and Kim was getting ready to ship out to Algeria to fight in the Algerian War. I was already sick about it. After our fantastic dinner in the resto Raffetan which, by the way, was illuminated with lights inside stretch-dried pig's stomachs, Kim and I went out on the town. The next morning at our left bank Hotel Lutetia, on Boulevard Raspail, as we were going out around 10:00 AM, we saw a limo arriving with our famous Americans, Elizabeth, Eddie and Ingemar again. This time they were returning from their Paris all-nighter. They obviously played all night and slept all day! Typical movie stars!

My chance meeting with these famous three was not finished yet! By the time Mother and I arrived in New York in September, we settled into the Plaza Hotel, and who did I ride down in the elevator with but Eddie Fisher!! Elizabeth was waiting for him in the lobby. Again we saw the same crew and their NY limo. We were staying at same hotel stateside!! What was this? Were they following us? Who has the best taste in hotels anyway? We had a good chuckle. It just goes to show you that if you stay home on the farm you really don't see or miss much. But once you've seen Paris, life is never the same!

#16, #17, #18, #19 1960

Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. - President Steuben Glass, NYC
Robert Frost - poet laureate of US under Pres. J. F. Kennedy
Roger Blough - President U. S. Steel
Leonard Bernstein - Conductor NY Philharmonic Orchestra,
Composer, West Side Story

In 1960 I was working at my first job in New York City. I sat three stories above Fifth Avenue by the window. If I so desired, I could look down on the street scene below and watch the whole world passing by. And, yes, everyone did pass by that corner at one time or another. I was at the corner of Fifth and 56th St., across from Bonwit Teller and Harry Winston Jewels, one block from Tiffany's.

I was just lucky enough to get this job by writing a long hand letter in my favorite green ink, asking if there was an opening for a new Sweet Briar graduate starting out in the great big wide world of New York business. I had only my French Literature degree and seven years of French studies to bolster my request. I could not even type at that point, although I was taking a night course in typing and speedwriting. Everyone said that if you could type you could land any job you wanted! I mentioned that I was in the process of learning that ever-so-important skill in my short note.

Lo and behold, the next week I got a phone call asking me to come in for an interview. Well, suffice it to say they hired me. And here I am learning the job on the job. I was hired to manage the owner's miniature rare book collection which was predominantly French, to handle his French correspondence, three of his bank accounts and to keep his Who's Who listings up to date plus be a general gopher when that was all done. My boss was Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., President of Steuben Glass, a subsidiary of Corning Glass.

During my tenure at Steuben Glass I met and talked with many of the movers and shakers in NYC in the early 60's. I often spoke with Leonard Bernstein, for example. He and Mr. Houghton shared work on the Board of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra plus that of the Metropolitan Opera and were social friends as well. Mr. Houghton was on the Board of US Steel. I met the President of US Steel in the office, Mr. Roger Blough. I had use of a Carey Cadillac Limo to run errands for Mr. Houghton – i.e. “Jini, will you run down to the Pierpont Morgan Library and find a certain manuscript for me today please?” “Will you find my original hand-written manuscript of Bunyan or Lewis Carol and have it at the front desk for me in an hour? I was preparing manuscripts for a researcher to use in town.

Ready for a certain Ph.D from South Africa who will be arriving this afternoon to do research on it?" I had the privilege to ride the private company DC3 airplane from Newark to Corning – often with only myself and one other person on board. The other person was sometimes, Mr. Decker, President of Corning Glass or even better, a man I loved to talk with, Mr. Frederick Carder, the original founder of Steuben Glass and the chief designer of Steuben art pieces.

At that time in history President Eisenhower, when he received a Head of State from another country at the White House, presented the official or royal visitor with a priceless piece of Steuben designed by Mr. Carder. Just in passing, Mr. Carder was an acquaintance of my grandfather Frank Rowlett Aulls and of my mother's as well.

At one point, Mr. Houghton was planning a speaking engagement for Robert Frost in Corning at the Glass Works, and he asked me to make Mr. Frost's travel arrangements from Boston via train, changing trains in NYC and then on to Corning. I did this and thought that was all there was to it. But, the morning that Mr. Frost was to be changing trains in the city, I got an early AM call from my office asking me to hurry in to meet Mr. Frost and make coffee for him as he decided to stop over to meet with Mr. Houghton and to see our Steuben Showroom and executive offices. Of course, I rushed in and was happy to make the coffee and get some goodies to serve with it. In those days it was not considered demeaning to serve coffee to one's boss as it is today. It was part of the job.

I only had a chance to exchange a few words with Mr. Frost, and to shake his hand and to listen to some of the conversation in the conference room of our office, but it made a lasting impression on me. He was friendly and gracious to me as he extended his hand to meet mine. I mentioned my interest in his home state of Vermont as I had spent several summers at camp on Mallett's Bay north of Burlington. After coffee, we sent him in yet another Carey Cadillac to the train in Hoboken, N.J. and on his way to Corning.

#20 1960

**HUNTER S. THOMPSON - creator of gonzo journalism, writer
(1937-2005)**

In 1960 I was living in NYC with my Sweet Briar classmate, Claire Devener, at the corner of east 82th and East End Avenue on the second floor, corner apartment. Our third roommate was Nancy Beckwith from California. Claire worked at Air France, Public Relations and I, at Steuben Glass and Nancy at Harper's Bazaar Magazine. Somehow Claire made the acquaintance of a young aspiring journalist named Hunter S. Thompson. I have just one incident to recount regarding Hunter that I can recall after all these years. It was just before Christmas that first winter in New York. Everything was new to us just starting out on our careers! New York was full of fun, excitement and new discoveries. One of the most fun things was meeting all kinds of new people. Hunter was one of them, even at that tender age of 21. He was a character, and we knew that. He was an independent thinker, a heavy drinker and very outspoken. But, he had heart.

We were all asleep on a late Sunday night just before Christmas with snow falling quietly outside when suddenly we heard a noise on our window over the street. It may have been a pebble on the glass that woke us. It happened again and again until one of us went to the window to see what it was. And there down below was, no, not Santa Claus whom we were expecting, but Hunter S. Thompson, whom we were not expecting!! He was there with one or two pals trying to awaken us. He had a surprise for us, especially for Claire for whom he had a soft spot in his heart.

It was a Christmas tree! He had just returned from a trip to Vermont over the weekend and had cut a tree just for us and brought it back on top of his car into the City. You know that a real tree, cut expressly for us in the wilds of Vermont was like a city girl's Christmas dream come true!

He yelled up from the street that he wanted us to have this beautiful tree, but how to get into our apartment?? It was too big to bring in up the stairs and I do not think we had an elevator – no we did not. The only choice left was to hoist it up on a rope and bring it in through our living room window! We must have awakened the whole block while we accomplished this feat. But we finally did. It was a labor of love and kindness, a Christmas gift from the heart.

I never knew Hunter that well, but Claire dated him off and on in NYC for a few years and kept up a correspondence with him for years after my New York days when he moved out west. When we knew him, he lived in The Village, on Thompson Street, coincidentally. Sometimes we three girls would get "all Bohemian" and go down to see him – Claire, Nancy and I. We would dress in all black and put on shades, be it day or night, and head out in either her racy, roaring red TR3 or my white Simca Ocean French sports car. Sometimes we even took the subway, perish the thought! We used to meet him in his favorite bar and have a beer with him and his friends.

It all seemed so daring and unconventional to dress up like beatniks and go the village for the evening. After living at Sweet Briar in the woods of rural Virginia for four years following her code of “A Sweet Briar girl always uses good taste and good judgment” theme, we were really breaking out of the box!! After all he was our only contact in the village. All our other friends lived, like us, on the upper East side, in the “genteel” area of NYC, the “high class”, high rent district! But we were tired of always being so prim and proper and loved to dress up like something we weren’t and travel downtown to see him in his totally different atmosphere of so-called freedom.

In the end, Hunter was Claire’s friend. She always seemed to pick guys who were not nice to her, who did not treat her with respect. He would go for weeks and not call her or start dating other girls and make her feel really sad. Oh, well, that was Hunter, and that was Claire, and she, by the way, never did get married. Both were unconventional almost to an extreme and certainly became more so as time went on.

In later years Hunter wrote weird things and became known as a far-out extremist writer with a style unlike any other. A few weeks ago, while we were in Tybee Island, GA. he died, and I remembered that I knew him way back when he was in his formation stage in the early 60’s. His death was reported on TV and in the papers for weeks. I had known he lived in Colorado and recognized a few of his titles and plays but had lost track of him as I had of Claire. Hunter went out with a blast. He did himself in with a shotgun and asked to have his ashes shot out of a canon. Only Hunter! So sad he never knew Jesus.

A few weeks after his demise, I heard on TV that there was a ceremony in Colorado – They shot his ashes out of a canon as he had wished.

Up periscope: Hunter wrote:

“Hell’s Angels:
A Strange and Terrible Saga” 1966.

“Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas:
A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream” 1972.

Plus at least 15 others.

“Fear and Loathing” was made into a movie Starring Johnny Depp

“The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved” - hailed as a milestone in “new journalism” popularized by Tom Wolfe and Truman Capote. They applied the technique of fiction writing to reportage.

#21 1960

Van Cliburn

My next meeting in The Big Apple was world famous pianist, Van Cliburn. I spotted this one at Carnegie Hall. Or, was it he who spotted me? I thumbed through my Playbill silently until I came upon an ad with Van Cliburn's picture. It was as I had suspected. I had sat in the 'golden seat' next to the foremost young pianist in the world! And, I had recognized him!

Over the many ensuing years, I sometimes doubted if it ever happened since it seemed too fabulous to be true. Mais, voila – there it was on page 11, the hen scratch of his name. I was ecstatic!!! What a find. I had almost thrown it out! My memories came flooding back. This winter of 2022

I am spending my free time during the Covid pandemic, to re-vise and edit these exciting "Meetings" that I had begun so long ago.

As I continued to look through the Playbill, I kept retuning to the picture of Van at the keyboard in an ad for 'Musical Courier', a music aficionado's guide to all the important musical events from around the world. Wasn't that a prescient foretelling of my meeting Van at that very concert. It was meant to be!

I had arrived a little early at Carnegie Hall that night. I was drawn to this concert to see and hear the great pianist, Arthur Rubenstein, at the keyboard. I had been looking forward to this performance for weeks since I purchased my ticket. I found my assigned seat in the front row left, one seat from the aisle. There was an empty seat on my left. Just before the lights dimmed for the start of the program, someone had slipped into the empty seat. I glanced over to see that I was Van Cliburn at my left elbow. He was unmistakable with his curly blond hair. And when we stood up at intermission, he was tall and lanky as I had guessed!

We had a chance to talk, but I did not say much. I assumed Van was totally enthused to be sitting in the front row, stage left, so close to Rubinstein whom he had undoubtedly admired for years. These two top performing pianists most likely had known each other prior to this night. Van probably had been 'compted' his first row seat, best seat in the house ticket by Rubinstein himself. And, beyond that, Van would likely be headed backstage following the concert to spend time with the great Rubinstein. They would make quite a pair, the elder and the younger side by side; Rubenstein with his shock of curly white hair and Van with his even thicker abundant blond hair. I must have talked with Van long enough to ask for his autograph at least. For that I am truly grateful!

This year, 1960, was to be a banner year for Rubenstein. He had booked 10 Carnegie Hall concerts. This was one of the last, if not the final one. This concert was packed.

I must say, I loved sitting in the first row all satisfied and composed next to Van! I had him all to myself during the concert after all, didn't I?

Some background about Van and how his name came to be recognized around the world: Harvey Lavan Cliburn was born in 1934 in Shreveport, LA. He placed first in the inaugural International Tchaikovsky competition held in Moscow in 1958. His mother, a pianist and piano teacher, discovered his talent from the age of three. He matched his new piano lessons with his singing voice. He played for heads of state around the world and for every US president from Truman to Obama. Sounds a lot like Mozart in his concertizing schedule.

At 17 Van studied at Julliard School in New York City. He trained under Rosina Lhevinne in the tradition of the Russian romantics. In 1952 he won the International Chopin Competition, also in New York City. At 20 he won another prestigious award, the Leventrit Award, and made his debut at Carnegie Hall, NYC.

At 24 he went to Russia to enter the first International Tchaikovsky Competition which he won handily. After playing Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and Rachmaninoff's piano concerto no.3, after which the ovation lasted a full eight minutes. If that was not enough, after a speech in Russian, he went on to play (off the schedule), "Moscow Nights" and brought down the house and endeared the Russians to him and vice versa in perpetuity!

With his huge win in Moscow in 1958, Cliburn made long time friends with the Russians, especially the youth. It was during the Cold War. Young Van realized how important it was for classical music that he loved so very much, to come to the forefront from this focus from within Russia.

The award was sponsored by Nikita Khrushchev who wished to show everyone that Russian culture was on a par with Russian technology, i.e The Sputnik launch in 1957. Khrushchev was on hand for Van's award-winning concert and seemed to have lost his heart to this young, talented pianist. As a result, he and Cliburn continued their contact with each other for years to follow.

Upon Cliburn's return to the US, he was feted with a ticker tape parade up Fifth Avenue. Whoever would have imagined that a classical musician would merit this attention? Enough said. Classical music was 'in', and I, for one, was tickled pink!

Up Periscope: Cliburn died in 2013 at the age of 78. He should have lived longer. We were only three years apart in age. I am 84 and still kicking and writing and enjoying life such as it is during Covid.

Addendum: This January, 2022, I read Brett Baier's "Three Days in Moscow". I learned that First Lady, Mrs. Nancy Reagan, in preparing for the December 9, 1987 state visit of Russia's Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, she had invited Van Cliburn to play at the White House dinner. Both Nancy and her counterpart, Raisa, wore floor length black gowns. Nancy's was decorated with sparkling sequins. President Reagan wore his tuxedo as it was a black-tie event. However, Mr. Gorbachev, leader of the Russian people, evidently was not accustomed to wearing black-tie so, he wore a black business suit. Also, it is now known that Nancy had had a double mastectomy only a few days prior to this high-level dinner, but her Mother had died not long before as well. Nancy was an exceptionally strong woman of undaunted priorities, and courage: perfectly suited to be in charge of the White House under these trying, extenuating circumstances. Most of us would consider her bravery impossible. I thought that a brief description of this one, specific evening at the White House was an interesting tidbit to include. Such was a snapshot of the life of Van Cliburn and those with whom he rubbed elbows.

#22 1960

Andres Segovia - Spanish virtuoso classical guitarist known worldwide. NYC

During by four years in New York City I was busy as I could be attending Broadway and Off Broadway plays and live concerts. This time I was off to see Guitarist, Andres Segovia at City Center, a smaller venue than most. I have grown to admire the soft sounds of the solo guitarist. Segovia is known as the 'Father of the Classical Guitar'. So, here I go. Not sure who accompanied me this time.

What I recall most, was that, even we had our tickets, we were ushered into the auditorium and shown seats on the stage. The crowd was huge that night. We would be 'up close and personal' with Segovia. It pays to arrive late!

We sat quietly until we saw him arriving from behind us carrying his guitar and heading for the solo chair that was placed in mid stage for him. The audience waited as Andres took some time to adjust the small leather-upholstered stool upon which he would place his left foot. His left knee would then support his guitar. He wore his signature horn rim glasses One could hear a pin drop as we waited breathlessly for Segovia to play his first chord.

I recognized some of the numbers, having heard them played by Pye Chamberlayne, my friend from my Virginia days. Pye was a virtual student of Segovia. In my travels in southern France, I often saw notices of the annual summer concert series he gave in north eastern Spain. I feel sure that Pye, who lived in France for years, must have attended this series. I am listening to Andres now and being suitably re-inspired!

It was all in all an intimate view of the musician/master teacher known worldwide. He is a one-man orchestra, playing 2 -3 themes simultaneously on his beloved guitar. At times his righthand fingers moved in a whirl as the rhythm increased. Then, just as suddenly, the pace slowed so those same fingers appeared to be plucking a slender violet from a bouquet.

Segovia played with ease, and there was an overall sense of peace that prevailed over the Hall that night. We were so close to him that we could see his complicated fingering and his facial expressions. We could scrutinize the many details of this famous man from our nearby seats. We hardly dared to sneeze or sniff for fear of calling attention to ourselves. Yes, it was weird sitting on the stage only a few feet from this talented man while watching his every move to produce such lovely, soothing melodies.

Up Periscope: Segovia was born on my birthday, Feb. 21, 1893 Many years ahead of me. When I saw him, he must have been about the age of 67. That seemed so old to me then. But, the coming of the elder years did not stop him until he passed away in June of 1987 at the age of 94. His music may be heard online and on RCA records.

#23 1961

OLEG CASSINI – world-renown dress designer for Jacqueline Kennedy

I was living in NYC in my first apartment at the corner of East 85th and East End Avenue. My roommates were Claire Devener, SBC classmate, also French major from Batavia, NY who worked at Air France in Public Relations, Fifth Ave., and Nancy Beckwith from California who worked at Harper's Bazaar high fashion magazine in the Pan Am Building on 42nd St. at the middle of Park Ave. Our apartment was a second story walk-up in a small brick building. Also, on our floor was a young Swiss man, named Frank, or Francois, Dunant. He was tall, well-built, blonde and handsome. He was conversant in both French and English. His father owned a specialty grocery store not far from the UN Building.

At any rate, Francois became a friend of ours. He was always popping in and out of our lives. His habit was to pop in late at night, any night of the week, after 10PM and ask which one of us wanted to go dancing with him. Invariably, one of us would be up for it and accept. We would dress up in our best 'little black dress' and highest heels and off we would go in a taxi either to El Morocco or The Copa. (The Copacabana). We would be ushered to a great table near the dance floor since the waiters all knew Francois, and we would sit down to peruse the clientele. There were always interesting people there, dressed to the nines – all wanting 'to be seen'. That was the point after all. We usually ordered a stinger on the rocks. – one would do for me since they were so strong! The point for me was to dance – I was crazy to dance with a good dancer, and Francois was just that. We danced, drank and gabbed till the wee small hours and then Francois returned us to our door in a most gentlemanly fashion. Just friends! What a great relationship when you think of it. All the other guys were trying to corner you when you invited them in or in the hallway, whether you were so inclined or not. With Francois there was no problem – a nice brother-sister routine and no hurt feelings. We three liked him a lot for that.

By summer of '61 we had lived in our first NYC apartment for about a year, and we all knew each other well. Francois suggested a trip out to the Hamptons for the weekend. I had never been to the Hamptons so I said I would love to go with him. He rented a car and picked me up on Saturday morning early. We had a splendid drive out of the city. In fact, on the way Francois saw a helicopter alongside the LIE (Long Island Expressway). It advertised rides over the beaches about ½ hour in the air. Francois asked me if I was interested, I said yes, why not! I loved to do things spur of the moment as you can see. I was a risk taker – a reasonable risk-taker, that is.

Next thing I knew we were seated and belted into one of those small helicopters with glass from your feet to your head. For a second it was dizzying to take off climbing fast, then tilt with your feet behind you and seemingly nothing in front of you to hold you in the plane, but glass. It was a gas! We buzzed the beaches and saw the surf and the wall-to-wall bodies already sunning on

the sand. Soon it was over, and we were back in the car in the Sat. AM traffic. Keep in mind that although we loved living in New York City and doing all it had to offer, there was this enormous urge to quit the city, especially in summer, and find the country, the beach, the wide open spaces one missed so much sitting behind a glass window in our Fifth Ave. Office. I know I felt this way. I was in my first job at Steuben Glass on Fifth Avenue next to Bonwit Teller and across the street from Harry Winston Jewels. My desk was next to the window, third floor, executive suite, President's office. I was one of two executive secretaries to Arthur A. Houghton, Jr, President of Steuben Glass. My job was to check out the miniature rare book offerings, especially the ones in French which corresponded to the genre of rare books which Mr. Houghton collected. I handled a couple of his checking accounts, his Who's Who entries, some correspondence, in both French and English, phone calls etc.

If the truth be told, however, I just wanted my freedom. It was very hard to be cooped up in an office all day looking out on Fifth Avenue, dying to get out there and explore, spend money and just be curious about art, theatre, music etc. So, this explains, in part why it was so desirable to be going out to 'the Island' that Saturday with Francois. It was like bursting out of a cage! I loved it. I recall the traffic on the LIE was awful – it was the first time I had witnessed so much darting in and out of traffic from one lane to the other. Fortunately, Francois was not like that. He was a good, sensible driver. I am trying to remember the car he had – it may have been a convertible. At any rate we arrived at East Hampton in the early afternoon. We settled into our motel and went first to the beach with a picnic we had with us. I had a couple of bikinis to choose from. One I had made for me in Capri – dark blue and green and the other was from Saks Fifth Ave. a Pucci – pink and yellow on white. I chose one and donned a beach cover-up and off we went. We had a lovely time walking in the heavy surf and just watching the people go by.

Afterwards, we went into town to look around for a bit before deciding what to do for supper. We peeked into the fancy shops, passed many lovely homes. We saw an ice cream shop and stopped in to assuage our thirst in the heat of the late afternoon. Francois and I were conversing in French, of course. We sat down to eat our cones while carrying on a spirited repartee en francais. After a while we noticed that a man was curious about our speaking French, and he joined in our conversation. We invited him to sit with us. After some time, he said that he was planning a dinner party that night and would like to invite us to join him at his home. We looked at each other a little puzzled, because we had no idea to whom we were talking. He then handed us his card and said to give him a call later to let him know. As he left, we saw it was Oleg Cassini! With his sunglasses on we had not recognized him. At that time, he was designing all of First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy's wardrobe. Wow what a coup! Needless to say, we called and accepted his kind invitation.

Fortunately for me I had packed a dressy summer dress. I remember it so well. It was aqua linen – a simple sheath with jewel neck, but it had an over skirt which was tied on. It was about 3" shorter than the sheath. It was smashing to say the least. And, believe me, at that point in my life I was heavily into fashion. I had a roommate who worked for Harper's Bazaar even! We all shopped at Saks and Bergdorf's - sometimes at Bloomingdales if they had a shipment of little designer dresses from Paris. It was a great supper with some illustrious names - I remember, the head diamond designer from Harry Winston was there – several models etc. Oleg was bronze, nice height, well-built and very personable. His

hair was curly as I recall, and he usually wore his sunglasses. He was easy to talk with and very welcoming. I remember asking him what he thought of my new dress. He put his hands on my hips and twirled me around and gave it high praise. We were made to feel right at home and had a lovely dinner and evening never-to-be-forgotten.

You will read more about Cassini in an earlier “meeting” with Ike and Churchill.

Up Periscope: Oleg Cassini (1913-2006) He was born in Paris into an aristocratic family of Russian decent and became an American citizen in 1941. That same year he moved to Hollywood. One day he was playing tennis at the West Side Tennis Club there and found that his tennis partner was the head of Paramount Pictures who mentioned that he was looking for a designer for his next film, ‘I Wanted Wings’, starring debut actress, Veronica Lake. Oleg got his wings that day! He must have created some wonderful outfits for Veronica in this, his first film. He married at least 2 actresses, unsuccessfully, but he was launched. His way with design was innovative and flawless.

Oleg was a humanitarian, a lover of animals. He was one of the first to begin designing fake furs in lieu of killing animals. He was recognized and given awards in both fields,

He worked through the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s 1980s with great success designing clothes for the actresses starring in many films to name a few: Rita Hayworth, Gene Teirney (He married her), Audrey Hepburn, Shirley Temple, Anita Ekberg, Janet Leigh, Betty Grable, Joan Crawford, Marilyn Monroe, Natalie Wood, Ursula Andersen, Jayne Mansfield, Lana Turner, Sandra Dee, Suzy Parker, Gina Lollobrigida, Kim Bassinger, Carol Baker et al. He was engaged to Grace Kelly as well. He married Marianne Nestlor, kept it a secret. Only led to fights over his estate going on until 2018.

His first house of design was in NYC. He founded his fashion company in 1951 with headquarters in Oyster Bay, LI, NY (my father-in-law lived in Oyster Bay on the L.I. Sound where he moored his sailboat, the Mouette).

When I met him, he was already nearly 60, almost old enough to be my father. He looked as youthful as a guy can look at that age, wore a handsome mustache, had a lithe, muscular body and a genuine smile. That is why we decided to accept his invitation to dinner at his Hamptons house. How lucky were we?

Sadly, Oleg seemed to be unlucky with women. His one and only long-term marriage in 1971 to Marianne Nestlor, was kept a secret until his death. Not sure the reason.

#24 1961-13

βThe Tishman Building - 666 Fifth Avenue, NYC

This is a special building for me, other than churches, that I chanced upon during the course of my long life that had a lasting impact on me. This imposing building was built in 1958 by developer, Tishman Realty and Construction Co., Inc. When the building was still spanking new, in its infancy, one might say, my life in New York City took a turn in its direction. In 1961 I was handed my dream job on a silver platter! I was hired as a secretary/travel writer in the NE Regional Office of Air France. I was assigned to work under Ray Chambers, Public Relations manager, on the 39th floor of the Tishman building, 666 Fifth Avenue.

This building played an important role in my life, pre-marriage, since I headed there every morning for nearly 3 years. Did I feel special as a budding, young, Sweet Briar graduate with a Bachelors' degree in French Literature under my belt? I was tall, imposing 5'10", slender, but with curves in the right places. I tried to mimic the fashion models and movie stars I had seen and admired on stage and in movies and magazines as I glided up Fifth Avenue toward "my building". The Tishman Building. Some days I wore my Christian Dior stacked heel pumps in taupe, a chic, matching, taupe leather, handbag with a short bamboo handle with a lightweight taupe wool dress with pleated skirt.

I turned into the ground floor of the 666 building. In the new architectural style of the day it housed a few fancy stores with walkways between. It was as an unconventional, airy, open, entry to the building, I passed the tall waterfall on one of the walls. Then I stepped inside a huge foyer with banks of elevators zooming workers like myself to the upper floors. I pressed the button for the 39th floor or told the friendly guard or elevator operator, the floor I wished.

Air France had a great portion of the 39th floor. I opened the doorway to our offices and greeted the receptionist as usual. Mr. Ray Chambers' office was on the outside wall with windows on Fifth Avenue far, far, below. The Northeast Regional Manager's office was near my desk as was the manager's secretary, Jeannette, and the elegant, commodious conference room.

My job consisted of taking dictation from Mr. Chambers and handling his correspondence with travel agencies, travel writers, and newspaper contacts, as I was his private secretary. Following my plan of attack on job hunting, earlier had completed a crash course in speedwriting and typing. These were the tedious parts of my job.

The fun and rewarding portions of my job description, included public relations work of creating press releases and, best, of all, writing travel stories. Mr. Chambers knew from my job application I had spent the better part of the two previous summers (1958 and 1959) mostly in France, but also including Italy and England. For the summer of 1959 after graduation from Sweet Briar College, VA, my mother and I toured all the Europe by car in nearly four months. So, I was not limited to knowledge of France!

I am sure Mr. Chambers was thrilled when I was hired, thus freeing him from the tedious job of researching and writing these travel stories promoting Air France destinations. He had done it for years and welcomed my expertise as a recent traveler to some of the most interesting, out-of-the-way, charming, villages in southern France where Air France had recently opened up a destination on the French Riviera, Nic. The big hooker was that all my stories were attributed to Mr. Chambers, but no mention that it had ben I who did the in-person travel research and wrote them. Thy appeared in all the big New York dailies: NY World Telegram and Sun, New York Herald Tribune and one or two on Long Island papers, i.e The Sunday Review, Riverhead, L.I. and New Jersey. In those days what did I know? I was happy as a duck in fresh water that someone was interested in my work. In fact, I had just as much fun writing them as I do now, recounting my chance meetings.

Some of the published titles were: “Sound and Light Spectacular, A Dramatic Must for Versailles Vacation Visitors”; “Itinerary of 14 – day Air Tour of Europe”; “Autumn Tour Starts with Rome”; “Afternoon in Rome”; “Evening in Rome”; “Morning in London”; “Afternoon in London”; “The Paris the Tourist Seldom Sees”; “Morning in Paris”; “Afternoon in Nice”; “One of the Highlights of the Air Tour – The Seine River as viewed from the top of Notre Dame”; “Curiosities Come to Light as Westminster Abbey Cleans Up For 900th Anniversary”; “Sunday Review Invades Europe”; “France, The Crossroad of Civilization”; “Historic Brittany Packed with Scenic Wonders”; My favorites were the Sound and Light Story and the “Afternoon in Nice”.

By midmorning each day in my building, we could hear the coffee cart heading into our suite of offices. This was when I learned to drink coffee, “light” with real cream and sugar AND of course something sugary to go along with it. I often bought a large sweet roll, a Danish or a croissant. I do not believe I tasted anything so luscious in the morning before this, except in France.

By lunchtime, I either met my friend, Claire, (Sweet Briar classmate and roommate in my first NYC apartment) who was also working at Air France in the headquarters office of Public Relations across the street in the main Air France building, or went shopping. Sometimes, I met a friend for a special occasion lunch at the “Top of the Sixes” Restaurant from which the view was breathtaking as one would expect from 40stories high above the world’s most fashionable street on the East Coast.

Another competitor for the almighty lunch hours were spent across 53rd street, just off Fifth, at the new Museum of Modern Art at (MOMA) to attend an auspicious opening of a special exhibit such as the first Monet retrospective. I took art lessons at MOMA, drawing, and oils in the evenings. In fact, I still have my green art smock from those early days. On museum days or shopping days, I would eat my lunch at my desk as I worked, while most of the office was out to lunch. When they returned, I could hop across the street and have a full hour to feed my soul with art.

Beyond all this, Claire and I had a favorite French restaurant we loved to frequent after work. It was on West 58th between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. It was called ‘*Steak au Pommes Frites*’ and

was so very much like being in France. Their salad dressing was yummy so sometimes we bought some to take home in a wine bottle with a cork. The midtown Fifth Avenue area was full of French restaurants with prices ranging from reasonable for the working girl to sky high for the rare date who was loaded!

Oh, yes. Fairly often in good weather, when I had no shopping to do on my lunch hour, I would carry my lunch to the foot of Central Park to eat my lunch of ½ grapefruit and a plain yogurt on the West or South side of the monument at the entrance to the foot path leading into the Park. I used to sit on the lower granite surround of the Simon Bolivar Equestrian Statue watching people entering the park and the zoo. When I was finished with my light lunch, I walked into the park to the pond where they fed the seals at 1PM every day. What a gas! There was a tall stone mountain built there in the water, where the seal keeper climbed up with a full pail of fresh, live fish. It was his fun job to feed the seals that would leap up higher and higher to grab the fish from his outstretched hand, honking all the way with excitement. When the show was over, I walk back by the large, wild, animal cages in the zoo before returning to my desk. Not bad for excitement at noontime in the city!

I remember one afternoon at Air France that the lights went out in our office. We soon found that all the lights in New York City had gone dark. It was a true black-out! We waited to see what our bosses would say, and then realizing that the power was probably going to be unavailable for the rest of the working day, we were advised that it would be best to exit the building, MY BUILDING!! My building had failed me!! Well, no choice but to grab any flashlights we could find in the office, form a conga line and begin the long descent to Fifth Avenue, ground floor. It took over ½ hour as I recall, perhaps more by the time we emerged at street level. I must say that if I had to use the stairs, I am glad we used them to go down and not up!! The atmosphere was one of heightened tension, but resignation on the part of the people we encountered the turtle's pace descent.

Our boss was a doll! He invited all of us – about 12 or so, to The Stork Club across Fifth Ave. and in the first block off Fifth at 3 East 53rd to be exact. I had heard of the Stork Club for years from my parents but had never been there, so I was pleased to spend a pleasant respite in the glamorous with my co-workers waiting for the crowds to thin out before making my way home. We all ordered drinks; I usually ordered a Scotch Sour in those days. After an hour or so, we drifted out of the Stork Club and managed to clamor onto buses heading uptown for our uptown east side apartments. Others lived in Brooklyn or Queens; they headed for a subway. I was living at that time at 310 East 70th Street. Unlike many people, I could have walked home, had I not found a bus. Well, that was a day to remember.

Another day that was written in my memory was the day of the first space ride by. And the huge parade in his honor that came up Fifth Avenue toward my building. Yuri Gagarin, Russian cosmonaut who flew over us on April 12, 1961. And, less than a month following the first flight into space by a Russian, Alan Shepard became the first American in space on May 5, 1961 aboard space capsule Freedom 7. He traveled over 300 miles in 15 minutes in this Mercury mission. The most exciting thing for me was to view his ticker-tape parade (He was also feted with one in DC and in Los Angeles) down Fifth Avenue soon after his record-making flight in

space exploration under President Kennedy. I watched this momentous parade from the south-facing window on the 39th floor and was in total awe!!!

F.Y.I: Project Mercury postage stamp issued May 4, 2011, by the United States Postal Service (USPS) commemorates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Project Mercury, America's first manned spaceflight program, and NASA astronaut Alan Shepard's historic flight on May 5, 1961, aboard the spacecraft Freedom 7. The stamp depicts Shepard, his Mercury capsule Freedom 7, and the Redstone launching rocket. I was a stamp collector.

And still another mind-catching, personal series of events began to occur after I met my husband-to-be, Rick Dyer, third year med student at Cornell Medical School on the east side, not far from our apartment, on east 70th. In the summer of 1962, sometimes he picked me up after work on the corner in front of the Tishman Building. His only means of transportation was an Italian motor scooter. It was fun to hop on behind him in my knife-pleated black silk skirt and scoot in and out of traffic as though we were in a French movie, like ones we used to watch at the Paris Theatre opposite the Plaza Hotel and around the corner from Bergdorf's. I do not believe I ever saw any other girls being picked up in such style on Fifth Avenue in those days. I always did like being unique!

I recall only one more event that happened to me while I worked at 666 Fifth Avenue. One Friday morning in the fall of 1961, I arrived at the office with my suitcase, my airline tickets in my wallet with extra cash as I was planning to fly someplace for the weekend. I breezed into the office, spoke briefly to the receptionist whom I knew well by then and on to my desk. I made a grand faux pas on the way in but did not realize it immediately. I had stopped long enough at the receptionist's desk, to take out my wallet and put in something she gave me, I left my wallet on her desk! Big error on my part! A few seconds later I realized I did not have my wallet. I went out to pick it up, but the receptionist was gone to the ladies' room and my wallet was gone too. I called security who sent an agent right up to talk with me. He sent his guards to search the building for my red leather wallet.

It was not long after that he came to call on me at my desk. He said that I had been in luck! They found my wallet intact in a garbage container on the ground floor. Only the cash was gone. The tickets were there, but I lost \$60! That was a good-sized sum in those days for a working gal. I was greatly relieved to have my wallet, my cards and my plane ticket. I made up for the cash with some difficulty and managed to make my flight and "weekend away" in fine order. But, I learned a tough lesson in city living: never put down your bag or wallet and never turn your back on them either, not even for a moment. Wasn't it a kick to work at the Tishman building? Everything that I enjoyed centered around 'My building' and My Midtown. Manhattan was in fact, my center of learning about big city living!

Up Periscope: Many years later, a close friend from church, Elaine and I, were talking about New York City. I mentioned to Elaine I was collecting stories for my "Not by Chance Meetings" project, and I mentioned I had worked at the Tishman Building on Fifth Avenue. She quickly rejoined that her father had built that building! I was floored, flabbergasted, to put it mildly. Another non-coincidence! Certainly a 'God wink!'

#25 1963

LUCILLE BALL RICARDO – actress, tv & film “I Love Lucy”

In the spring of 1963, I was still living in New York City. I was recently married and working at Air France on Fifth Avenue, 40th floor of the Tishman building. I had a hairdresser named “Joseph” pronounced with a French accent. I think he was around Park or Madison Ave., upper east side. I recall that I had rather longish hair when I first went there and had the unfortunate experience of being thwarted in my hairdo. I was getting ready for a special occasion and needed an upsweep of some kind, or a French twist, something very chic at any rate. They washed my hair and then could do nothing in the way of styling it for some reason. I recall just sitting there and finally taking the brush and fixing it myself! A first for them and for me!

Now, at a later date, I went again to Joseph’s for a fancy upswept sculpted “do”. I no sooner sat down when I noticed a darling dog on the lap of the lady sitting in the next chair. It was a small poodle. I looked up to say something to the dog’s owner and recognized her as Lucille Ball! I do not recall what was said between us; I only remarked that Lucy had a very low-pitched voice – so unlike her theatrical voice on TV on the I Love Lucy Show. She was quite beautiful and poised, very non-chalant, and at ease. I guess it was I who was non-plussed at seeing her beside me! I can recall what I wore that day as Rick took photos of my hairdo when I returned to our apartment. I was wearing a medium-to-light blue poodle cloth two piece dress which was made for me from a picture I found in Vogue Magazine. The front of the top was decorated with about 4 white horizontal stripes about 5 inches wide which had gold military buttons on each end. It was a brief encounter, but truly one of my “chance meetings” as could only happen in the Big Apple!

#26 1962-63

GWEN VERDON – Dancer, Broadway star & film Actress BOB FOSSE - her husband, Choreographer & Film Director/Producer

In the fall of 1962 while pregnant with my first child, Heather, I lived in New York City, a few blocks from the New York Hospital. In order to get ready for the delivery, my physician, Dr. Given, recommended that I participate in a “Preparation for Labor” class at the hospital. I agreed that it would help to get my muscles ready for the big event and be a good thing for me in general. The only exercise I got on a regular basis was walking! I often walked home from work, (30 blocks uptown and 3-6 crosstown blocks!) always hoofed it here and there shopping and doing errands multi blocks per day. As you know, walking is a way of life for a city dweller. But, regular exercise other than that was not a popular pastime then as it is now.

I signed up for the class and found that I recognized the name of one of the soon-to-be-mothers, Gwen Verdon (1925-2000), the Broadway dancer whom I had seen on the stage in “Damn Yankees” and in several films. Her name was often on the lips of New Yorkers who made it their business to be au courant with Broadway and film. Gwen’s dancing was the epitome of fine, high power dancing of the 1950’s. She was an energetic and high kicker in high heels and black stockings with short perky red curls! I was none of those!

Gwen was born in CA. Her father was an electrician at MGM Studios and her mother was a vaudevillian in a dance troupe. Gwen worked as a dancer and uncredited choreographer’s assistant, actress and multi-talented stage performer with many Broadway credits. Her career spanned the 1950’s 1960’s and 1970’s. For a dancer that is a long career on her feet! She played the star role in “Sweet Charity” and Roxie Hart in “Chicago”. She had a bit part in the ballet, Garden of Eden and was so well received that the audience demanded her to return to the stage for her own curt can call. Her first Tony Award followed.

In 1955 she played in “Damn Yankees” in which she sang: “Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets” for a record 10’9 performance, and won another Tony; then continued in the part in the film version. She won another Tony for “New Girl in Town” and garnered a fourth Tony for the musical “Redhead” in Fosse’s Broadway debut as director/choreographer. In 1966 she returned to the stage to play the lead role in “Sweet Charity”, again with Fosse, followed by the film version. She worked with Fosse when he produced “Cabaret”, the musical film for which he received an Oscar for best director.

Even though the couple were separated, they continued to collaborate into the 1970s and their special work together, for instance: “All That Jazz” daughter, Nicole in 1979. Verdon played character roles in “Cocoon”; she played in a Woody Allen film, “Alice”;

she did TV performances, co-starred opposite Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton, and Leonardo DiCaprio, and as Ruth in “Marvin’s Room”. She taught dance, musical theatre and acting in between. She served as artistic consultant for a Broadway musical showcasing classical Fosse choreography. The show was awarded a Tony for best musical. In 1999 she played a small part in “Walker: Texas Ranger”. Gwen also won a Grammy nominations and other special awards during her long and bountiful career. In 1981 she was inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame. In 1998 she was awarded the National Medal of Art.

In the course of our classes together, I felt inferior to her in every way, being limber-challenged when it came to stretches and splits which we did together side-by-side on the carpeted floor, or at the bar, and when we stood at the bar, we were Mutt and Jeff. I was 5’10” and she, 5’4”. I was thrilled to brush shoulders with her and to laugh together as we plowed through our labor exercises together. I found Gwen to be very easy to talk with and upbeat. She told me this was not her first pregnancy but her second. She added that she was 35 at that time, and that she decided she needed to do whatever she could to ready her body for this second birth. She admitted to me that her first child had been born 20 years earlier! She said she had no recollection of that time at all. So, it was all as new to her as it was to me, being a ‘prime imp’ (nurse talk for first time mother).

Gwen and I met together for ten weeks in our small group. I did not want to invade her privacy too much so did not get to know her very well. At the end of our time together the last meeting was to be with the fathers. It was that night that I met Gwen’s husband, Bob Fosse (1927-1987): dancer, musical theatre choreographer, musical theatre director and film director, a very warm and handsome man, lithe, intense, and strong. Fosse is still being talked about as a revolutionizing factor in the art of dance in the 20th century. He combined modern dance and ballet in a totally new way, taking it to a new art form. His choreography pushed dancers to use their bodies in ways never seen before. He expected his dancers to push through a glass barrier into uncharted territory. And they responded to his coaching by doing it! His style was unmistakable and became the benchmark for the second half of the 20th century. No one has surpassed him as of 2005.

After that I never saw Gwen again, but knew that we were in the hospital at the same time. I had heard from my doctor that she was on the floor above me when I went in to give birth to Heather and that Gwen had had to go into the hospital for bed rest for the last couple of weeks to help her to get through without miscarrying. Her daughter, Nicole, and my daughter, Heather, were born at nearly the same time.

Some years later, since I had not seen it on stage, I enjoyed the movie, “All That Jazz”, only to discover that it was the story of Gwen, her daughter, Nicole, then grown into a dancer herself, and her Dad, Fosse. It is a great show. I heartily recommend “All That Jazz”, as the one I loved the most! Let us remember her as an icon in her time, always doing what she chose to do, dancing and singing.

I shall always feel a special connection to Gwen and her daughter because of the brief ten weeks' of labor classes we shared in the early 60's. and the fact that our two daughters were born at the same time in the same hospital and that we prepared for birthing together!

Up periscope: I recently found that Gwen was whit Fosse in September 1987 when he suffered a fatal heart attack at Willard Hotel in Washington, DC. They had never been divorced. And this tidbit: Gwen was a cat lover: Some cute names she used for her beloved cats were: "Feets Fosse". "Junie Moon", and "Tidbits Tumbler Fosse". She died of a heart attack at 75, in Woodstock, Vermont with her daughter, Nicole. Later that night in New York, the Broadway Marquee lights were dimmed in her honor. I am saddened as well.

#28 1962-63

Nobel Prize Winner Vincent du Vigneaud

**Dr. Vincent du Vigneaud, the father; 1962-1979;
Dr. Marilyn du Vigneaud Brown, Pediatric Gastroenterologist, his daughter**

The Nobel Prize winner: I had the great pleasure of meeting in **1962** was
Dr. Vincent du Vigneaud, 1901-1978, President of Cornell Medical College, New York City

Dr. du Vigneaud was an American biochemist of some note and **Nobel Prize winner for Chemistry in 1955 for isolation and synthesis of pituitary hormones, asopresin and oxytocin causing contraction and secretion of milk. He studied chemical structure of Sulphur-bearing vitamin Biotin. He separated nine amino acids and was the first to achieve the synthesis of a protein hormone. In 1946, he also achieved the synthesis of penicillin.**

Dr. du Vigneaud studied under Professor C.S. Marvel at the University of Illinois where he earned his degree in 1923 and his Masters' Degree in Science in 1924. The next year he was assistant to Dr. W.G. Farr at the Philadelphia General Hospital and served on the staff of the Graduate School of Medicine of Pennsylvania University. Then he worked with Professor J.R. Mulin and submitted his thesis to the School of Medicine at the University of Rochester, earning his Ph.D. Then, as a Fellow of the National Research Council, he worked with Professor J. J. Abel at Johns Hopkins University Medical School with professor George Berger, then at the University of Edinburgh Medical School and with Professor Charles R. Harington at London University Hospital.

Back in America he joined the Physiological Chemical staff at the University of Illinois under Professor W.C. Rose. In 1932 he was named head of the Biochemistry Department at the George Washington University School of Medicine. The Cornell University Medical College offered him a professorship as Head of the Biochemistry Department in 1938.

He held numerous lectureships in Universities in the US and in England – Liverpool and Cambridge, and Switzerland. In 1952, his Messenger Lectures at Cornell University were published: “A Trail of Research in Sulphur Chemistry and Metabolism and Related Fields” Du Vigneaud received awards after awards as well as the Chandler Medal of Columbia University in 1955. And the Willard Gibbs Medal of the American Chemical Society in 1956. Honorary Science doctorates were bestowed on him by New York and Yale Universities in 1955, and by The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1960. And much more, in 1955, his crowning glory: **The Nobel Prize in Chemistry.**

Du Vigneaud also received honorary fellowships by The Royal Society of Edinburgh, The Chemical Society and Royal Institute of Chemistry, London. He has been elected to many

scientific academies among them, most noteworthy, the Board of Trustees of The Rockefeller Institute NYC and the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases.

His researches have centered mostly on Sulphur-containing compounds of biochemical importance, being concerned originally with the Sulphur of insulin and more recently with two hormones of the posterior pituitary gland-oxycytocin and vasopressin. He has also studied intermediary, amino acids and trans-sulphuration, biotin and penicillin.

His wife was Zella Zon Ford, and they had two children, Vincent, Jr. and Marilyn Renée, married name, Brown.

I became acquainted with his family after I was engaged to my first husband-to-be, Richard Hemenway Dyer in December of 1961. Rick had just completed his third year of medical school prior to our wedding in summer of 1962 at my home, The Oaks, in Hornell, NY. We were wed on July 14, 1962.

Although I had known Dr. Vigneaud from afar, I first had occasion to meet him at Rick's, graduation from Cornell Medical College in June 1963. Yes, I met Dr. du Vigneaud at graduation and all the other gatherings of the medical students that occurred when wives were included. I wish I had had more time to speak with him, especially since over the ensuing years, I knew his daughter well, much more so, after med school graduation. His daughter, Marilyn, was a classmate of my husband's at Cornell Medical College.

From our marriage until Rick's med school graduation, I happily shouldered the major financial contribution supporting our lifestyle for that first year in NYC. I worked in Public Relations at Air France, on the 39th floor of the 666 Tishman Building, Fifth Avenue. To supplement my weekly income, Rick worked several late hours at the New York Hospital blood bank and also collected and return his classmates' laundry. All this, while he kept up his studies as a fourth-year med student. It was, for us both, a very busy, happy time.

Sometime during this period, Rick introduced me to his class Med schoolmate, Marilyn Rene du Vigneaud. Not sure when she married Barry Brown, attorney, but they were both to become close friends of ours. Both couples had children at about the same time.

My husband and I had just returned from our required Barry Plan, two-year stint for young MDs, in the US Air Force during the Vietnam War. Rick served that time as a class D surgeon at George Air Force Base in Victorville, CA. We re-connected with Marilyn and Barry when we returned east. They asked us to join them on a trip to Antigua in the Caribbean. We said that we could not do it just then as Rick was beginning his four-year residency in orthopedic surgery in Philadelphia and did not have the funds to take a winter vacation. They countered with: "Let's just say that we are inviting you for dinner and later you can return the favor and invite us for dinner." We accepted and so did they at a later date. What great friends they are.

I remember some of the fun times we had together when the Browns would spend time at a family summer place in the Berkshires north of Watertown where we lived. (I still live here

in the same house after some 50 years). Marilyn and Barry used to trail a couple of horses, more like four horses actually, to the Berkshires in summer. They would invite us up for a visit so our children could get to know each other as well. Besides our trips to the Caribbean, the most fun part of our visits entailed a midnight horseback ride through the forest behind their house. I was totally amazed that we were heading into the thick woods in the dark. How would we NOT run into trees? Marilyn said: "Jini, no problem. Just let go of the reins and the horses will find their way." They know these woods. It did take trust on my part, to do this, but voila. It worked like a charm. We rode on and on with the horse turning left and right at just the right time. All I could see were my horse's ears and the spots of moonlight as we weaved in and around the trees.

Now you know the circumstances under which I met Dr. du Vigneaud, and his daughter, Marilyn, not realizing when I met him, what he had accomplished. I was recently married to a Med student and had no idea how famous he was nor for what reason. I just enjoyed having met the Head of Cornell Med School. As to meeting Dr. du Vincent, it was not in a small group. However, I ran across him at the College on special occasions, knowing who he was, but no idea of his exceptional studies for which he had been acknowledged in recent years. At last, I have done my due diligence in somewhat tardy fashion. As a late bloomer, I say: Better late than never. Today, some 60 years later, I, more fully, appreciate the unique contributions Dr. du Vigneaud made to chemistry and medical science, far ahead of his time.

Up Periscope: I discovered a definitive 550 plus page biographical memoir of Dr. du Vigneaud by Klaus Hofmann today, August 27, 2022. The book was published in 1987 and mentions that the author referred to Marilyn Rene Brown as one of his sources, by the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC.

Details in this piece of the career of Dr. du Vigneaud were taken partially from Nobel Prizes and Laureates.

My friend, Marilyn Rene Brown Ph.D., MD has had a very successful career in Rochester, NY practicing Pediatric Gastroenterology. She earned many awards during that time as well. We also lived in Rochester, not far from Marilyn and Barry, for two years during Rick's medical training, before moving to California as a Class D surgeon at George Air Force Base during the Viet Nam War and then to Philadelphia for four more years as a Resident in Orthopedic Surgery, and finally to Watertown, CT.

#29, #30, #31 1965-7

ROY ROGERS – movie star, singer
DALE EVANS – movie star, singer and writer
TRIGGER, JR. – movie star, handsome horse

It was sometime in the year 1967 that I met Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. We were living in California, in the High Desert. In fact, my husband, Rick, was a Captain in the U.S. Air Force, a Class D surgeon at George Air Force Base in Victorville, CA. It was during the Vietnam War. Rick was doing his two-year stint in the service as part of an agreement that he would do so after his internship on a plan called the Berry Plan. In this plan a recently – graduated med student, a new MD, would promise to spend two years in the service before returning to civilian life to finish his residency in his specialty. We could make a choice of 2 or 3 places we wanted to serve in the U.S. We chose California and were fortunate to get our first choice. There was a small base hospital that served the tactical Air Force Base, named George.

Rick first met Roy in the hospital when he treated him for a back ailment. Then I met him at the Apple Valley Inn at a function I attended there. He owned the Inn in the nearby town of Apple Valley and lived almost directly across the road from the Inn. Roy, being the flamboyant star he was, had a special vehicle, a Cadillac which he had customized to a cowboy's taste. It was one of a kind! The interior was rich with tooled leather accented with silver decorations. The wheel was a saddle or steer horns as I recall. It was dazzling with shining silver. It was drivable too. Since the car was a convertible, the top was always left down (it almost never rained in the high desert), and it was permanently parked in front of the Inn to attract gawking. Roy drove it from time to time for special occasions and in parades. In point of fact, Roy was a very genteel, self-effacing kind man. You would recognize his smile anywhere! Just like you had seen it a million times on the screen! We often ate at the Inn and took my parents there when they came to visit.

I belonged to the Officers' Wives Club on base. Early in our stay, our club invited Dale to speak to our group. She had written a new book about the death of their infant son. She shared with us the entire story in all its pathos. Dale spoke to us as though we were her neighbors, her cherished friends. She was very personable and outgoing. Over refreshments I had a chance to talk briefly with her in our small group gathering. She was as lovely as she was on screen with short curly blonde hair and a disarming smile. I shall always remember the friendly sparkle in her eyes as she shook my hand. I do not recall what was said but remember trying to identify with her pain.

Roy and Dale were often in evidence either on base or at the Inn during our 2 year stay in the desert. One time stood out for me as very special and that was when I had a chance to ride Roy's horse, Trigger, Jr. Near the Inn stood the barn where Trigger Jr. was stabled with a few other

western horses for the public to visit freely. I soon discovered it was possible to sign up for a trail ride. A group of us decided to try a desert trail ride one Sunday afternoon. It was probably my idea.

Since I was the most experienced rider in the group, I was allowed to ride the star! Trigger, Jr. We rode western of course. We had a leader who took us on a fairly long ride. I remember we rode to the foot of a tall mesa which had a very modern home balanced on the summit. The owner was a local developer. Later we were invited to a cocktail party or house tour up there. I forget the purpose of the occasion. The house was pretty impressive, especially from such a great height! The view was 360 degrees and quite startling for an easterner like me. There was an indoor pool in the living room! With the flick of the button the carpeted floor retreated to reveal a lovely pool which was ringed by overstuffed couches and a huge window overlooking the valley, Apple Valley! In fact, the pool did not end at the window, it continued right under the edge of the house and into the garden! Such a fabulous place for a party!

Well, back to my ride on Trigger. Our group of 6 walked a bit getting used to our mounts. Then we picked up a snappy trot. We were riding through cactus, stick-tights, tumbleweed and bushes. Pretty soon we came upon some local wildlife, the jack rabbits which lived in the desert behind the inn. We roused out some big ones. They put their ears straight up and began to run; we chased them. Boy, were they fast! Trigger responded with a nice fast canter; almost a gallop. He was a good horse for me. He was plenty tall, which was good for me with my long legs; he was reliable and had good gaits - easy to sit to. Of course, the Western saddle helped me to feel secure even though I had not ridden in one since my first horse at home in Hornell. I soon felt at ease on Trigger's back. We rode around the desert for about an hour and a half and returned to the barn with no adverse incidents.

Trigger had been the handsomest of our rented horses, hands down. He was a true palomino, gold, dappled body, with a long flowing blonde tail and mane. I was very proud and excited to have had the chance to ride him. When you think of it, you just never know when you are going to meet a movie star!

#32 1966

Meteor, full speed meeting, near the Island of Santa Cataline, CA - voyage via sailboat

“A meteor fell into the Pacific Ocean between Catalina Island and Newport Beach California summer of 1966.”

LA Times headline the next day!

In the dark, a meteor fell into the Pacific Ocean before my eyes as we were returning from a sail to Catalina Island in 1967. We had spent the weekend with a physician friend and his wife and another couple on their sailboat. We were living in the High Desert at the George Air Force Base at the time in Victorville, CA. A weekend on the ocean would be a welcome change from the non-humidity of desert life. It had been a fine time exploring the island and anchored in Santa Catalina for Saturday night. We had seen wild boar in the wild woods above the port and had dined well both days as usual.

On our return trip we were sailing in the late evening in the dark, headed back to Newport Beach where our friend moored his boat. It was a calm, peaceful return sail that night. There was just enough wind to keep moving as I recall. All of a sudden, I saw a broad streak of bright red flash across the sky. It seemed near to us. It headed right for the ocean and disappeared into the sea. I knew it must have been a long way off, but how could I really know how far or how close? We were all amazed at the sight, wondered if it really happened or not, but we all agreed we had definitely seen it. It had to have been a meteor. What else could it have been?

Well, we returned and anchored safely. There were loads of other boats in the water near us all the way back from Catalina. They must have seen it too! Our questions were answered the next day when we picked up the local paper to see a photo of the meteor as it streaked across the sky just as we had seen it. So, there you have it. We certainly did see a meteor enter our atmosphere and land in the Pacific Ocean. It was an amazing sight and a one-time thing, so felt it was worth writing about even though it was not a famous person. Nor was it precisely inanimate either!

#33 1971

Lift-off at Cape Canaveral witnessed

I had been visiting my parents in Florida with my three children, Heather, Amy and Rusty. We were driving home in two cars, as I recall, with the radio on in both cars, listening to the lift-off preparations of the space craft from Cape Canaveral as we went. As they announced that it would be taking off and the countdown was getting closer to lift-off, I motioned to my parents in the next car to pull over. We were on a very flat area of Florida just west of the Cape and hoped we might view the lift-off from where we were if we were lucky! We stopped and looked right, to the east, and there, sure enough, was the actual lift-off before our very eyes. It was very exciting since we had always been glued to our TV sets since the very first entry into space a few years prior to this. We saw the ignition, the cloud of vapor that surrounded the space vehicle as the jet fuel ignited and pushed the craft into the sky. We watched as long as it was visible rising into the heavens on its way into deep dark space! It was a beautiful sight for us all. It was an unexpected. event on our trip north, and we never were lucky enough to witness it live again.

#34 1972

Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward and their 2 daughters.

It is almost impossible to live in Connecticut and not run across the Newman's. I happened onto them early on. It was, in fact, in the early 1970's. We had gone skiing at Timber Ridge private ski area in Vermont, stayed at the Davies' ski lodge for a week of skiing with our three kids, Heather, Amy, and Rusty. The first afternoon we went into the base lodge at Timber Ridge to stow our stuff and saw a few people from Watertown. One told me that all the pssst-ing was about the fact that Paul and his two daughters were there eating in the next room. I got all excited – I was new in CT, remember, impressionable – I still am at age 68! Oh well, I quickly made a rash decision that I would take my two young daughters, Heather and Amy, up to meet him and his daughters. We had a common footing, did we not? Kids always spark new beginnings. And, kids, always break down barriers, n'est-ce pas? Well, here I go --- I walked up to them and started a conversation, saying at some point that I wanted to introduce my daughters to him and his girls. They were blonde and pretty like mine!

We all had a nice chat. Then Amy piped up and asked Paul for his autograph. He answered very politely that he did not give autographs, but that he would buy her a beer when she got older! She was about 8 then and very amiable. Little did I know of Paul's unwritten law. It seems that "everyone" knew it in the state except me! Well, I was learning fast. The two families skied together for the week. Rusty told me after a particularly good ski run one morning that Paul had taken a big spill right in front of him! Surprised Rusty and made him feel like a skier who had some measure of control on his skis since had not fallen just then at any rate. I had been surprised that Paul was about my height and had such slim hips, slender legs too! I guess in the tight ski pants he looked rather slight compared to his bigger-than-life appearance on screen.

In the ensuing years I saw him from time to time – first at Lime Rock Racetrack where he raced every Memorial Day and Labor Day. I remember that day for another incident as well. That day I wore a well-worn pair of leather sandals custom made in Provincetown, MA. As I got up to find the race pits, traversing the slope in front of the whole audience, my sandals slipped on the smooth grass and slid sideways right out from under me! I fell on my derriere in front of the crowd at Lime Rock between races! They weren't looking at the track, they were looking at me!! Arghhh! I quickly picked myself up, unhurt, except for my pride, and made my way down to the pit to see Paul Newman getting out of his race car after a race. He was certainly "old blue eyes" if I ever saw one! Speaking of which, was always sorry that I never did see my favorite blue-eyed crooner, Frank Sinatra.

Another time I saw Paul was at Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, CT where I had a subscription series for about 15 years or so. My friends and I had the whole second row center for ages. One night I invited Heather to come as my guest since she was living in New Haven at the time – must have been about 1987. Once again, as we were taking our seats, there was that familiar pssst, pssst again. I asked my friend next to me who replied that Paul Newman had been

spotted sitting behind me and not to turn around under any circumstances! I whispered the same to Heather on my left. She sat on the aisle. It was a little like Orfeo and Eurydice, we had to turn to look! We sat facing the front as long as we could, until just as the curtain went up Heather swiveled her head just in time to meet old blue eyes eye-to-eye! Big smile. She saw him again! Wheww! Those eyes. They were right. He was indeed there. As I recall it was an Arthur Miller play – “Under the Bridge”, (Brooklyn Bridge in NYC). Just before the lights went up at intermission, we noted that Paul lit up the stairs to the VIP room ahead of the crowd. His partner who sat next to him did not budge. We stood up and talked, filed around etc. during intermission as usual. We glanced surreptitiously at the person who sat next to Paul and decided in the end it was Joanne Woodward, his wife, but incognito. She wore a wig, and it was not easy to identify her as the world-famous movie star that she was. We knew that they lived in Westport, CT – common knowledge around our parts. So, we had the 2 of them just behind us for the whole play. Paul re-appeared just as the lights dimmed for the second half. This time we did not bother them as we had before more than a decade earlier, knowing that they needed their privacy. We had become accustomed to seeing famous people by then and gave them the respect they deserved. Sometime a few years later I went to the Westport Playhouse one evening when Joanne was directing a play. Caught a glimpse of her after the show. That was her “baby” in those days. She was trying to bring back the popularity of that theatre.

Up Periscope: Paul died September 2008 of lung cancer I believe. He was a Connecticut icon and will be missed. He was born in Ohio in 1925. Joanne was born in Georgia in 1930 and still carries on today, August 2022. She might not have smoked!

#35 1974-1995

**Arthur Miller, playwright, former husband of Marilyn Monroe, currently
he was wed to Inge Morath, Photographer
Sandy Calder, sculptor
William Styron, writer, Pulitzer Prize winner
Jill Clayburgh, actress
Meryl Streep, actress
Christine Baranski
Edward Herman, actor
Sam Waterston, TV actor, longtime lead in “Law and Order”
Igor Kipnis, harpsichordist, Founder of Connecticut Early Music Festival
Paul Winter, musician, composer
Paul Haley, musician, conductor
John G. Rowland, CT Governor
Jacques Bossiere, Founder, First President W3R -700 mile route of
Rochambeau**

When I was working in Public Relations and also taught Cross Country Skiing at the Woodbury Ski and Racquet in the late 1970's, there were many famous people, all inhabitants of Litchfield County, who were regulars there. **Arthur Mille, playwright, essayist, and screen writer** was one. In the winter I had a chance to talk briefly with him as he came to play indoor tennis or outdoor paddle tennis. At that time in his life he played tennis year-round at WS&R as a member. He was married to **Inge Morath, photographer** at that point. She would remain his wife until his death in 2005. Together they created a lovely book called “In the Country” – which translates to living in Litchfield County. She took all the photographs and he wrote the text. I first became aware of this book when Mother and Daddy and I were on one of the famous Litchfield House Tours in July of about 1972. We had stopped at the lovely Congregational Church, I believe it was Congregational, in Milton, a more remote, countrified part of Litchfield. It lay open on a pedestal at the back of the church, open to a picture of the church. The photo was beautiful, showing the silhouette and the recognizable multi-paned window, for which it is famous. Soon after, I received a copy of the book from my parents. I still cherish the tome for the many shots of people and places I knew in the county. Since then I have spoken with both of them at book signings (I have a few of their books in my collection) at the Hickory Stick Bookshop in Washington Depot. I have friends who knew and entertained the Millers over the years. I also saw some of his plays at Long Wharf Theatre as they used to present one of his plays each year as a tribute to our own local playwright. I used to take out of town visitors on a tour of famous people's homes in our area. His was one. Of course, you knew his earlier wife had been Marilyn Monroe. Never ran across her.

Another on my little tour was the home of **Alexander Calder**, not far from the Millers, in Roxbury near Woodbury. As we would drive along Route 84 heading toward Hartford, I always pointed out the Segur Ironworks where they brought Calder's works to life. Rusty and I went to go to The Whitney Museum of American Art on Madison Avenue in NYC to see a retrospective

of Calder's work in the 1980's. We both loved the playfulness of his circus figures and mobiles. Rusty was fascinated by an iron ball suspended from the ceiling which was like a perpetual motion machine. The pendulum moved from one inverted metal dome to another, all different sizes and resonances on the floor, creating sounds, bongs at each hit as it swung from place to place. For a child it was such fun to hear the bells ringing, never-ceasing. All at his eye level! Also, when I was in France, I passed by the small village where Calder had a home and studio not far from Tours where I studied. Interesting that his influence came into my life on both sides of the Atlantic, not far from my home base.

While I still worked at WS&R I met a man who lived across the road from Calder, went to his home for a party now and then. His name was Talcott Clapp. We knew him as Teeb. Sadly, at this writing, he is deceased. He told me his daughter (or son) married Calder's son (or daughter – I forget now). It was just after we moved to Watertown. They had a huge outdoor wedding in a field on his property. My friend, Teeb, showed me some hooked rugs hanging on his wall and said that Sandy, as the artist was called by his friends, had taught him how to hook rugs and that they had spent hours hooking rugs together and talking. Calder had given him a nice one too. I had not known that rugs were one of Calder's media until then.

Several years later, visiting the home of former NY State Governor, Rockefeller, called Kykuit, on the Hudson, in NY State, I made an interesting connection to Calder once again. In the basement of this gorgeous home were many pieces of artwork – most were woven and hooked rugs – of which several huge pieces were attributed to Alexander Calder. After Calder's demise, when I drove by his home on Painter Hill Road in CT, I saw that many of his enormous stables had come to rest on his property, more than the usual. I used to stop my car for a closer look at them, knowing that his work graced the city centers and state museums all over the world, from New York City and Washington, DC to large cities in India and more! I was thrilled to see so many of them up close and personal. Then, as time went on, inevitably, a tall fence went up to surround them in the woods. Eventually, all of Calder's stables disappeared; sold or moved to museums, I presume. I could, however, still look over my shoulder to see his studio windows and muse about his amazingly creative work as it used to go on just inside. He made drawings and then models, or mock-ups of each figure, mobile and stabile first, right there. Then he sent the drawings to the Segur Ironworks I mentioned earlier, to be completed in full size. When driving by Segurs I often saw Calder's huge stables outside. Very exciting.

Another house on my famous people's tour was that of **William and Rose Styron**, also in Roxbury. I first went to their home in about 1972 to buy a Pedigreed Golden Retriever dog, which we named Company after the Broadway play of the same name that we had just seen in NYC. Styron's son had raised the litter and was in charge of the sale. We bought the dog and met Bill Styron that day too. He is a Pulitzer Prize winner for the book "Nat Turner's Rebellion". His wife, Rose, was often at the ski area. She played tennis and took lessons on her own court from our tennis pro. They lived across the road from Dustin Hoffman and his family. William Styron also wrote, "Sophie's Choice", a story about a young Jewish woman working for the Germans during WWII. This book was so well-received that it was made into a film starring **Meryl Streep**, also a Litchfield County resident. Her home is in Salisbury, in fact, near Salisbury School where my son, Rusty, was studying for four years. In Styron's later years he developed severe depression and wrote about it after he emerged from it. It was entitled "Out of

Darkness”. I bought the book, had it signed by Styron, spoke with him again about this book at the Hickory Stick Book Shop of course. I gave it to Rusty for a keepsake.

When Rusty began his four years at Salisbury School, Mother and I had heard that **Meryl Streep**, a recent Academy award winner for her interpretation of the lead role in “Sophie’s Choice”, lived nearby. It is a huge property surrounded by a chain link fence, discreetly hidden in the greenery, with a lovely lake adjoining the modern home. I have a friend who has run across her at soccer practice when her son was playing on the home team in town. Classmates of Rusty saw her at Shagroy’s Grocery store from time to time. Rusty never did, never took any interest, nor would he have recognized her if he was next to her in the check-out line! I remember telling him he should take notice when in town shopping with the guys from school. That he could look across from his favorite macaroni aisle to see if she was there too. I hoped he would catch a glimpse, but he never did. That’s my Rusty!

I saw **Jill Clayburgh** who played a wonderful part in the movie, “An Unmarried Woman”. She sat in front of me at Music Mountain once. My friend, Lea Winslow, got her a cushion to sit on that night. Jill was so skinny that I could see all her bones through her shirt. Died end of 2000 of cancer.

My friend, Genie Rigopulos introduced me to **Christine Baranski** (TV and movie star) at the Congo Church in Watertown after a concert one winter night in 2004. I also saw her at a big fundraiser I attended in Bethlehem. She was delightful, but her husband was a weirdo! He sang a song about motorcycles and the devil! She actually harmonized with him. He scared me with that one!

Well, I finally saw Meryl at a later date. I went to a couple of fund-raisers at Hotchkiss School where a few Litchfield County stars were doing readings. – **Meryl Streep, Edward Herman, Sam Waterston** took part and were delightful. It was a small group, and we sat in the school theatre near the front. The three readers/actors were seated on the stage near the audience. I had seen Hermann in the lead role in a documentary playing the part of President Roosevelt not long before this. He did an excellent job portraying Roosevelt. The evening was casual, off the cuff and fun as the tree chatted out loud back and forth so we could feel a part of their conversation. I really enjoyed it. See our later meeting, 1997, at Wisdom House, Litchfield.

My early music-loving friends and I used to go to the ‘CT Early Music’ series of June concerts yearly in E. CT on the CT College Campus, at Harkness Chapel and other venues along the CT shoreline. The founder and lead harpsichordist was **Igor Kipnis**, with whom I chatted on several occasions preceding the concerts. We made it a practice to arrive early to get good seats and to talk with Igor. He lived next door to a friend of mine. I religiously attended his early music concerts for years, happily bathed in the early sounds of the harpsichord and the other original early instruments. Kipnis was the foremost harpsichordist in America until his death in about 2000.

Paul Winter - innovative composer and musician. Everyone knew that he lived in Litchfield. One day I went into the now-gone Crutch and MacDonald Drug Store on the corner (now there is a resto there called “@ the Corner”!), to buy my Sunday New York Times, and he was standing

beside me, buying his! I had attended his ‘en plein air’ concerts at the White Memorial and other local venues. His pianist, **Paul Hayley**, has played the organ at our Episcopal church in Watertown on several occasions. Paul also organized and conducted the “Chorus Angelicus” singers. This group was made up of young vocalists of Litchfield Co.

I was asked to join the Governor’s Commission on American and Francophone Cultural Affairs in 1996 and served on it for the next 15 years. Our monthly meetings met in the Governor’s Chambers each time, in the Capital Building in Hartford, Ct. We met our governor, John G. **Rowland** several times. One Christmas he and Mrs. Rowland, invited us to their home, the Governor’s Mansion, for a holiday thank-you dinner party. During this time our leader, Yolande Bosman, and I worked with to create the Official **Washington and Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R)** from Newport RI to NYC and on to Yorktown, VA where the last battle of the American Revolutionary War was fought against British General Cornwallis. We went many places to follow the W3R path and celebrate battles and campgrounds along the route. It was a unique opportunity for me to learn about Rochambeau as I began to write my biography of him. Sue Endler and I wrote a brochure in the early 2000s: “Connecticut’s French Connection”. Our Commission also celebrated French Month in Connecticut specifically in Ct’s schools as proclaimed by our Governor Rowland, each year. We attended speeches on the subject, flag raisings, a weeklong re-enactment of Rev War battles, annual celebrations including Rochambeau re-enactments in Southbury, Lebanon and the greater Waterbury Region. John and I often donned our Rev War period outfits including my two hand sewn silk gowns to dine and dance to the 18th century music at such gatherings.

The list goes on and on... We do love our music, art and historical events in Litchfield County! We are truly blessed!

Up Periscope: Look for more meetings regarding the W3R and my biography of Rochambeau and his contemporary family members later in this book.

#36 1976 & 2011

The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center

During the 1970's I was taking rather frequent trips to New York City to attend the theatre, concerts at Lincoln Center, art exhibits at the various museums in Manhattan or just to shop. On a few occasions at that time, I went to the blossoming artsy SOHO area for openings, wearing above ankle hiking boots with Vibram soles and a short jean skirt or my long jean skirt which I made from a pair of jeans by opening up the seam from cuff to cuff thus turning it into a long skirt. I filled in the skirt with a blue and white calico material which came from a long-discarded bed sheet. I alternated between this "look" and the Bergdorf Goodman style, white belted trench coat with tall white patent leather stacked-heel boots..

At any rate on one such trip I went in with Scott Berwick for a ballet at Lincoln Center, evening performance. We decided to go in early and go down to the World Trade Center to see the view from their top deck. I think there used to be a restaurant up at the top called Restaurant in the Clouds or something like that. (Windows on the World? Or was that one at the top of the 666 Fifth Ave.?). We were headed for the observation deck which was above the restaurant.

When I stepped off the elevator, I was immediately aware that the building was rocking!!! The top floor was moving ever so slightly. The building was constructed so it would give in the wind, be somewhat flexible in the case of high winds. This was very disconcerting to me. I stopped in my tracks when I felt the swaying under my feet. I was not happy there, and I said so! Scott tried to assure me that it was perfectly safe. I walked toward the lookout very cautiously.

As I approached the windows, I saw that they extended from ceiling to floor - plain glass all the way up and down! It even went below floor level! To me it was an odd architectural design. A downright scary one! As I stepped toward the glass, I became woozy! By that time Scott had discovered that there was an inset bench which ran around the observation tower perimeter and was an extension of the floor. In effect, you had to step down from the floor level onto the bench from which you had an unobstructed view of Manhattan, lower or upper, depending on where you chose to sit.

When you sat on this floor-level bench, your shoes touched the glass in front of you. From my point of view (pun intended) this was the most frightening way to "enjoy" the "breathtaking" New York skyline!

As I often did when Scott and I were climbing down a mountain in the White Mountains or in Colorado, I took his hand in order to steady myself as I slid down onto the seat

beside him. I started to look down but realized all too soon that all that was between me and 100 plus stories was a thin sheet of glass!! Do you begin to feel the perceived danger as I did by now? Can you sense the uncertainty of the place? Danger was too close for comfort up there.

This was not a mountaintop 'high' for me but a time when growing acrophobia ripped through me. Self preservation won out over the curiosity of exploration. I refrained from looking through empty space ¼ mile down to the street again. Instead I chose the long views and found some beauty in that.

The Twin Towers, conceived and begun in 1966, were dedicated in 1973. They were constructed like long, narrow, elongated, upright tubes. The designer was Yamasaki (spelling?) and the chief engineer was Wesley Robertson. The weight of the towers was distributed, therefore, onto the outside edges of the tubes as opposed to the way the Empire State Building was constructed with a series of supporting columns running across each floor, limiting the size of offices and open spaces in the interior. The World Trade Center had none of that, only wide, open interior spaces, even 60-foot offices. This design was supposed to be wind-friendly and built to sway with the wind gusts that came in off the water over New York Harbor and the Atlantic. I experienced all that!

They say that, when fully occupied, 35,000 people worked in the twin towers. Each of the towers had 220 floors which is astounding, even dizzying! And they were the 2 tallest buildings in the world at that time. One building was 6 feet higher than the other because of antennas on the tippy top.

We did not linger long that lovely cloudless day atop the new, tallest tower in the world since I was so uncomfortable. Soon we were on our way down again on the special elevator from the top. This was my brief experience in the landmark building in lower Manhattan one sunny morning some 30 years ago.

The WTC towers no longer exist. The very WTC twin towers, so much a revered symbol of the promise of our youth and of American prowess in the world of finances are no more.

Five years ago today on another bright, sunny morning full of promise and of hope, September 11, 2001, these same WTC towers which I visited in the early 1970's were hit on this day in 2001 at 8:46AM and 9:03AM and flattened at 9:59AM and 10:06AM respectively; imagine it!! America's pillars of power hit and gone within an hour and 15 minutes!! Burning and weakened by the incredible heat of two full tanks of jet fuel (10,000 gallons in each of the two planes) from 2 passenger planes, the towers were set ablaze on impact. The buildings gushed black smoke while all matter of things flew out: papers, office furnishings and even people jumping to escape the fire and heat!

The first plane to hit was a Boeing 767 with 92 people on board; all were killed instantly on impact. The 767 went directly into the North Tower. The shock wave caused the building to move 18 inches! The second plane, United flight 195 with 62 passengers

aboard, hit the south tower about 17 minutes later with all passengers killed instantly. The jet fuel ignited and melted the aluminum supports in the center core of each building and then went on to melt the steel supports. The building engineers never conceived of such a possibility! 1 1/3 hours later the south tower collapsed, followed by the north tower 7 minutes after that. The two skyscrapers simply began to accordion fold into huge clouds of white smoke and debris. In a matter of seconds, the first tower was flat. The same for the second one. These heinous acts of war were perpetrated as suicide missions by Al Qaeda, which in turn was masterminded by the Islamic extremist Muslim from Saudi Arabia, Ben Laden.

Interesting enough, in 1981 a 707 almost hit the north tower, and before that a plane did hit the Empire State Building in a dense fog.

I shall never forget my brief chance meeting with one of these immense towering towers. Nor shall we Americans ever forget this deliberate, attack on our soil that killed 2,749 of our brightest, young minds in a moment. Nearly 2800 hardworking, promising Americans including the brave New York City firefighters perished in that horrendous assault on our homeland.

Let us not forget we are still at war today and that Al Qaeda and other Islamic extremists are still plotting and planning to kill us even now as I write on this quiet, beautiful day in Maine.

September 1, 2006

Up Periscope: Osama bin Laden had his comeuppance permanently, on May 2, 2011 in Pakistan, thanks to the US Navy Seals. And, in 2022, his comrade who helped to plan for the destruction of the Twin Towers, Zawahiri (I cannot spell his name), was killed by a US drone on a balcony, living the high life this summer 2022 Comrades of these two are still plotting to end America. We live in a most dangerous world.

**See next two pages for more on the Twin Towers

Twin Towers Debacle per Jini and John Vail 9/11/01

Notes:

We are to be here at Raymond Pond, Maine, for just short of two weeks.

The word of Bin Laden's ill deed came to us en route, still in Connecticut, making a pit stop off Rte. 84, exit 71, to visit the necessarium. We had been listening to a book on tape, the story of John Adams's life set at the time of the Revolutionary War 1776. It was about 9:30 AM. As we entered the restaurant, we saw the people were gathered around the TV on the wall near the restrooms. I focused to see the Twin Towers of the World

Trade Center afire. Soon we realized that the blaze was caused by two American Airlines commercial planes flown, on purpose, directly into the offices of the innocent as they sat at their desks to begin their day or to drink their morning coffee or chat with a friend. Some died instantly, a blessing, some tried to flee, jumping out of 100 story windows to escape the 1000 degree heat. The concept was too awful!!!

Rings of pain reverberated from building to city to state to country, and soon, all America and the world were informed of the blood bath. The first name to come to mind was Bin Laden. God's fury should be lashed out on him!!! The dreadful deed had been perpetrated at 8:40 AM and by 10:30 both towers collapsed, one hour and 44 minutes after being hit, with full tanks of jet fuel. Apparently, the combustion was so hot that the steel construction was melted, causing much more damage than even Bin Laden had anticipated. He has spoiled everyone's day but his own. He has spoiled our vacation, our time to read and think, and my time to relax with my husband. To me this was to be precious time, even though we are retired, this place and this time are special to us. But more than that, he has upset the lives of millions of people, not just Americans. He has killed for the stated sake of his God who I believe to be Satan. He is deluded! Since when is killing or suicide okay, even in Islam? Now, we will not have a moment's peace, nor will anyone else, for the foreseeable future.

P.S.: I once visited the Twin Towers-took the elevator screechingly fast up to the top floor, 100 something-stepped off the elevator and immediately felt the swaying of the building-was frightened to even sit on the inside observation ledge with knees pressed to the window-only a thin piece of glass between safety and certain death. I was so glad to leave that place! It had been estimated that if everyone were at their offices in the two buildings, the number could be as high as 5,000. We later found out that just under 3,000 lost their lives there that day. Many were able to exit before the towers fell. My visit was in the late 70's when the buildings were new.

How poignant to be in Maine, now comparing our loss of freedom to that of this beautiful feathered creature before me, the Loon.

Addendum, no number - Early 1980's, Langley, VA

Refer to #53, Jane Cook and Peter Steiner

This one I just had to include. Late or not! It is even funny!

One weekend I decided to drive to Washington area to visit my friend, Jane Cook. We went expressly to make a visit to the Air and Space Museum in the center of DC. I was a regular in DC by then after 4 years in VA at Sweet Briar College plus the many visits to my Cousin, Carolyn who lived a block from the National Cathedral AND the many times I met Jane in DC at the National Gallery of Art. I was an old hand at driving inside the city! Never mind the times I had trouble getting into Virginia from DC center. I sometimes got in the wrong lane trying to head for the Lee Mansion. I could see the mansion ahead of me but could not manage to get in the proper lane to cross the river! In effect, I was making a circle and getting nowhere. But that was in the past. Not to worry today.

This is a new trip with the kids. Rusty had wanted to see the Air and Space Museum for a while. So, here we are in DC once again. The museum visit was a smashing success. I called Jane to say we were heading out of town toward her house in McLean, VA. It was a little late. Dusk was beginning to fall. Supposedly I knew my way to her house as I had visited so often.

We were in VA as it grew quite dark. I was getting a little confused about my route. There was no gas station, no phone in my pocket to check the GPS in those long-ago days. It was getting close to dinner time at Jane's. We really wanted to just get there, get settled, take off our shoes and relax.

Then I saw a distant light on the right. At last I could stop to ask directions. I turned off the road. There were no houses in sight as I recall. I cautiously drove my Volvo wagon up to the light. It was our only chance to find our way on the right road.

I pulled up to the light and saw it was not a gas station, not a house. It was a sort of gatehouse to something special. Well, we had come this far, and we were getting hungry too! I pulled up beside the light. There was a man inside sitting at a desk, near the window. Good, I would not have to get out of the car. I rolled down my window. The road I was on seemed to continue around a curve and proceed up a hill. Oh well, I told the man I was lost, and could he help me find Jane's road. I knew it had to be nearby. He was most helpful, knew her street and gave me the directions I longed to hear. I thanked him profusely and raised my hand to wave goodbye.

Then I noticed a sign behind the man illuminated beautifully. It read: CIA!
Oh, my goodness! It had just sallied right up to the Central Intelligence Agency main entrance with blinders on. In conversation amongst those who are in the know, the CIA is

synonymous with “Langley” and vice versa. Of course, everybody knows that, especially if you read spy stories like I do. You might say I goofed, but I got my intended outcome.

I turned the car around and made it to our destination with no trouble. No one was chasing me with revolvers drawn and pointed at us! When I think of this, I can chuckle and recall the innocence of a mother hen with her brood just looking for a safe way home for supper.

#37 1986

JOHN DENVER: (1943-1997) - Movie star, composer, singer

See also my write up on Lady Liberty (inanimate group earlier in this list)

It was the summer of the centennial of the erecting of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, NYC – 1986. The celebration would be a four-night extravaganza during the July 4th weekend, centered around Lady Liberty, as I call her, who had just undergone a few years of cleaning and refurbishing. John Denver was getting a lot of publicity since he was to host the July 4th event in New York City, in the Harbor itself. He was going to be the emcee on the world-wide broadcast of the celebration that night. We were all looking forward to watching it on TV. Lady Liberty was a gift from the French people to America in 1886. She was lovingly created by French sculptor, Frederic Auguste Bartholdi. He also sculpted the “Lion de Belfort” statue in the Territoire de Belfort in Eastern France where I spent four months on The Experiment in International Living in the summer of 1958. Being the Francophile that I am, I was eagerly awaiting the big fete in NYC that summer, 1986.

It was July 2, a couple of days before the big day I was doing just an ordinary thing. I was working in my garden all by myself. It was an extremely hot and muggy July day. As usual, when I really get into my ‘jardinage’, I am in my oldest clothes and my hair is wild, and I am dripping with sweat from head to toe. After a couple of hours, I went into the house to get a glass of water. The phone was ringing off the hook. I picked it up to hear my friend, Christa, on the phone saying that she had been trying to reach me for hours and was so glad I finally answered! What was all the fuss? She told me in a hushed voice that they had a most amazing surprise visitor at The Birches Inn, the lovely country inn that she and her husband, Heinz Holl, owned on Lake Waramaug here in Connecticut. She went on to say that a black Porsche sports car drove in that late morning looking for a night’s stay. They recognized the driver as John Denver!

Evidently, he had been rehearsing in New York City for the big Lady Liberty event. This event I learned later that day, was the inauguration of the newly restored Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. The statue was 100 years old this summer. Remember? It was made in France by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi and sent to America as a gift in 1886. It was July 2nd and John Denver was to be the master of ceremonies on the nationwide TV show on July 4th. Denver had two days off to relax and decided to rent a car and drive into Connecticut, to Litchfield County, to be exact, and boom! He landed at The Birches Inn. They rented him the entire suite of rooms on the lake at the water’s edge, in what they called The Boat House. Christa was adamant that I come up post haste! She whispered that he would be coming up to the Inn for lunch soon, and she did not want me to miss him! I told her the state of my dress etc. She said, “Just hurry and come up ASAP!.

When I see a chance like this within my grasp, I will not be one to pass it up, so, I made the flatout decision to quickly take a shower and change my clothes. I did so, washing my hair,

throwing on a quick shift dress, jumped into my black Saab and was off to make a record time trip to the lake. I usually figured about 25 minutes to get there, but this time I did it in close to 18 minutes. So, in less than 45 minutes I sped from garden to Birches Inn! I was breathless when I arrived and very excited to see John Denver.

You see I had a history with John. I first heard his music in the early 1970's when my first husband and I went on a sailing trip in the Caribbean with John Denver's music as our constant companion through the winds and waters of the Lesser Antilles. We had taken a trip with five other couples on two 40' sailing sloops. "Bareboating" they called it which meant that we were our own crews with our own two captains.

One of our friends had brought along a tape he had just made of the new John Denver songs. You remember the songs, "Sunshine on my Shoulders", "Rocky Mountain High" and so on. We had lived with those songs for two solid weeks under the equatorial sun. In short, we had all fallen in love with John during that time. In fact, not long after our return from that trip, we learned that John was coming to perform in New Haven, and most of us were able to make the concert.

Spectacular to say the least! He was charismatic! We loved his music so much so that, before going to the concert, we made up a special packet to give to him. It contained photos of us on the boat along with an invitation to him and to his wife, Annie, to be our guests that next March for another Caribbean bareboat sailing trip.

It is with great sadness that we never had an answer to our most wonderful invitation! We had left the envelope in the hands of his manager at his hotel in New Haven. Alas – but here was my chance to see him and ask him if he ever received it!

I was sooo excited when Christa showed me where he was sitting in the restaurant, up in a small alcove, up a step from the main restaurant. There were not many guests having an early so to speak, or to make a move to speak to him somehow. You guessed it. I had to make the move. He was about to stand up. I left my table and headed for the lobby near the door. I would wait there where he had to pass by me to leave. In another instant he headed my way. I said to myself, "It is now or never, Jini", and I walked up to him as he headed for the exit. I introduced myself, told him how much I loved his music and then launched into the sailing story, his songs and the packet in New Haven. Did he recall getting it? He said no, that at that time he was so busy with appearances and travel that he did not have time to read his mail himself. An honest answer, at least.

He was taller than I expected and with great hair, blondish and dancing fun eyes. We talked for a while longer. He was not in a hurry now. I mentioned something else which threw him off guard. At the time I was working at The White Flower Farm in Customer Service. As luck would have it, I sometimes talked with his gardener at 'Starwood', in Aspen, Colorado, his home in the Rocky Mountains. There really never are any coincidences, are there? I even remembered the name of the gardener. I dropped the name in our conversation. and he replied, "Far Out!" (We have all heard him use this on his TV appearances. Right?)

“How do you know him?” Well, the rest is history for me at least. Then he asked if he could buy me a drink at the bar. Christa joined us there, and we all talked for quite a while. Then he got up to make a phone call to Australia. I was sad to learn later that he was leaving his first wife for Annie whom he had made famous in his songs. (PS I learned many years after, that he divorced her too. The bubble broke. Sad!)

Then he excused himself and said he was going down to his cottage by the lake to practice on his guitar. I watched him walk down the driveway toward the lake.

It had been a propitious meeting for me. A very rare opportunity to meet and talk to a singer whom I had admired for some 15 years. You know how we are in this modern world. We love our icons, often make too much of them for who they really are – they are just like us, but more talented, somehow larger than life when we meet them. I found John Denver to be very real, very friendly and most gracious.

Up periscope: He was born: Henry John Deutschendorf, Jr., an activist, humanitarian, John Denver died much too early in a plane crash (1997 age 54) in which he was the only passenger. He died in Monterey Bay, CA. It is not known if he made an error in gas consumption of the test plane or intentionally dove to his death. More likely, he may have had difficulty switching to the second gas tank. Evidently to do this one had to change tanks by lifting a lever behind his head. It might have gotten stuck or been hard to reach. Such poor luck.

I watched a film of an interview with him in which he said that he did not understand women and was unsure of them in general. He had a big heart just the same and brought untold joy and deep sadness to those who loved his music. I learned that he was planning a flight into space on a special pay-your-way trip. Unfortunately, he did not live to enjoy it. His music still moves me very deeply.

#38 - 1987- 1999

Yuri Bashmet: World-renown #1 best Russian violist

It was my first study summer back in France, 1987. I was in Tours studying all aspects of the French language, culture, history, with plenty of music thrown in throughout my six-week study stint. I was lodging with Mado Renaud at her garden home off Rue Victor Hugo just a few blocks from downtown Tours in the Loire Valley. There was an American professor in my study group at the Institut de Touraine. His name was Dan Daniels. He too was studying and residing with a family who knew Mado and her family. Dan and I soon found out that we shared a love of music as well as all things French. Dan kept me posted on the frequent concerts during the month of July. The series was called the Semaines Musicales and was an annual event. There were at least 4 concerts a week. We quickly learned that the featured musicians were Russian, including opera, piano, violin and viola soloists. There were also string quartets, choral groups, and of course, full orchestral offerings. The menu was varied and of high quality. Dan and I attended as many concerts that July as we could fit in to our study schedule. I remember several spritely Vivaldi string solos and duos performed by the talented Russian musicians.

In the beginning I did not recognize any of the soloists' names. But, it did not take long to figure out who was the ultimate "star" performer of the Semaines Musicales. It was a violist named Yuri Bashmet. Soon his name began to stand out above the crowd of Russian performers. I sought out his concerts, read glowing write-ups of his expertise in the local Tours paper, La Nouvelle Republique.

Oh, and interestingly enough, the French, and I daresay most Europeans, have quite different ways from ours of showing performers how much they appreciate their talent. For example, unlike an American audience, at the conclusion of the last piece shown on the written program in Tours, the European audience begins a rhythm of clapping in unison. This clapping is kept up until the performer agrees to do an encore. But this is not the end of their appreciation! They go on again and again demanding 4 and sometimes even 5 encores!! They are relentless! And we, the audiences, profit immensely! I suppose it is all what you are used to, but we Americans give up much too easily. We almost never demand encores like they do in France! When we do, we seem to be content with one! Yuri is so beloved by the French audiences that he rarely is allowed to leave the stage before playing at least 4 more numbers. Quel bonus!! I loved it.

Sometimes Mado's daughter, Maryse, would get super seats for us at these concerts. She works as the assistant to Sophie Bardet, the wife of Chef Jean Bardet, at their topnotch Hotel Restaurant, in the Parc de Belmont. The Hotel is a member of the prestigious Relais & Chateaux network of grand hotels around the world. Since many of the musicians are guests at this hotel, Maryse profits from many perks working there. Also, since many of these musicians return year after year, Maryse has become acquainted with them. As a result, ticket offers are commonplace. And since her mother, Mado, is not a music enthusiast, the free tickets are passed on to me.

For six summers I returned to Mado's and to the Institut de Touraine, thus totally enjoying my perks as a French Teacher with my summers free.

Each summer the musical venues in Tours were different, moving from ancient churches and cathedrals to priories and even City Hall (Hotel de Ville) making use of these acoustically fine, gothic and rococo spaces to show off the virtuosity of the Russian musicians. Each summer I became more adept at getting my tickets for Yuri's concerts. I found they were available at the new store in Tours, La FNAC. La FNAC is a Mecca for books, records and CDs. As a card-carrying member of Club France I was able to purchase my concert tickets there at a discount. Each June when I arrived in town, I went directly to La FNAC to secure my tickets for the summer. The first time I inquired for the Club France discount, they looked at me as if I had swallowed a frog! It took long explanations and return visits to work it out, but finally I did. Tickets for concerts in Tours are not inexpensive. They cost about \$50 to \$100 a pop full price, so I needed the discount to soften the blow of several tickets!

One summer 1993, to be exact, when I no longer was taking courses in French in Tours, I was staying at the country home of my friends, Jane and Peter, about 45 minutes from town. I chose to go there, rather than to stay in Tours, in order to better concentrate on my writing for 3 peaceful weeks. I planned to be all alone, and to, *mais oui*, drive my rented car into Tours on occasion for my Bashmet concerts. I had purchased my tickets via the usual method and was ready to roll! One such evening, after a delightful dinner "en plein air" chez Mado, I excused myself to leave for the concert at the new community center concert hall. My plan was to arrive early, get a good parking spot and read for a while in my car till time to take my seat. I went into the spanking new concert hall and found my seat in the 6th row near the aisle. I was virtually alone, watching others file in early. A nice-appearing young girl with long blonde hair sat down next to me. We soon began to talk. I found that she was one of Yuri's viola students. I neglected to mention that Yuri gave master classes for the month of July while in town to make best use of his time each summer. I enjoyed talking with his student. Her name was Claudine. I guessed she was about 13. She told me this was her third year studying with Mr. Bashmet. Her home was in the Bordeaux region, much too far to commute, so her parents had worked out a lovely way to

facilitate her lessons. They rented a house each summer in Tours to be near her while she studied and practiced.

Much to my delight, Claudine went on to relate a few stories of what it was like to be tutored by Yuri. She said that he was married and had a son and a daughter. In fact, his wife was in the audience that night. I saw her seated in the front row. Claudine also told me that Yuri was quite the temperamental “artist/star”. For instance, he was always very late to her lessons, aggravating to be sure for the up and coming student trying to please her mentor! Being consistent, he did not arrive on stage that night till 20 minutes after start time!! How does a world class musician get away with that? Only in France I say to myself!

I was invited to meet Claudine’s parents at intermission. They had seats towards the back of the auditorium. During the long intermission we four chatted outside on the street. It was then that Claudine told me that her mother wanted desperately to speak to Yuri, but could not, since Yuri did not speak French. He was conversant in English and Russian only. A frustrating language barrier for the girl’s parents! So, when they found out that I was fluent in French, they made a request: would I pass on something to Yuri after the concert, something of great importance to them. I said I would be happy to do so. That meant that I would go backstage after the performance to meet Yuri. Claudine had already indicated that she would love to introduce me to him since I had shown such great interest in following his music.

When the five encores were finished, the crowd filed out. I followed Claudine toward the stage door and into the wings where a small crowd was gathering to speak with Yuri. I saw his wife standing quietly in the background, patiently waiting while a Russian radio interviewer was asking the profusely perspiring violist questions. The radio journalist was recording the session on tape obviously to be aired back in Russia. We stood on one foot and then the other for what seemed like hours waiting for the interview to finish. When it did there were others who wanted to meet Yuri and to talk with him; some were old friends. They spoke in both English and Russian. When it was our turn, Claudine introduced me to Yuri. I offered him my hand. He extended his to me and gave me a winning grim from under his long burnished chestnut locks. It was exciting to shake the hand of the greatest violist in the world so casually

I got right down to the business at hand and proceeded to pass on the message Claudine’s mother had requested. It was this: “Please tell Mr. Bashmet that our daughter had recently, that is just prior to coming to Tours this summer, won the annual viola competition in Bordeaux.” I was happy to give him such fine news. His dark brown eyes lit up with pride as he looked over at his talented young pupil and he replied in English, “Yes, I know all about it! I am very proud of her accomplishment! Thank you for telling me and please let her parents know that I am aware of her prize-winning performance.” Well, well. So, he knew, but he had said nothing to Claudine and could say nothing to her parents because of the

language barrier. Why do profs hold back praise? Is it just being lazy? Is it so as not to waste time on details of life outside of his teaching? We did go on to have a short conversation about his music, my being present at so many of his concerts. I had the presence of mind to ask if he ever traveled to America, specifically to New England. He answered that yes, he would in fact be at Tanglewood in Lenox, Massachusetts next month and that sometimes he played in Boston and New York at Lincoln Center. That was more than I could have hoped for. I said that I would try to see his concert at Tanglewood if I was home in time. Maybe I would not have to wait an entire year to hear him again!

The long and the short of it was that I went back to Claudine's parents to tell them the news. They were so grateful that they invited Rusty and me to visit them on our trip south later. In passing I had mentioned that I would be heading south in a couple of weeks for a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. People are so nice all over – on both sides of the pond!

That was my first real connection with Yuri, unscripted and unplanned. After that I became even more of an aficionado of his music. Now wasn't it just a kick that I went early, that his student sat next to me?

That summer of writing in 'La France Profonde' and concerting in Tours ended on a high note. However, when Rusty flew over to France to pick me up, I could not for the life of me find the last name nor the address of the lovely viola student and her parents just outside Bordeaux. It surfaced after returning home in August – too late Nathan! We passed through their town somewhat wistfully. That chance passed us by where so many others came to fruition.

Later, that summer back in Connecticut, I was able to go to Yuri's concert at Tanglewood. Following the concert, I went behind the "music shed" to say hello. He remembered me. I asked him if he had a list of his upcoming concerts in the US. He said he had no idea, but I should call his agent at I.C.M. Artists, Ltd. in NYC and ask for his agent, Jeff Holland, who would give me the schedule. I did this and found that when I was going to be in Sarasota that coming winter, Yuri was giving a concert at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall there. I wrote and got tickets for my friend, Antoinette Hill and me. I was certainly not going to miss out on an opportunity to hear, once again, the compelling strains of Yuri's viola.

It was an exciting time making plans for the concert and hoping to see Yuri in Florida. I was told by the Van Wezel ticket office that there would be no going backstage on one's own, but that I had to be invited by the musician. So, Antoinette and I headed to the concert with an envelope in my bag containing a note and photo of myself tucked inside. Obviously, Yuri, who traveled all over the world constantly would not have recalled my name, thus the photo to jog his memory. With luck he might request my audience. It took some fancy footwork to find someone to take him the note. I then scouted out the program and realized that he, the featured soloist, was to play at the end of the first half. It suddenly

occurred to me that, being the star and finishing before intermission, he might not be around at the close of the evening. So, I had better trot right down to see him during intermission.

At half time I left Antoinette in the lobby while I pursued someone in charge. Finally, I found an officious lady who was very abrupt and virtually unwilling to help, and we both spoke English! At last she condescended and took my envelope, disappeared through a nearby door. I cooled my heels. Intermissions are not as long here as in France. I feared I would lose my tiny window of opportunity.

Suddenly she reappeared to tell me that Mr. Bashmet would see me! Hip, Hip, Hooray! She motioned for me to follow her. We went back through the door, down 2 flights of stairs and along quiet corridors. She stopped at an ajar door and indicated I should enter. I leaned sideways to peer around the door and there he was, all alone in the bowels of the theatre with a huge smile of recognition broadening over his face. I was so happy that I came.

I went to shake his hand, but he kissed me on both cheeks, *a la francais*. We talked about his solo. I complimented him of course. He seemed “down” about the results of, not his playing, but the reaction of the audience. I said I did not know what he meant. He explained that, perhaps because of the elderly make up of the audience and the fact that it was midwinter, many of the people were coughing and sneezing, blowing noses etc. In short, the level of audience concentration was not up to his expectations. He found it most disconcerting! I sensed that for him it was a sign of disrespect on their part. There was no consoling him. I had to admit that I heard the noises also during his very difficult Schnittke solo. In my mind I had to agree with him remembering as I did that in Tours, you could hear a pin drop while he played. In fact, I generally found myself, holding my breath, leaning forward and not even moving a muscle during his magnificent interpretations of Russian composers who wrote uniquely for Yuri and for his viola. After a brief time of talking about his trips to the US and his summers in Tours, what it was like traveling alone in foreign countries, I said my ‘*au revoirs*’, promising that I would see him the next summer in Tours. I rejoined Antoinette just in time for the curtain to go up on the second half of the program.

What a wonderful opportunity to talk once again with my new Russian friend. I knew I would see him again next July in France. I would also take a moment to call his agent from time to time to see if he was concretizing anywhere else I might be going.

Had I followed Maryse out of the church, thinking we would just stand and talk as I usually did. Instead, she invited me to accompany her to a small café about 2 blocks away to have a kir (champagne and blackberry liqueur). My first thought was ‘how could there be enough time to walk over there and have a drink and get back in time?’ I started to go with her, then noticed that Yuri was sitting alone on

the steps at the rear of the church smoking. I hesitated, processing through my mind, that performers are a little protective about breaking their concentration during a concert and that he might not want to be disturbed or even have a conversation which might throw him off his musical mindset midstream in the concert.

In the midst of these thoughts, I turned toward him, and he looked up. I went over to speak with Yuri. The first half of the concert had been particularly strenuous on the musicians. Of that I was sure. It was a very hot and humid July evening. Although the lights were dim in the ancient church, there was just enough natural light (in the summer in France it stays light until almost 11PM) to see the sweat pouring off Yuri as he put everything he had into his music. With the backlighting, I could see the sweat spray off from him as he gesticulated and gyrated with the forceful bowing.

It was almost a mystical vision, concentrating with him, on the score, while drops of perspiration rippled away from him in a kind of aura. The music and the humidity rose to the upper reaches of the gothic arches as the last rays of sunlight beamed down from the high windows.

As we spoke, I could see that Yuri was spent, sweaty and hot. He seemed peaceful though. He motioned for me to sit down on the stone step too. I did not expect him to really know who I was since I had seen him so briefly before. Whether he did or not is immaterial. We discussed his music, summer in Tours and the steamy night, just to pass the time. Soon he snuffed out his cigarette, and we parted. He entered the rear door alone. I had told him I would look for him in New York at Carnegie Hall or maybe again at Tanglewood later that year.

Did I tell him that each summer when I got to Tours, I raced into La FNAC to see if he had any new CD's? This was before DVD's and before we all had computers and the internet to look up websites and all matter of facts. Did I tell him I had most of his CD's to date? Not important. It was back to the concert.

During the next year I had little time to call his agent or to go to one of his concerts in New York City. I did have a pleasant surprise when I discovered that there was to be a special on the Bravo TV network devoted to Yuri and his outstanding talent. He was touted as one of, if not the best violist in the world. The documentary was outstanding capturing conversations between Yuri and Schnittke, the aging contemporary Russian composer who had written several viola solos especially for him. You see, classical music scores featuring the viola were few and far between. In fact, Yuri told me that over the years he himself arranged the scores of several well-known composers to feature his instrument in an effort to fill that gap, to showcase the underused viola.

The following summer I planned to spend a couple of weeks in Norway, beginning with a few days in Oslo. Upon my arrival I headed straight for the

Concert Hall to see if there was a good concert to take in while I was in town. At the box office, why was I not surprised to find out that Yuri was playing his viola there that very night! He was the featured soloist along with Barbara Hendricks, American opera singer who performed mostly in Europe. Naturally I purchased a ticket and returned later for the program.

I was happy to see that there was at least one Schnittke on the roster that night. Many of my friends do not enjoy the very modern, complicated atonals of his compositions. I love the challenge his compositions pose. Being so unusual I feel compelled to focus my full attention on every note, trying desperately to understand their deep meaning. I noticed a big difference that summer night in the land of the midnight sun, between the audience in Sarasota and the one in Oslo. The latter was riveted in their seats without a sound or slightest movement till the last note faded. The Norwegians were obviously attuned to Yuri's style and to the intricate, often dissonant, unanticipated sounds and rhythms of the Russian composer, Schnittke. I loved every moment. The audience's response was instantaneous rapture, made known to Yuri by the extended applause! It was glorious. For me it was yet another learning experience concentrated about this man and this composer in of all places, Oslo. I began to comprehend that Yuri's choice of pieces was certainly influenced by audiences such as this. Compared to Sarasota, hey, they were better educated to his level of interpretation and therefore appreciated him on a higher level.

After the concert I went backstage to surprise Yuri. I waited behind the Russian Ambassador to Norway and his wife as they greeted their countryman with much affection. When I finally stood before him there was no doubt about his recognizing me. We spoke briefly about meeting in such places so far from our respective homes! During our conversation about his friend, Schnittke, Yuri told me that the aging composer was composing a new work for him featuring viola solos, but that he was worried that he might not be able to complete it since he was very ill. This evening was another one of my not-so-coincidental coincidences which seem to follow me all over Europe! I love it.

In the next year or so (1996), I met my husband-to-be, John Vail, and went on to introduce him to Yuri shortly thereafter, first in New York, at Carnegie Hall, and then in Boston at Jordan Hall. I had planned on attending the concert at Carnegie with several friends, months in advance. John was a latecomer to the group of Yuri devotees which I had gathered over the years. We were all anticipating a great evening in New York. My friend, Mary Linda, was going to drive us down in her 7 passenger Chevy Suburban. At the last minute, just prior to leaving Connecticut, she was feeling ill and jumped out handing the car keys over to John and saying, "you take over for me!"

Little did I know at the time, John hated NYC and worse than that, he hated all big cities and especially, he detested driving in them! How he must have agonized at having to drive all of us French-speaking females into the city with no

notice or wiggle room! In the end he did wiggle out of the concert itself, saying that he would stay with the car and repair something on it for our safety! So, he did not meet Yuri that night, but my friends all did and loved him! He was dashing with his long bob of shiny hair and sparkling Russian eyes. Never mind his virtuosity! The crowd adored him as we all did. We were sitting in the front balcony. During the loud applause, in our excitement we shouted out “Go Yuri!”

That night, when we went backstage to see him, he was wearing a brace on his left hand. I was first in line of our group to talk with him. He told me he was in a lot of pain – carpal tunnel syndrome. It had been coming on for quite some time yet he played as though there was nothing wrong. I introduced him to my bevy of ladies from Connecticut. We all chatted with him as long as time permitted.

John and I would see him again in a week in Boston. I, once again, had purchased tickets ages ago, even before I started to date John. So, these two concerts with Yuri were cast in stone so to speak. In Boston we were joined by my daughter, Heather and her husband, Stuart. That night John finally met him.

Granted I was enthralled at Yuri’s amazing talent, his handsome, boyish appearance, and the fact that I happened to run across him on two continents, was exciting to say the least. Bashmet, after all, was young enough to be my son for heaven’s sake! Now I had John in my life, I was not giving up on Yuri just yet!

There was to be one last sighting! My friends continue to ask me if I have been to a Bashmet concert recently. Yuri planned to give a concert in the Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood, sharing the spotlight with world-famous Yo-Yo Ma on cello. I was dying to see Yo-Yo as well as Yuri. Both were tops in the world on their instruments. And I did not have to cross the ocean to hear him. I invited my friend, Lea, who loves music as much as I do to attend this earthshaking concert. We tried to get tickets, but the concert was sold out and we were early! I discussed my predicament with my son, Rusty, who suggested that I call his agent and ask for comp tickets! Right on – a great idea! I called Jeff Holland and asked for “comp” tickets since it appeared to be the only way. He said that I should go to Tanglewood ticket office the day of the concert and send a note to Yuri to request the tickets. Jeff explained that he would not be talking with Yuri again before the concert so this would be the last resort.

Lea and I were undaunted as we often were in situations which appeared to be without hope. We decided to go up to Massachusetts early and hang out in the right places. We went to the ticket office and gave them my note. We told them we would be at the Wheatleigh Inn for dinner. When we arrived at the Inn, it was quiet. The waiter told us we were to be seated next to the table reserved for Yo- Yo when he came to Tanglewood and that he had eaten at that very table for the last two nights. I warned Lea not to get excited, that we would not see Yo-Yo at the restaurant tonight as musicians generally do not eat dinner prior to concerts.

The waiter brought a phone to our table – we called the ticket manager who told us there was no response as yet. We feasted on a lovely, very dear dinner at the exclusive Inn tucked into the Berkshire Hills near the concert center. We had decided that come what may, we would savour a fine meal and if we had to return home empty-handed, we would not have lost anything. We were on dessert and still no call. I called the ticket office one last time. The manager asked us to come back to her office and not to worry. We did and we didn't. We drove in, parked and went to see her. People were filing into the hall. There would be no outdoor seating since it was about to storm! So, we crossed that possibility off our list. Our chances were narrowing.

As we stepped up to the office; the Manager produced a small white envelope! In it were two comp tickets! Miracle of miracles. Thank you, Rusty! We had box seats situated directly over the stage right.

Seiji Ozawa Hall was a relatively new hall and we had not been there yet. It was deep in the woods behind the main shed where we usually went for the big concerts. The Ozawa Hall was reserved for intimate concerts like this one tonight. We were delighted and even smug as we took our most special seats. In fact, we smiled like 2 Cheshire cats which had swallowed our owner's favorite bird! Yuri had remembered me and had come through for us!

The concert began with Yuri and his daughter playing a duet – she played the piano and was most severe in manner and appearance since I had seen her last as a young teenager in France. She was lovely but obviously in a snit for some reason. She played well and so did he. She never cracked a smile as they made their bows at the close of their piece.

Then Yo-Yo and Yuri each played a solo and then combined their talents for the next two numbers. While they played, we heard distant thunder, but paid no attention. Yuri and Yo-Yo obviously knew each other well and were at ease together on the stage.

The roaring of thunder came closer and closer, but we were all so rapt in concentration on their beautiful music, we paid little attention. At the end of the first duet our two string musicians were given a standing ovation. Yo-Yo wore white and Yuri wore black. They raised their arms in a clasp of hands to thank us. As they began to get settled for the next piece, there was a huge flash of lightening followed immediately by a clap of thunder directly overhead. The lights went out. It was black in the concert hall. In a few seconds Yuri lit his cigarette lighter – the only instance that cigarette lighters really come in handy these days of banned smoking in public places. He and Yo-Yo were laughing and joking about the darkness and whether to try to play in the dark or wait or quit or what. Their bantering back and forth in the half-dark went on for some time with rain soon overtaking the shed. It beat down hard on the roof over our heads. Then, as

quickly as it had come, the thunder, lightening and rain passed, and the lights flickered back on the stage illuminating our two virtuosi once more. The concert resumed as if nothing had happened.

After the superb music we gave them grateful applause. I walked outside to thank Yuri. A lady appeared out of nowhere and offered to snap a shot of Yuri and me together. He and I spoke only briefly since the crowd was crushing in on every side. Lea and I drove back to Connecticut in a most delightful mood that night! We wrapped up our memories in happy talk all the way home.

Up Periscope: That was 1999. I had first seen Yuri perform in Tours in 1987. It was a bright and happy time for me, knowing that I had had an ever-so-fleeting chance meeting with the world's greatest violist.

Today, August 30, 2022 I found more information on Yuri. He was awarded the highest award he can get, by President Putin plus many others from many European countries where he played over the years.

Yuri's list of awards is long and impressive:

source: Wikipedia

Violist Yuri Bashmet receives honor from Putin, 14 JUNE 2022

Bashmet received the title of Hero of Labour from the Russian president on 12 June 2022



Yuri Bashmet | kremlin.ru

The violist Yuri Bashmet has been honoured by Russian president Vladimir Putin at an award ceremony held on Russia Day, 12 June, at the St George's Hall of the Grand Kremlin Palace.

The Hero of Labour of the Russian Federation gold medals and the National Awards are given to Russian citizens 'for outstanding achievements in science and technology, literature, and the arts, and for outstanding contributions to human rights protection'.

Bashmet has been a long-time supporter of President Putin. In March 2014, along with 86 Russian cultural figures including conductor Valery Gergiev, Bashmet signed a letter in support of Putin's position on Russia's military intervention in Crimea. Following this, he was stripped of his title as honorary professor at the Lviv National Music Academy.

Read: Yuri Bashmet loses honorary professorship at Lviv music academy

President Putin said, 'Yuri Bashmet said that he is trying to persuade himself that he is indeed a hero. Today's winners, heroes of labour and heroes of Russia, do not need to persuade themselves that they are heroes and outstanding citizens of our country. It is enough that the country recognises this and thanks you for your labour, for your deeds, and for your results.'

Bashmet has had a long career as a viola soloist and conductor. He founded the Moscow Soloists in 1986 and is currently artistic director of the 'New Russia' State Symphony Orchestra.

He was born in Rostov-on-Don in 1953 and moved with his family to Lviv at the age of five. He graduated from the Lviv secondary special music school in 1971.

Honours and awards

When he was a student, Bashmet was granted the Second Award at the International Contest of Violists in Budapest (1975) and Grand Prix at the [ARD International Music Competition](#) in Munich (1976), attaining worldwide recognition.

His artistry has won recognition in various awards and regalia in Russia and abroad. He has been granted the high titles of the Honorary Artist of RSFSR (1983), Honorary Artist of the USSR (1991), State Award of the USSR (1986), State Awards of the Russian Federation (1994 and 1996), Award-1993 "Best Musical Instrument Performer of the Year" (a title comparable to the "[Oscar](#)" in cinema). Yuri Bashmet is an Honorary Academician of the London Academy of Arts.

In 1995, he was awarded one of the most prestigious awards in the world, of the "[Sonnings Musikfond](#)" in Copenhagen. Previous recipients include [Igor Stravinsky](#), [Leonard Bernstein](#), [Benjamin Britten](#), [Yehudi Menuhin](#), [Isaac Stern](#), [Arthur Rubinstein](#), [Dmitri Shostakovich](#), [Mstislav Rostropovich](#), [Sviatoslav Richter](#), and [Gidon Kremer](#).

In 1999, by the Act of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of France, Yuri Bashmet was granted the rank of the Officer of Arts and Literature. In the same time the Prime Minister of Lithuania marked his invaluable impact to the Art by granting Bashmet the highest honor of the Republic of Lithuania. In 2000 the President of Italy granted him an honor "For Contribution to Motherland", and in 2002, the president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin presented him the honor "For Contribution to Motherland", 3rd grade. In 2003, Yuri Bashmet was granted the rank of Commander of the French [Légion d'honneur](#).

In 2000, the Russian Biographic Society granted Yuri Bashmet the honorary title "The Man of the Year", in 2001 – "Zealot of the Enlightenment". In 2003, Bashmet became the laureate of the "Olympus" National Award.

- [Honored Artist of the RSFSR](#) (1983)
- [USSR State Prize](#) (1986)
- [People's Artist of the USSR](#) (1991)
- [State Prize of the Russian Federation](#) (1993, 1995, 2000)
- [Sonning Award](#) (1995; Denmark)
- Officer of the [Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas](#) (Lithuania, 18 June 1999)
- Officer of the [Ordre des Arts et des Lettres](#) (2000, France)
- Commander of the [Order of Merit of the Italian Republic](#) (Italy 2000)
- [Order of Merit for the Fatherland](#), 3rd class (15 April 2002) – for outstanding contribution to the development of national art
- Officer of the [Légion d'honneur](#) (2003, France)
- [Order of Merit \(Ukraine\)](#), 3rd class (19 April 2004) – a significant personal contribution to the development of cultural ties between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, many years of fruitful creative activity
- Honorary Professor of [Moscow State University](#) (2004)
- Honorary Citizen of [Rousse](#), Bulgaria (2005)
- [Order of Honour](#) (6 February 2008) – for outstanding contribution to the development of national music and many years of creative activity
- [Grammy Award](#) (February 2008; USA) – with the orchestra "Soloists of Moscow" – for the execution of works by Stravinsky and Prokofiev in the category "Best performance by small ensembles"

#39 & #40 1993

President and Mrs. William Jeffrey Clinton Presidential Inaugural Gala Washington DC and The Capital Centre, Landover, MD.

Looking back, my thoughts about what to write in this subject, notes for someday? Not sure what would do with all these notes I was making or even if I would go far as the draft stage. I began with many poems. It was a very fertile period while teaching at Bassick High School and Central High Schools in Bridgeport CT while taking at least 6 weeks in France every summer. For instance, I recall making heavy notes on this inaugural gala. A few years later when I wanted to refer to them, I could not locate the pad I used. It went missing for about a decade! Finally, I found it and put it all together to write what follows:

January 17, 18, 19, 20, 1993.

Rusty's girlfriend, Greta, and I started out at 8AM for DC on Sunday, January 17th. It was 20 degrees and clear. The Litchfield Hills and Taft fields were still buried in snow. Greta's Mom, Louise Brogna, came out in her pjs and robe to load in Greta's things to begin her second semester at Georgetown U.

We stopped at the farm to pick up the chocolate chip bread that Amy and I had prepared the night before in her electric bread maker, a wedding gift to Sean and her two years ago. It was to be a house gift to Peter Steiner and Jane Cook where I would stay this weekend in McClean, VA. Greta and I were really excited to be going to DC. It was a special occasion in more ways than one. Not only would we be present at the big gala, but I would have the opportunity to see Rusty at work in his field, film production. Rusty had been working for some time now for Smith and Hemion (an LA film producer) on Clinton's Pre-Inaugural Gala the night before Clinton's swearing in.

Dwight Hemion, a TV director and producer, made TV specials featuring famous actors and performers. For his memorable TV productions he won 14 Emmy awards and was famous for making his shows about the featured person such as Frank Sinatra, and not about what surrounded that person. We would soon see what he would produce for Clinton when it appeared later on our TV screen.

Greta, and I had many good discussions en route, but the most memorable was her input regarding her brother, Rico, who was recently married to a local girl whom Rusty knew in grammar school. Her name was Melissa Shuhart. Rico had been working his way up to the major leagues in baseball since his graduation from Watertown High School. Last summer he had recovered from an injury and was playing strongly for the Double AA Detroit Tiger Team. He has several homeruns in August and got a Thursday night call to come to the Detroit Professional team to play which he did for a few days, then he was dropped back.

Greta told me her brother sent her Bible passages to read in the mail and that he has told her that his life has changed since he found Jesus. In a business like baseball, the evils of temptation are on every side. He manages to stay far from them and to do good and care for others in a sometimes hostile, atmosphere. Greta has been greatly influenced by his example. Praise be to God for working in her life. The seed has been planted. I have been praying that God would plant someone in Rusty's life to show him the way. Perhaps Greta is the one. It is another answer to prayer, Praise you Jesus!!

We drove into Georgetown U and unpacked Greta's things and set out to go to the Lincoln Monument to take part in the festivities of the pre-Inauguration. We shared a cab and descended near the Viet Nam War Memorial. There were an estimated 500,000 people on the Mall that afternoon/evening. There had been crafts and food all afternoon. We missed that part.

Then, Greta and I walked by the World War II Monument, my first visit there. As we walk beside it, the taller part is the monument gets smaller it narrows at the end. We moved slowly through a dense, and more dense crowd until we could all see the stage – or the top of the steps of the Lincoln Monument. There were 2 huge screens, one of each side of the monument. The one on the right was poorer resolution, could see only dots. On the left it was picture perfect. Saw and heard all the great performers. Liv Ulmann spoke, Barbara Hendricks, whom I saw in Orange last summer in the ancient Roman amphitheatre. We also saw Michael Bolton, Aretha Franklin, Kenny Rogers, Diana Ross and Stevie Nicks and Lindsay Buckingham from Fleetwood Mac sing and it was also Martin Luther King Day, so the celebration was two or three-fold. Ray Charles played and sang God Bless America. We all joined in. I felt chills from my ankles up to my spine. We looked up and saw jet planes flying over in formation en route to National Airport. The roar momentarily drowned out the song. Michael Jackson appeared in red jacket with gold chains across his chest. Diana Ross in billowy green and red satin gown sang on the steps. All of us sang, 'We are the World, We are the Children'. (written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie). The man who wrote it arranged the whole affair that afternoon at the Lincoln Memorial.

People even climbed trees to see better. Smallish bare trees held as many as five people with video camera etc. It was fairly cold but with 500,000 people all huddled close together, I was quite warm. A lady in front of us held a 2"x2" TV in her hand - caught a glimpse of the action there as well. Then I saw the Gov. (what Gov?) and Clinton cross the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and walked to the microphone with their wives. They were far away but recognizable. Greta and I were so excited we kept tapping each other on the arm to make sure it was true. She loved Aretha Franklin – I loved Liv Ulmann and the opera singer I had seen in the Opera "Carmen" in Orange, France, 6 months earlier.

After seeing several stars, Stevie Wonder etc., the Presidential group led everyone over to the Lee Memorial Bridge to see a replica of the Freedom Bell near Arlington National Cemetery. We stayed behind to escape the crowd at last. We decided to walk toward Georgetown and hoped fireworks would start soon. They did. With a huge flare of light from across the Potomac. It was like a broad fountain of light to start and a very long show,

many new techniques and bright burst in the dark sky over Arlington. The crowd was relatively quiet until we heard lots of yells and screams, we realized we were standing near all sorts of limos belonging to the stars. The Fonz was being escorted on foot through the crowd. He looked much older and wore a camel's hair Boy Coat. He strood alongside us for a while.

It was so great to finally see Rusty. He was so "turned on and up"! I am sure he was exhausted too. He had worked 10-16 hours a day since Jan. 3th and wouldn't stop until about the 22nd! He ushered us to our seats, third row center stage – Unbelievable! The place seats 30,000i people-were we lucky or what? We met friends of Rusty there too. Bryan Elwood, a friend of Rusty's from Salisbury School plus Jim ?? and his bro/roommate at GW. Five of us met to sit together for the evening performance. The show started with the five of us able to make eye contact with all the stars as they passed by us to mount the steps to the stage. We got our popcorn and coke and sat down. Rusty went up to the Press Box. I took tons of photos on my new Olympus. It was such a thrill to hear all the people start to ooh and ahh when all the stars walked out from behind us, passed by us at arm's distance to the stage.

Oh, by the way, speak about "Up Close and Personal", the open seating for the President Elect and his Vice President Al Gore and their families was only 6 rows behind us!!! And, since their row was elevated above our row, we had a bird's eye view of them. Also, almost every seat was filled on this gala night. The atmosphere was electric. I was so proud of Rusty and his work and ready to follow him anywhere. It is so easy to get caught up in the excitement of seeing famous people and crowds, even at the Gala as we were singing God Bless America and America the Beautiful, I found a great need to lift my hand toward Jesus. Oh Jesus, please let us all glorify thee in all things! Let us not forget your ultimate and eternal sacrifice for us in our name. It's like the best credit card imaginable – you have set it up in our name. We have approved credit on it forever.

The show started with Rusty's boss, Mr. Smith, the producer, coming on stage with micro. All of this is a rehearsal, even the people pay hundreds of dollars to come tonight. There may be glitches and some re dos etc. Actually, there were few. He introduced Jack Lemon who was the Master of Ceremonies. We recognized our new President Clinton and his new administration. A few special choruses were brought in, some sat on the stage and some on the ground level in front of us. High School Choruses, mostly black young people, all were aglow with excitement with grins from ear to ear, ear even while singing. Michael Jackson did his dance favorite: walking back while stand still effect. The crowd roared with delight.

A small young black boy sang the National Anthem. It was so emotional I looked into his eyes as he sang with such gusto.

As I write this it is January 29th, I am at Jonathan's Hair Salon in Watertown, and Sue is doing my hair. It is a color to maintain my strawberry blonde natural hue. Tres bien. Even though I am laced with silver threads by now at age 55. I just ran into Joan Esty, mother of friends (Margaret and Diane) of Heather and Amy in high school and grade school. The daughters piped up beside me to say: "Are you Amy's Mother?"

And another old friend sat down beside me at the hair dryer. To place me in the early 1990s, I am wearing my newish white dressy sneakers with a few rhinestones on them. I am wearing black socks and purple paisley leggings and a purple baggy sweater. I wore these sneakers to the gala. Wild and crazy idea!

My written account ends abruptly here on a hopeful note for our country. The rest of my notes is missing. I had written, scribbled the details of the rest of the evening on a sheet of paper, or on the program I had. There was little space to write, to record all that happened after the above. Barbra Streisand came on stage, walking by me, wearing a long gown of grey flannel or fine cotton. There were many, many others to come to celebrate Clinton's winning the presidency that night. They all sang or made jokes. It lasted for hours. The venue was a super large stadium just over the river into Landover, Maryland from downtown DC.

On January 19, 1993, a cast including Michael Jackson, Barbra Streisand, Elton John, the Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe, comedians Chevy Chase and Bill Cosby, and actors Jack Lemmon and James Earl Jones plus, plus, performed at the 42nd Presidential Inaugural Gala at The Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland in President Elect Clinton's honor. Who is Stevie Nicks or was it Stevie Wonder who was on the stage that night?

Well, I saw it all. These stars passed by my seat en route to the raised stage. in the center of the huge, Capital stadium venue. It was the largest event I ever witnessed. And, it was Rusty I need to thank for inviting Greta and me to see what he was working on. What an amazing job to have at that time in United States history!


Up Periscope: With great sadness, I follow up here on Clinton's time in office very briefly: He disgusted Americans with his "I did not have sex with that woman": outright lie on TV in front of all the world.





MJPhotosCollectors.com



 alamy stock photo

PEF1W6
www.alamy.com



alamy stock photo

FDGJ4F
www.alamy.com



alamy stock photo

FDGJ4F
www.alamy.com










30349JB MG
52TH PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL GALA
PRESIDENT CLINTON & FAMILY, STEVIE NICKS
& AL GORE

PHOTOBY GERBER/BARRETT/GLOBE PHOTOS, INC. ©1993

 alamy stock photo

DN878P
www.alamy.com

On January 19, 1993, a cast including Michael Jackson, Barbra Streisand, Elton John, the Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe, comedians Chevy Chase and Bill Cosby, and actors Jack Lemmon and James Earl Jones plus, plus, performed at the 42nd Presidential Inaugural Gala at The Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland in President Elect Clinton's honor. Who is Stevie Nicks or was it Stevie Wonder who was on the stage that night?

Well, I saw it all. These stars passed by my seat en route to the raised stage. in the center of the huge, Capital stadium venue. It was the largest event I ever witnessed. And, it was Rusty I need to thank for inviting Greta and me to see what he was working on. What an amazing job to have at that time in United States history!

#41 & #42 1993, Summer

MICHEL AND MADELEINE, COUNT AND COUNTESS de ROCHAMBEAU, Vendome, France

Following my usual summer trip to France in 1992, I was sorting through my many brochures and notes of things to do the next trip when I came upon a two-sided color brochure advertising a spectacle at the Chateau Rochambeau with historical re-enactments and fireworks. I assumed that this was a yearly event and so searched for an address in order to make inquiries for the coming summer of 1993. After some time I received a hand-written letter from Michel, Count of Rochambeau, himself. He informed me very politely that I had missed the spectacular event of last summer and that it mostly likely would never be repeated!! I was devastated to say the least. I had been within a few miles of this historic event and knew nothing of it at the time!

I had been keyed into the importance of General Rochambeau of the 18th century only a year or two before, when I attended a small re-enactment of a portion of Rochambeau's march through CT in Southbury. I heard about it through my Alliance Francaise connections and had found it most intriguing. I clearly wanted to know more about this huge brigade of 5500 French soldiers who had passed through our state in 1781.

In response to my simple request for information, I had the great good fortune of receiving a letter from the current, living Count of Rochambeau himself! Nothing happens by chance. Thanks be to the Glory of God! I give Him the credit as always for putting me in touch with this most important Frenchman. As it turned out Michel is an Americophile par excellence!!! He has visited the USA many times with relation to his ancestor's historical connection with America's winning of her Revolution for Independence.

I was quick to answer the Count's kind letter, by telling him of my connection with the Alliance Francaise and that I served as a Commissioner on the Governor's Commission on American and Francophone Cultural Affairs in the State of CT. More importantly, I was going to be in his area the following summer and would he like me to bring him memorabilia from the recent re-enactment I had attended in Southbury, CT? Vendome is not far from Tours, my usual base of operations in France.

For the summer of 1993 I was planning to have my son, Rusty, meet me at Jane and Peter's house in Beaumont-sur-Deme for a pilgrimage to Saint Jacques de Compostela, Spain. We would have time to make a visit to the Count and Countess before the side trip to Spain. Michel wrote me back, and then called me at Jane's to invite us for cocktails one late afternoon before we left for Spain.

Before the trip to France that summer, I did some research on the location of the Chateau de Rochambeau. What I found was rather surprising. I found that the present chateau was built on the

ruins of an 11th century “chateau fort” (fortified castle) by Fulk. Nerra III, Duke of Anjou, was born ca. 987 and died 21 June 1040. His first wife was Elisabeth of Vendome. Their only son was Geoffrey II, Count of Anjou. Fulk, the father, was celebrated as one of the first and greatest builders of medieval fortified castles in the Loire and Loir Valleys and beyond. He is of interest to me as you will soon see.

In due course, Geoffrey II Martel inherited his father’s chateau that had been constructed on this very site where we were headed today. Keeping track now, the same castle was, in turn, inherited by HIS nephew, Geoffrey V Martel, Duke of Anjou in the 12th century. The same Geoffrey became known as Geoffrey Plantagenet of the royal line of France and England. His name, Plantagenet, became his appellation ever since he had begun to wear a flower of the cytisus bush on his hat. His name was taken from the genus of the flower.

The reason that I am diverging into the plant world, is because of its relevance to my family heritage on my maternal side. To make a long story short, I am in the direct line of the Plantagenets. Voila the connection I found during my research
On the Chateau de Rochambeau. My ancestors built the earliest known castle on the site where the Chateau de Rochambeau now stands.

Back to the first visit of Rusty and myself to this ancient chateau site. We were both thrilled to be able to visit the chateau where General Rochambeau had lived in the 18th century and to meet his descendants. We followed the Count’s directions to the bottom of their long dirt driveway. Rusty had a video camera. He would ask the Count if he minded if he filmed the visit. By the small, simple sign that announced the private drive, the private drive, “Rochambeau”, we parked the car for a moment. We got out of the car to freshen up before our arrival. Rusty put on a tie and we giggled with excitement. Then Rusty, holding the camera outside the car as we went, drove slowly up the long entrance road to the chateau along the little Loir River which paralleled their long driveway. We passed elderly men fishing with long bamboo poles. They looked like something out of Marie Antoinette’s ‘hameau’ (her make-believe farm) behind Versailles. The scene was bucolic and peaceful on that warm summer afternoon. Still we did not see the house! We went on and on which just raised our anticipation with each passing moment.

Finally, in the distance, we saw the limestone chateau rising up beside the little Loir river. It was not huge, not small, but a real fairytale castle in the architectural design of Mansard. We moved onto the crushed stones and heard the sound the tires make on the stones. So typically French! We pulled up by one of a few tall double French doors, not knowing which one was the front door. We started to alight from the car when a door opened, and Michel and Madeleine stepped out on the terrace to greet us!! I do not know when I have been more excited! Every American woman wants to meet a French Count. I know I had, ever since I read my first French novel, read about The Count of Monte Cristo in the Three Musketeers or saw my first French films.

There he was, just an ordinary man, tall, slender, and trim for a man in his seventies. White hair, a little disheveled, but very distinguished and polite. Very much down to earth. He wore an ordinary shirt with khakis, a little ill-fitting. Madeleine, with her greying hair looking somewhat like his, with a few dark streaks still in evidence, no perm, no dyes, no curls nor style at all stood beside Michel. She had just a few natural waves, like his. She wore what I might call a flowered

house dress, as if I had just called her from the kitchen. She may have just put down her paring knife while preparing leek soup.

They both greeted us with warm smiles and welcoming body language. Rusty and I were speaking some French and some English, mostly French. Apparently, they both speak English, but he prefers to speak French. At their side was their granddaughter, Virginie, age 9 who was visiting. The Count asked if we would like to have a tour of the dependency buildings and the main house. Of course! He showed us into the building opposite the main house which was a troglodyte building carved out of the 'tuffau' hillside hundreds of years ago. The French have a habit, very practical one at that, of building their homes out of 'tuffau', a limestone, local to the Tours area, which they mine 'sur site' on location. This leaves a cavern on the property, either like a cave or as great meandering tunnels under the surface.

After the house is completed the owners usually find great uses for these caves. In this case they used it for a nightclub-like playhouse for the kids and grandkids. There was a huge bar decorated with all sorts of memorabilia; it led from room to room with lots of party accoutrements everywhere – obviously a fun place for all generations to meet and have fun away from the formality of the main house. Next to this was a family chapel, equally carved out of the soft, easy to sculpt 'tuffau', with altar and cross and stained-glass windows a much more serious retreat.

We then followed Michel and Madeleine into the main chateau, Michel describing everything as we moved slowly from room to room. He pointed out a beautiful painting of General Rochambeau's wife, Jeanne-Terese Telles d'Acosta (she was Portuguese), that was attributed to Maurice Quentin de Latour. There were several other paintings of relatives including their son, Donatien-Marie Joseph de Vimeur, Vicomte de Rochambeau, and historical figures. We paused in the formal sitting room to admire the handwork of Madeleine some years ago. She re-embroidered all the chairs and wall hangings in the original design. When I asked if she still did needlework, she replied that she only did layettes for the grandchildren now.

Then the Count moved toward the far wall where he proudly pointed to two gouaches by Van Blarenbergh of the battle at Yorktown, VA, major turning point of our War for Independence. With the help of our French allies and King Louis XVI's Royal French troops, this important battle was won on October 19th 1781. The paintings were a gift from King Louis to the General depicting the "Siege of Yorktown" and the "Surrender of Yorktown". Thousands of soldiers on both sides, French, American and British lined up for the surrender ceremonies. General Rochambeau was beside General George Washington, both astride their steeds, on the winning side! The defeated British General, Lord Cornwallis, was absent from the surrender feigning illness. Alas, these two gouaches were sold for one million each. Several years after our first visit. (I later gave a lecture for the Alliance Francasie on the subject of these twin gouaches).

We moved into an entry hall where the Count pointed to a miniature of the original sculpture of Rochambeau by Ferdinand Hamar. Hamar created four similar likenesses of the General. One is in Lafayette Park across from the White House in Washington, DC; one by the sea in Newport,

R.I. where Rochambeau and his 5,500 French troops landed in 1780; one in Paris and another in Vendome, France.

Then we were beckoned to climb the stairs to the second floor. At the top of the stairs is a picture showing the two cannon (no 's' required) from the battle of Yorktown sent to General Rochambeau as a gift from the American people. Note that at the time of the French Revolution from 1789 onward) La Comtesse de Rochambeau gave them to be melted down for bullets. With that detail in mind, we moved into the Master bedroom.

The first thing that caught my eye was an American painting of George Washington (full size). Madeleine tells us that while the General was in America for three years, his wife, Jeanne Marie Telles d'Acosta, Countess of Rochambeau, embroidered by hand all the chair coverings, wall hangings, curtains and bedspreads. Another note here: A year after this visit I received a letter from my friend the Count, with whom I continued to correspond until his death some 16 years later to tell me that he had sold this painting at auction for two million dollars. It is costly to keep such a large domain up to snuff.

Still in the master bedroom, Michel then turned to proudly point show us the General's medals, royal orders, sashes and awards in a glass case. The General was one of the first to be named a Son of the Cincinnati along with George Washington and The Marquis of Lafayette. We recognized the ribbons he wore on state occasion, including the Order of the Society of the Cincinnati. We also saw his Royal Order of St. Louis and the Order of the Saint Esprit, (the Holy Spirit). He was named Marechal of France on his homecoming from his American assignment, the highest rank that a French soldier may earn. While Michel gave us all the details Madeleine mostly stood quietly, sometimes staring into space. Poor dear lady, how boring it must be for her, always to have to be in attendance when there are guests and always to be cordial while hearing the same spiel for the 500th time! Onn the other hand, her husband does not seem to mind. It seems brand new to him, judging by his enthusiasm.

The last room to visit upstairs was the library with another glass case in which we saw the original handwritten copy of the General's Memoires. He wrote these while a prisoner in the Paris 'Conciergerie' Prison during the French Revolution. The Count told me that the General was condemned to die at the 'Guillotine' and that on the day he was summoned to take the wagon to his beheading, a propitious even occurred.

As the General was waiting to get into the wagon, being the gentleman that he always was, he stepped aside to let a lady step up first. At that point, the executioner said that the wagon was full and that he would have to wait until tomorrow. By a wonderful quirk of fate, the next day the rule of Robespierre and the French Revolution came to an end, and in due time, all the prisoners were freed, including the General de Rochambeau! Also, in the case was a medal with a story. On the medal was sculpted England having a baby, America, which it was, in turn, trying to kill. France saved the baby! I love the symbolism!

After our long and most edifying tour we moved into the private sitting room to imbibe in a cool drink with cheese and crackers and, in a more relaxing atmosphere, just to chat a bit. The Count showed me his copy of the Rice and Brown two volume boxed set of The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army about the war from the French point of view, and specifically,

Rochambeau's march from Newport, RI through CT to Yorktown with George Washington. My first view of it. I made a mental note to get a set when I returned home, if I could find it. I did, and now am proud to have it in my own library.

While we talked of history and his visits to America, their charming granddaughter, Virginie, took Rusty outside to feed the swans in the river by the grand front entrance to the chateau. She was named for you know what! (I also was named for the state of Virginia). She and Rusty hit it off as she asked him if he would like to walk outside by the river with her. Rusty took his camera. And, by the way, he had asked permission to film our entire visit. Our hosts had no objection. While Rusty and Virginie walked outside she said that she would like to sing the Rochambeau song for him. He has it on tape – so cute; short, but to the point. A song that kids have been singing for 200 years obviously. She and Rusty had a lively exchange. Rusty's French is pretty good but a little 'rusty', and it made it easier for to converse more casually with Virginie. I could hear them laughing a lot. After about 2 1/2 hours we graciously, but reluctantly, took our leave.

Since that first visit, I have returned two more times and have kept up a correspondence for over 13 years now. Michel must be close to 85 or more, by now. (2006). Since 1993 he told me there had been a break-in and several important pieces of memorabilia were stolen. Very sad! And about 2 years ago he sold his Stuart painting for about \$2,000,000.000. Also, very sad! One has to keep up the family property, you know, for the next generation. I have introduced friends to him – Serge Gabriel and also Yolande Bosman. She has taken students to visit him on two occasions by asking me to write him for permission.

In this last year in preparation for our 225th celebration of Rochambeau's "March to Victory", I have written to ask him many questions pertaining to his family and to the chateau which he has willingly answered. He has given me the email address of Virginie, who he says, is now studying the law in Paris. I look forward to corresponding with her soon. The Count has made many trips to America in his youth to participate in Rochambeau-related events up and down the east coast. He is always wholeheartedly willing to receive Americans as he did us. He is the strongest and most devoted French Americophile I know!

As we said our 'au revoirs' from the car, Virginie says she hopes Rusty's film is a success! After a most amazing first visit to the Chateau de Rochambeau, we drive back down the long country drive back to the real world. It had been a visit to change our lives and to live forever in our hearts.

Up Periscope: In 2011 I had my first book, a biography of Rochambeau published by an Independent publisher, Word Association. The Title of the book is: "Rochambeau, Washington's Ideal Lieutenant: A French General's Role in the American Revolution" and since then given more than 50 talks on the subject from Newport RI, throughout CT and Westchester County, NY plus all the way down the east coast to Williamsburg and Yorktown VA. It has been a real kick. I thank my real friend, Michel de Rochambeau for his inspiration and enthusiasm on my subject. Oh yes, and John and I both donned our Rev War period clothing to attend as many Rochambeau celebrations and events as possible, even as far as learning the English Country Dances as we went. The meeting of the Count and Countess de Rochambeau at the Chateau has given us many happy memories.

#43 1996

Francine du Plessix Gray (1930-2019)
biographer, novelist and contributor to the New Yorker

FRANCISE DU PLESSIX was a name I had heard in Litchfield County for a long time. Although she was born in Poland, I knew she was fluent in French. She is described as a Pulitzer Prize-nominated writer and literary critic. She was born in 1930 in Warsaw, Poland. And was married to sculptor, Cleve Gray. I met her in 1996 when I was the Vice President in charge of programs for the Alliance Francaise de Northwest CT. I suggested that she would be a good choice as speaker at our 75th anniversary event. So, off I went to the drawing board to prepare. I was working with Ann Lorusso on the project. Francine lived in nearby Warren, CT. We called her and set the date. The event included dinner, speaker and entertainment and would be held at the Good News Café, Carol Peck's Restaurant, in Woodbury.

Next, I would spark up the program with some French music to be supplied by my friends, The Everyman Guild who played, danced and sang early French music. One of my very best friends, Roberta Marggraff, regularly performed with them. The evening celebration was on its way to becoming a memorable one.

I called Francine to inquire as to the subject of her talk. She surprised me by saying, "Oh, I will not give a talk per se, I will take questions." Oops! When the meaning of this sunk into my brain, I was not so pleased. Few members of our group would be familiar with Francine or her work. I had read a 1994 biography she had written, "Rage and Fire, Life of Louise Colet", I thoroughly enjoyed it. Later I read more of her books: "The Queen's Lovers", "Tyrants and Lovers". Most of her subject was French, so most of our members would be conversant on the famous 18th century literati surrounding the central personage in the book. This book could be a jumping in point, so that was a plus.

I went to the Watertown library to request a list of her books. I went online to look up her life. I asked our librarian to request several of her books so I could peruse them and make my own list of questions to ask her if the audience went silent. I began to read about her life and accomplishments. I quickly realized that in order for our group to ask pertinent questions as Gray had directed, it would be incumbent upon me to educate the group BEFORE the event. That was an enormous job. I took it on with gusto, however.

Therefore, I compiled a summary of Gray's life and works to date, to distribute to the members that night. They would have to digest the information before she spoke after our meal. I would share the stage, so to speak, with her, in order to field the questions. As I was getting to know Francine, I realized that for some reason unknown to me, she probably was weary of speaking before organization such as ours. The celebratory evening arrived. I knew that she spoke fluent French and that she was well-versed in French history. We are an educated, well-traveled and

curious group, so the questions began to come in for her. Everyone rose to the occasion. The Q&A went better than expected. My plan worked.

Francine sat with us at the round table in the corner, so some of us had had a chance to chat with her beforehand. She was gracious, not overly so, and seemed tired by the close of her part of the celebration. It was a success, and I was pleased to have had this occasion to get to know her a bit.

The musicians wandered through the tables singing and dancing to medieval tunes for us. Their costumes were authentic and intriguing. The food was most agreeable as always at The Good News Café.

After that evening in 1996, I occasionally ran into Francine at the local Bantam Cinema, and we exchanged niceties. Then, some years later, I read that she would be speaking about her latest biography, “Madame de Stael: The first Modern Woman”, at the Gunn Memorial Library in Washington, CT. Mme. de Stael was the wife of the Finance Minister under French King Louis 16. We exchanged friendly greetings that day as I purchased her book. She managed to speak rather well while sitting in a low chair at the front of the large group. I also had given a book talk there in front a crowd of over 100 history lovers eager to learn about General Rochambeau and how he worked to well with George Washington in the Revolutionary War.

Francien wrote another biography of the unsavory Marquis de Sade. From what I knew of Sade, I would not be interested in this book. Evidently, she was drawn to what critics called the ‘nitty gritty’ underside of life. No one wants to read about the life of a non-complex, happy person. Authors want to sell books. Another of her works was simply titled: “Them”. I knew that she had lived with her parents in Paris while growing up and that it was not a happy co-existence. Even in NYC her parents had the habit of locking her in a closet when they went out on the town. So, these many years later, possibly following the passing of ‘Them’, she finally divested herself of the suppressed feelings she had for her parents and could not decide on a better title for the book. Just, ‘Them’ There is something about that one-word title that is off putting and derogatory. Now we all know about the stultifying relationship she must have endured during her tender years.

It was always enjoyable to read her work in The New Yorker Magazine. I looked frequently for another book of hers to be published. I loved her descriptions and her comprehension of the Revolutionary times and the women who lived alongside influential men in France about which she wrote. I longed for another of her in-depth biographies. But alas, she had no more strength nor time to research and to write. I know of what I speak.

Up periscope: She passed away not long after, in 2019 in Manhattan

#44 1997

**SAM WATERSTON - actor, film, TV-Law and Order
(second meeting)**

In the fall of 1997, I got a call from Lea Winslow to go to Wisdom House Retreat Center in Litchfield to hear Sam Waterston talk.

We called to get tickets but were told they were all sold out and not to bother. I called Lea and said “We will not take no for an answer. We are going. We will get seats at the last minute. We arrived very early. There were no people waiting – good! We climbed up to the floor where the talk was to be given. There was a lady at the door ready to take tickets. We asked if there were any cancellations. She said: “Not yet.” A few minutes of patient waiting, and we were in luck. We got in! How very simple. I had a feeling this was going to be special and easy!

Lea and I installed ourselves near the front in the middle and sat down to wait. Pretty soon who should walk in but Sam. We hardly recognized him. He was casually but elegantly dressed in country chic, in dark pants with a grey cable knit cashmere sweater. He was tall and very handsome. Much younger looking in person than on TV. He had been appearing in most everything that had to do with Abraham Lincoln. Sam impersonated him adroitly for sure. I also had seen him in an often re-run program on philosophy with Liv Ulmann and a third person walking through Mount Saint Michel in France. It was heavy stuff, deep theories and ideas about the place of man in the world etc.

In recent years Sam was one four stars appearing on TV daily and nightly, in a murder mystery program that took place in Los Angeles called “Law and Order”. Lea used to watch it 3 or 4 times a day! I was curious to see what this guy was like in person even though I recall that the subject on which he was to speak today, was not at all of interest to me.

Sam was casually standing near our row, just looking around before the place began to fill up. Lea stood up and went over to talk with him. Naturally, I could not sit and watch, so I went over as well and introduced myself. We shook hands and the three of us began to talk in the aisle alone. He was easy-going and easy to talk with. In an instant a funny thing happened. A lady whom Lea and I both knew rushed up to us from the back of the room with her camera. It was Ollie Wetmore. Apparently, she is a grand devotee of Sam’s, and we had no idea she would be there. Before we knew what happened, she snapped a couple of photos of the three of us together. I was so happy to immortalize that moment. When John and I were out driving in Litchfield Co., we would pass his house near Mohhawk Mountain Ski area.

#45 Ca. 1999

Brook Hayward and Peter Duchin

This will be an account of my second meeting with Brooke, not by chance, but on purpose, in Torrington, CT, about 1999. It was advertised that she was appearing with her husband, Peter Duchin at their UConn campus in Torrington, CT. My friend, Genie Rigopulos and I decided to go.

Genie had known Brooke on a business basis for years. Somehow, since Genie and I played weekly bridge games, we took advantage of being together across the bridge table to catch up on each other's news. Somehow Brooke's name popped up, and voila, we made the connection. Genie told me that she saw Brooke when she appeared at the high-end gift shop she and her daughter managed in Washington, CT. It was at the Mayflower Inn where John and I sometimes eat or meet friends for lunch. I always stopped in to see Genie and her daughter, Karen, when we were at the inn.

Genie and I were both game to go to hear Brooke and her famous pianist, band director, husband, Peter. I had never met Peter before but had heard him play the piano at the famous Bemelmans Bar in New York. I think it was on Madison avenue. I loved to go to this most unusual piano bar whenever I had a date who offered to escort me, that is whenever he was flush enough!

Not only was Peter famous, as a nightclub pianist who played the popular songs of his time, but his father, (same name) was even more famous. What a duo they made. Their story was portrayed in a movie many years ago as well. It was not a happy life from what I recall. That did not stop us. I really wanted to see if Brooke would remember me from our early meeting in Vermont (see my account in Part one #3).

The short of it is that we both attended Brown Ledge Camp on Mallett's Bay in Winooski, Vermont in the early 1950s. I am guessing she and I were both there in summers of 1953 and 1954. We were in the same rather large three-story cabin. She was on the 2nd floor and my roommate (bunkie) and I were in the 'dungeon', that was tucked in under the ledge, below our cabin.

Back to the evening at UConn Torrington: Brooke and Peter sat on a low stage very casual in comfortable chairs. We sat at the front, so were close to them and could converse at some points during the during their discourse. They talked candidly about their lives as children, living amongst the many stars of their era, while living in Hollywood.

When the program was over, Brooke and Peter came down to our level in the small auditorium, to mingle with us. After a short while, Genie and I were able to speak with

Brooke. She recognized Genie and they began to talk. I waited my turn and was close enough to chat with Brooke. I mentioned our time at Brown Ledge Camp. She had a glimmer in her eye and said she now remembered me. We spoke for a while longer about 'n'importe quoi', enjoying having found each other after all those years. I told Brooke that I had read her book, "Haywire". She said, "When you are in New Preston, please stop in to visit me". I was thinking that I would like to have her sign her book for me. But, oh, well, I have not made the trip although I go to New Preston frequently. I guess I do not feel comfortable in interrupting her privacy.

Up periscope: Now my pal, Genie, has left us, so I do not have a buddy if I were to go to knock on her door. Beyond all that, I read recently that Brooke divorced Peter in 2011. So, now I relegate this meeting to the past with so many others. Such is life!

#46 2003

**Harlow Giles Unger (b. 1931) Biographer: Lafayette
Taft School, Watertown, CT**

Thanks to my connections with Taft School here in Watertown, where my daughter, Heather Dyer Woodring spent four years as a day student, I was aware of Unger's upcoming visit. He was to be giving a talk on his latest book, the biography of Lafayette. This was too good to miss since I had written a biography titled: "Rochambeau, Washington's Ideal Lieutenant: A French General's Role in the American Revolution". The two men had met shortly after Rochambeau landed in Newport, RI in 1780. And, Lafayette had been my hero for years. Now I would meet an expert on the subject.

Harlow Giles Unger is an author, historian, journalist and broadcaster of note. Here is a partial, impressive list of books to his credit: John Hancock; Noah Webster; Lafayette; First Founding Father, Richard Henry Lee and the Call to Independence; The Unexpected George Washington: His Private Life; America's Second Revolution: How George Washington Defeated Patrick Henry and Saved the Nation; The Last Founding Father: James Monroe; Lion of Liberty: Patrick Henry and the Call to a New Nation; American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked a Revolution; Henry Clay: America's Greatest Statesman; Improbable Patriot: The Secret History of Monsieur de Beaumarchais, the French Playwright who Saved the American Revolution. This partial list of titles was compiled many years after I met Unger in 2003.

Like my daughter, Unger is an alumnus of Taft School. Chip Spencer, an acquaintance, had arranged for Unger to come to Taft. Knowing I was writing a biography on General Rochambeau, Chip called, urging me to attend Unger's presentation on October 3rd. I so enjoyed the talk that I was riveted on his every word. When he was finished Chip asked me to come to the podium if I wanted to meet Harlow and to speak with him about Lafayette and my other hero, General Rochambeau. We chatted for a while, pointing out the connection between the two Revolutionary War Generals. After the crowd thinned out, I bought his book on Lafayette and asked him to autograph it for me. I told him my book was going to be ready to publish in the near future and that my goal was to inform readers about Rochambeau, the lesser known of the two generals and that I planned to present it on Audible as well in order to reach a broader audience.

Up periscope: When I say partial list of Unger's histories, I find that I have grossly understated his accomplishments. Those of you who read the American Revolution like hungry savages, who do not already know Unger, will be thirsty to find his writings. It is only today, March 14, 2022, that I have discovered what a prolific writer he is. (He is in his 90s now.) I am one of those 'hungry savages'! I cannot wait to read the rest of his histories!

#47 2004

**PAULA DEAN – Chef, TV, The Food Channel, Southern
Cooking show, Savannah, GA**

John and I were preparing to make our winter trip for the month of Feb. to Tybee Island, GA. We mentioned to Bonnie Vail that we were going to try to have lunch at Paula Dean's restaurant in Savannah, called 'Lady and Sons' near city market. Bonnie got all excited that we would be going to Paula's resto since she always watches Paula, loves her recipes and most especially, that Emily, age 3, adores Paula! In fact, when Paula comes on the TV Emily starts up a conversation with her right away, as though she were right in the room with Emily. She always starts with a "Hello Paula!!" We said we would look for her when we got there.

Upon arrival at Tybee the first night with Jackie and Bill Stempfle, we were getting ready to go out to supper with their daughter, Gretchen, and son-in-law, George Perez, and kids, Spencer and Gabriel. Gretchen said she had planned to take us to Paula Dean's new resto on Wilmington Island where they live. It had just opened two weeks prior to our visit. It just happened that I recognized the resto as Gretchen had taken us there for a ladies' lunch the last time we were together. Now, under new ownership, the décor was totally different. The tables were right out of a 1950's kitchen – formica tops with chrome edging and similar chairs, mostly chrome so typical of the era.

When the waiter came over, I mentioned that we were looking for Paula and was she there that night. The congenial waiter said "No, she is in Millbrook, NY taping some new shows and probably would not be back for two days". Later I told the waiter the cute story of how Emily loves to talk with Paula during her shows anyway.

About halfway through our meal the waiter rushed over to say that Paula had just arrived way ahead of schedule and that he had told her the cute story of Emily's adoration. He said that he thought that Paula would come over to talk with us soon. We got excited to really talk with her ourselves! Shortly she meandered over to our table wearing casual travel clothes. She has pretty blonde, short hair and a thick southern drawl. With a genuine, big smile and very easy-going attitude, she approached our table and said that she heard the story about our little three-year-old granddaughter, Emily Vail, who loved her so much!

Well, I just happened to have an 8x10 photo of Emily and Grampa John from Christmas that I brought along with several others to show to Gretchen and Jackie over dinner, it being our first visit with them in at least a year. I fished out the photo and a pen and asked Paula if she would mind signing it for Emily. She did and we were all thrilled!

There are no coincidences are there? Were we in the right place at the right time with the right equipment in hand or what? Paula made our night by showing up ahead of schedule; Emily, I am sure, will get a charge out of this story when she grows up.

Up periscope: A few days later when we went into Savannah for lunch with Jackie and Bill, we ended up at the new location of Paula's downtown resto, 'Lady and Sons'. It was only open for a few months and spanned three floors with elevator. We had seen relatively few people on the street that lunch time, but the resto was full on each floor!! We passed up the buffet, mostly fried foods, and ordered a light lunch. The meal came with a great homemade garlic raised biscuit and a corn bread with honey butter which were out of this world. The she crab soup was divine!! The best, most sinful thick soup I ever tasted! Again, we inquired if Paula was in town. The waitress said that she was in CT taping again this week. She said that if we wanted to speak to her son, Jamie, downstairs, we were welcome to do so after we finished our meals. Jackie and I both bought cookbooks. I bought her "Just Dessert" book to use for my bridge group conclaves and the second cookbook to give to Bonnie. We met Paula's son and found him to be as sweet, personable, and handsome young man as we had ever met. He posed with us for pictures and signed our cookbooks happily. Such southern hospitality as you read about in books or see in movies!

#48 2008

Stuart Woods

This one is a short one. The story is easy to put into words. Stuart Woods is a writer of mystery stories. Furthermore, when I discovered him as an author, I enjoyed his writing style plus the fact that his intriguing mysteries happened mainly in two locations, both of which I was familiar: namely New York City and Litchfield County in Northwestern Connecticut where I live. And I liked the fact that most of his tales revolve around the same central figure, the detective. Then I found that they began to broaden in scope to Santa Fe, New Mexico and Paris, France; two more of my favorite places. So, in a word, I was hooked on Woods for a number of years. No sooner did I finish one of his books, did I go in search of his next one. Thanks to Audible Books online, I can listen to them nonstop no matter where I am!

I must admit, I do frequent book shops from time to time as well, just to stroll through and see what the latest rages were in new titles. My nearest bookshop owner informed me that Stuart Woods would be coming to her store to give a talk. Naturally I signed up and marked it on my calendar.

Wood's day finally came. I went to the bookshop to line up with one of his books to be signed. He was much older than I had pictured him. Oh, then so was I. Time marches on for all of us. He was tall with a good head of grey hair. Today I do not recall a thing I said to me, nor he to me. I liked him, but, what does the exterior of a writer say to a first-time greeter? I knew I would continue to read his books and be curious about exactly where he had resided in my county.

At the time I met Woods (his name is the same as the last name of my Sweet Briar College freshman roommate from Forest Hills, Michigan), I had just published my first book, "Rochambeau, Washington's Ideal Lieutenant". I sometimes tell a friend that I write during the day and I read (listen) at night. Oh well, another non sequitur!

Regarding Woods' home in CT, I finally had him figured out to live on the north end of Lake Waramaug where I friend of mine lives. At any rate, Woods soon moved from my state, and I am still reading his books when I run out of new authors to devour. I always look for a new author who has a ready list of at least 25 books, be they historical, travel or mystery. You might want to check out my other living author (now 91 at this 2022 writing) in my meetings list: Harlow Giles Unger, a much more prestigious and worthy writer of U.S. history.

#49 1958 & 2011

Celeste Holme (1917-2012) - bonne vivante, actress, singer, dancer

It is 1958 and I am in NYC with my parents. They have just met me at the docking of the Liberteé French Paquebot, upon my return from the summer in France on the Experiment in International Living program.

Celeste was born in 1917, 20 years older than I. She made quite a name for herself in acting, singing and dancing. She majored in Drama at the University of Chicago.

Her first dramatic role was opposite British star, Leslie Howard, in 'Hamlet'. Her first successful role on Broadway was in 1940 in 'The Time of Your Life], co-staring with Gene Kelly. Her pivotal role to stardom was as Ado Annie in Rogers and Hammerstein's 'Oklahoma' (1943). She sang the song many of us remember: "I'm just a girl who cain't say no." In 1946 20th Century Fox signed her on a movie contract.

In 1947 she won an Oscar and the Golden Globe award for best supporting actress in 'Gentleman's Agreement'. Her best films were 'The Tender Trap' (1955) and 'High Society' (1956). These two were my favorites of all time! I had the 33 1/3rpm record of the 'High Society' film track that I played so much when I was a student at Sweet Briar College, that I knew all the lyrics by heart. I fell in love with her in my tender years.

Remembering 'High Society', it was Celeste who gave that film the touch of whimsy and spice that made my heart sing. Yes, it was a happy film, full of music crooned by my favorites: Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. I recall Louis Armstrong singing and playing his horn while wiping his forehead with a white handkerchief. Put this all together, and you a memorable film.

Celeste's real life was not as fun loving as her musicals. She wed 5 times before finding a man of enduring love who did not sue her for her financial assets. On April 29th of 2004, she wed singer, Frank Basille. She was 87, and he was 41.

So, it was, that much time passed between my first sigting of Celeste in at the Persian Room and my second surprise meeting at the Abbey Theatre in Bethlehem CT. 53 years had elapsed. I did not forget her.

As it happened, July 28, 2011, the night John and I chose to attend the musical, 'Oklahoma' was the evening that Celeste was invited to be feted in person by the Abbey Theatre. Celeste had played the supporting role in the very first production of the play in New York so long ago. (March 31, 1943). Oklahoma's music and lyrics are now an integral part of the fabric that is America.

One year my summer camp, Brown Ledge on Lake Champlain in VT, featured the play, Oklahoma. Everything was created by us, the campers, sets, parts and all. I played the piano for a couple of the numbers in the production. All month we sang the Oklahoma songs at meals and song gatherings. We were bursting with everything Oklahoma that year.

On the night of July 28, 2011, Celeste and her husband, Frank, sat directly in front of John and me at the Abbey Theatre. They were in the first row, as special guests. We had read that she had undergone serious operations, suffered through many illnesses and crucial health problems. I was amazed that she could make the 2 ½-hour private limo trip from NYC to Bethlehem. We remarked how caring her husband was toward her. He assisted her in standing, sitting and walking. All assists were made with his loving kindness. It was obvious they were very much in love.

During intermission I waited to see if Celeste was up to talking to us. She turned around to face us, and we began a conversation. I told her I had loved seeing her at the Persian Room and in her films. She was conversant, very responsive, but weak overall. I shall not forget how she struggled to walk up the aisle toward the exit following the finale. Then she was gone.

Up periscope: She died on July 15, 2012 in NYC of a heart attack. We miss her! I still love to watch the film, High Society, one of my all-time favorites!. The music and dancing are supreme! And Celeste is still young in our memories.

#49 2015

Raphael de Gouberville - Grandson of Michele Count de Rochambeau. Age: c. 23. Newport

Newport, RI, July 4th weekend 2015: The return of the 'Hermione'. Having been built in Rochefort, France, the original 'Hermione' brought the Marquis de Lafayette to America, landing at Marblehead, MA on April 7, 1780. (Lafayette's second trip to America). Lest we forget, General Rochambeau and his fleet anchored at Newport, RI in July of 1780.

The return of Lafayette's 'Freedom Frigate', 'Hermione' to America, has been awaited for 20 years as it was being re-constructed in Rochefort, France to resemble the original ship in every possible detail. Since I am an extreme Francophile, it has not been easy for me to wait for two decades for this moment. It is an event not to be missed! During my wait, I received frequent updates in the form of books, letters, photos, DVDs and other realia sent to me from France by my dear friends, Lily and Claude Ressouches. My friend Lily and her husband live near Albi, so the drive to Rochefort is reasonable for them. All these publicity materials built up to dizzying heights on my desk over the years.

Finally, I got an estimated date of arrival in July 2015. I simply had to convince my dear, sweet husband, John, we have to make arrangements to be there when she sails into Newport, RI Harbor. It would have to be at least a three day stay in order not to miss the fanfare of events surrounding 'l'Hermione'. There would be Lafayette military events, a VIP luncheon on the crest of the hill overlooking the ship's passage into port, speeches by all the officials, meeting the Captain and crew after she docked and more.

After all, Newport was the destination of Rochambeau and his 40 some ship flotilla when they arrived in America as a gift from King Louis 16 and his Queen, Marie Antoinette, to the United States of America and to the commanding general of the army of the American Revolution, George Washington. Actually, I had studied Lafayette's role in the American Revolution long before I learned the history of Rochambeau's contribution. The Marquis had been my personal hero since I was in High School.

I cajoled my daughter, Heather, and my granddaughter, Jessie, into leaving the Cape for the long fourth of July weekend at Newport, RI with us. Our group grew to eight in the end with the addition of Nancy Callahan and her friend, Patrick. Nancy is the new President of the Alliance Francaise de North West CT. She will be an honored guest at the Lafayette event. Our group was augmented by four more, with Mary and David from Middlebury, CT, also good friends and Francophiles, plus David's brother and his wife. I learned some time ago that the entire weekend would be planned by a friend of Nancy's, the President of the Newport Alliance Francaise.

Heather had worked with me for three and a half years via telephone between my house in CT and hers in MA, to edit my first book, "Rochambeau, Washington's Ideal Lieutenant: A

French General's Role in the American Revolution". She had gotten her history feet wet so to speak, during that prolonged labor of love. This weekend in Newport, now almost five years since my book was published, she and I would carry on with the side by side stories of Lafayette and Rochambeau in Newport. We all have reservations at The Jailhouse Inn in the center of town. With our maps and schedule of events at the ready, we exit the Jailhouse on the first morning.

Our first stop is to be Trinity Church. We amble up to the front door, only to find that the entry was guarded by re-enactors of the legendary Rhode Island Regiment in their unmistakable white uniforms. I speak with their commander whom I had met at an earlier gathering. We pose for photos with a few of the soldiers and enter the church. There will be a Te Deum service dedicated to Admiral de Ternay inside, followed by a memorial service outside by the grave of de Ternay. I remember him well as he played an important part in the early section of my book. My book is the only biography of Rochambeau still in print covering this sea voyage. I could not help but think that Admiral de Ternay deserves to be remembered. I am moved to witness this memorial to him today.

De Ternay commanded the 40-ship convoy from Brest, France to Newport, Rhode Island. It was a remarkably long 70-day crossing. Rochambeau sailed with the Admiral on the 80-gun flagship, 'Duc de Bourgogne'. The admiral did a splendid job, avoiding enemy ships of all sizes under all sorts of difficult conditions. In July 1780 he landed at Newport and delivered King Louis's troops to America.

When we entered the church, Heather suggested we should look for George Washington's pew at the front. So, we did. Not expecting to see Washington there today, we mugged along behind Heather to the front of the church and seated ourselves beside the raised lectern. The pews were reminiscent of those of Paul Revere's Old North Church in Boston with tall wooden sides with a door opening onto the center aisle. We are on the early side, so, we settled in to wait for the action.

Shortly, there is a tap on my shoulder. The person said: "Would you all mind moving back just one pew please?" This one is reserved for General Rochambeau." I assented, and we happily remove ourselves to the next pew. Secretly, I am please we now knew who the guest of honor will be. How lucky is that?

Presently, a man appears, dressed in fine, rich French military regalia of the 18th century. He quietly slips into Washington's pew just in front of us. This is truly an unexpected opportunity for me, always ready to step back in time to start a conversation with one of the characters in my book! Wasn't that the reason I came to Newport after all? Here is a real, live Rochambeau up front and personal.

I begin a conversation with the gentleman, General Rochambeau. I find him most agreeable and friendly. Evidently this is one of his first times taking the part of Rochambeau. The general in the front pew is French, naturally. His English, however, is almost non-existent, but we carried on. His uniform and accoutrements are perfection itself. I inquired of him, is he American? He responds: "Presque" (almost). Then I ask Heather to take a couple of

close-up photos of the General and me together. She has her iPhone. "Sure, Mom." She gets at least one excellent shot. After all was done, I was puzzled that he did not remove his tricorne hat in church. When I told him of my bio on Rochambeau, he was shocked into silence. We exchange business cards and he left. I have since lost it. A pity.

Following the service, we all left the church behind the female Trinity Church Canon and headed to the burial place of Admiral de Ternay. As we marched outside, I could not fail to notice that the living Rochambeau was not a look-alike at all. Our live general was more the height of George Washington, not that of the much shorter, stocky, real Rochambeau. Just an observation. As a writer, I find I am always observing lesser-known details from the sidelines. Reader: please be patient. Raphael is coming soon!

Once outside, our general stood tall in the sun in his handsome high, black, highly polished boots. He positioned himself at the head of the oversized, low, flat stone that more than covered the admiral's grave. The general removed his hat for the playing of 'taps' and the singing of the French and American National Anthems. The Canon spoke the eulogy. The Admiral of the Navy War College of Newport extolled de Ternay's valiant effort and the commander of the Rhode Island Regiment placed a wreath of delicate white flowers on the gravestone below the Latin inscription.

We stood with our hands over our hearts feeling sorry in spite the fact that de Ternay had done a yeoman's job to avoid capture by the sea-roaming British; in spite of the fact that he had accomplished the landing of the 5,500 French troops of the Special Expeditionary forces on friendly soil. de Ternay is to be highly commended for what he accomplished 235 years ago almost to the day.

I cannot leave you here to wonder what happened to Admiral de Ternay after his great success mentioned here above. Why was he buried in Newport? It is written that he had been suffering from some physical illness on the crossing, and after his arrival here, his health began to deteriorate. I mention in my account that he was not feeling up to par when he accompanied Rochambeau too Hartford to attend the first meeting with Washington. Because of his weakness, he and Rochambeau rode in a carriage rather than on horseback. Before Christmas 1780 he fell ill, and on December 15 he died. Since he was Catholic, and there was no Catholic church in Newport, he was paraded through town with appropriate pomp and circumstance to the Anglican Trinity Churchyard, where a Catholic priest pronounced the last rites. Thus, we honor Admiral de Ternay here this morning.

Later that today we find the beautiful club that sits on a promontory over the bay where we will have our lunch and meet many of the honored guests who have made this weekend possible. The table assigned to our group of eight turns out to be on the outdoor terrace next to the club building. At first, we worry about being outside to eat as rain is threatening. We are most happy to report that the rain held off and that our outdoor table made it easy for us to be on the lookout for the arrival of the 'Hermione' as she heads into the bay below us. Then we hear a shout that the ship is appearing!

I see John running with camera in hand down the grassy slope toward the water to get a closer view. The slope is too steep for me, so I remained at the top with our group, now all standing in awe. The gathering excitement makes the shivers go up and down my spine as I can now see clearly that there is a small flotilla of ships preceding and accompanying the 'Hermione' to her planned docking space. She looks splendid sailing silently through the rising mist of the very humid midday.

After lunch we head to the wharf to see the ship up close. It was a long wait, all those intervening years while she was being built in her berth on the French coast at Rochefort. There are crowds of people converging at dockside, doing the same thing as we are, trying to see the ship, much closer now. This day is most assuredly a day to remember, a day for the history books.

Someone points out the captain of the ship. I stood by him and asked John to take a picture. Our little group stood on the dock for another pic to show we had really been there. We listen to the speakers. Most are members of the ship's crew and some from the welcoming dignitaries from Newport and the surrounding area. The excitement is palpable.

Next on the agenda in the afternoon is a gathering by the Rochambeau statue in King Park. It is another wreath laying assembly. The large colorful wreath will be laid at the base of the famous Rochambeau statue whose arm points offshore toward France from whence he came. Assembled here are more dignitaries relating to Lafayette and Rochambeau. I was wearing my white Solumbra, wide brimmed sun hat. The speakers are introduced and then spoke at the microphone one by one. Then, I heard the name. Out of the blue, clear as the sky overhead, I heard the master of ceremonies pronounce the name Raphael de Gouberville. I was stunned as I did not expect to see anyone from the Rochambeau family here this weekend. (I can now say how I recalled so easily where I sat: The French Press had taken a photo of the crowd, verifying where I sat! I saw the newspaper coverage of the Lafayette weekend a couple of days later.) John and our friends sat nearby.

I am lucky today to have a good seat at the end of the third row. A lady with a crying baby insisted I sit in the last favorable seat while she took the seat behind me. Who knew? It is yet another NOT by Chance Meeting!!

Now I know that I came here today in order to meet yet another member of the Rochambeau family, Raphael de Gouberville. This time, not a re-enactor, but the real, live grandson of my now-deceased friend and longtime correspondent, Michel, Comte de Rochambeau. I am super excited.

As the speeches were finished, I get up and made my way toward the youngest member of the Rochambeau family, Raphael! I keep him in my view as I move through the crowd to speak with him. I can hardly wait. I am speaking with John, so he knows who I am referring to in such an excited flurry. He knows to get out his camera, and pretty soon the intervening people move to the side, and I am here at last!

I have already removed my voluminous hat so I can see him more clearly. And he, me. I introduce myself and say, that I am the author of the biography on Rochambeau. He looks directly at me and says: "Oh, I am so glad to meet you! I LOVE your book! I read every word!" I am overcome with joy! He already reminds me of his grandfather who is so friendly, so welcoming and forthcoming. I see that John is waiting for the right photo of us. I introduce him to John. Then, without thinking, I automatically put my arm through Raphael's, and we both face the camera with beaming smiles. We speak in English about my book, about his grandfather and how we corresponded for over 15 years. I must have asked if his parents were here. He said no, that he represents the family Rochambeau this weekend. Then I could see that there were many others waiting to speak with him so John and I and our friend, Mary's sister-in-law, Paquita Beglan who was standing just a couple of steps ahead of us when John took the picture, stepped back so Raphael's other admirers might have a chance to speak with him. There were so many more things to say to him. To ask him about. For instance, I would have liked to know how his sister, Virginie, was progressing after law school. My son, Rusty, and I had met her when she was but 9 years old, on our first visit (1993) to the Chateau de Rochambeau. Oh, my oh my!

Up periscope: So, friends who read this account, there is a follow-up that is very sad for me to relate. When I returned home after this momentous weekend in Newport, I wrote up the story of my visit to Newport and then posted it with photos on my "Revolutionary Rochambeau.com" blog. My blog is simply History Bites. For the most part, I tell the true-to-life stories of heretofore forgotten heroes and heroines in history at the time of Rochambeau and the American Revolution. Their stories need to be remembered. I intersperse these stories with some passing events in my life, even a French recipe I make at home.

My friend, Vera, in FL posts all my blogs. She posted the Newport blogs for me as well. A few days after the post she called to tell me there was a problem. Someone was trying to reach me. It was Raphael. So, I responded. He answered from his temporary home in London where he was beginning a career. Was it in finances? He told me that I MUST remove the picture I posted of himself and me together at Newport. And there was another woman in the picture who had to be removed from my blog also, asap! He told me that his mother was getting phone calls asking, "Who is that woman standing next to your son?" She indicated that his career would be ruined when people saw this picture as well as his mother's reputation would be in peril if I did not take it down immediately!

I was stunned by her words. I am sure her father would have protected me if he had been alive to come to my aid. As a courtesy to Raphael, I removed the photo. Still puzzled when I think of all this, I still feel the deep down pain even today, June 2022. Raphael's mother, Nathalie, did not even inquire as to the identity of the smaller woman in front of us in the photo. The smaller woman was Paquita Beglan, wife of John Beglan, one of the most outstanding members of the Society of the Cincinnati, New Jersey, and I am the mother-in-law of Stuart Woodring, longstanding member of the Society of Cincinnati, also New Jersey.

Nonetheless, I cherish my brief and most special meeting with Raphael de Gouberville in Newport. Nothing can change that!

#51 2017

The Ortons, Vermont Country Store

It was our usual fall leaf peaking trip to Vermont. John and I have often spent lovely visits to our favorite Vermont destinations, and this fall, 2017, was no exception. We were on our last day at our last stop as we drove south. We stopped in Weston on route 100 for our annual visit to the Vermont Country Store. We finished our shopping for jams, bought a few items we could not resist. This time we were planning to go next door for lunch at the restaurant attached to the same owners as the VCS.

It was a quiet midday, not into snow/ski visitors yet. We entered by the rear door and were seated in the bar area in a comfortable booth. We had just ordered our lunch when two men came through the same door and walked toward us. I thought they were just walking through, but they stopped to talk with us.

They introduced themselves as Lyman and Eliot Orman. I recognized their names immediately. They were the owners of the VCS! Oh, my goodness. What a surprise! We four began a great conversation about the store and about our connections to Vermont. It seemed silly for them to stand there while we were sitting, so we invited them to join us at our table. Although I do not recall what we discussed, I know that when they left, we had made a wonderful connection, if brief, with the owners of a store that we had known and visited regularly for decades.

When we got into the car after finishing our lunch, I opened the VCS catalogue I had in my handbag. Sure enough, on the inside cover there was a note from the Orton family for the coming Christmas season. At the bottom was a photo of Eliot and Lyman with two others: Gardener and Cabot Orton. I assume they were Lyman's four sons. Or, were the other two, his son and HIS son?

Through the years this store was not only a landmark in the small town of Weston, VT but an 'institution' as we New Englanders might call it. My parents knew and frequented the store on their trips to Vermont as well. I was familiar with the catalogue since I was old enough to page through it checking out the broad variety of useful and fun objects. Typically, as on this day, we had purchased our 'old standby': Vermont Maple Syrup (the best anywhere) and some hard candy along with a new winter flannel nightgown for me! We are never without their 'signature' catalogue (not my parents, nor our family today) through the ages – now counting seven decades! And that is a record! How my parents would have loved to have been with us today!

Up periscope: Per the description in the catalogue: The original founders were Vrest and Mildred Orton. It seems that they mailed the first 1,000 catalogues to the names on their Christmas card list in 1946. "It was filled with top quality goods and wares – a selection of products backed with a 100% satisfaction guarantee. It's a promise that we uphold to this day."

#52 1995-2022

Leif Bjaland - Waterbury Symphony Maestro, Music Director and Conductor.

It is the evening following a day of musical highs! I am inspired to look back to my first meeting with Leif Bjaland. (b 1955). It was 27 years ago here, at my home, in Watertown, CT. in 1995. But first, let me explain how I, a 'mélomane' (music lover), was fortunate to experience the fine conducting of excellent maestros. In 1963 after the birth of our first daughter, Heather, my first husband, Rick, an aspiring Orthopedic surgeon at Cornell Medical school in New York City, and I, shared a subscription to the New York Philharmonic with our best man. The venue was Lincoln center for the performing Arts in 1962. The conductor was Leonard Bernstein (See my "Meeting" with him in 1961 when I had occasion to speak with him on the phone when I worked as executive secretary to the President of Steuben Glass, Fifth Avenue). At that time, Bernstein was at the peak of his fame, having just composed the music for "West Side Story" on Broadway. The builders of the music hall were still in the process of adjusting the 'clouds', that hung from the ceiling over the orchestra. These 'clouds' were under performing as they were intended to reflect the sound 'of music' emanating from the musicians outwards, to the audience. Who ever heard of such a problem in the past? Often, as we found our seats up by the ceiling early, we would see men adjusting the now famous 'clouds' prior to the performance.

By 1965 we had moved to the high desert in California for Rick's 2-year stint in the U.S. Air Force during the Viet Nam war as all recently graduated Med students were required to do. Well, you could not expect us to stay glued to the desert when we craved culture! Bill Swartz, our children's (Heather's and Amy's) Pediatrician and his wife, Susan, found time to hustle the 90-minute drive down into L.A. to the music center, home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for our Symphony subscription. The conductor was Zubin Mehta, another great Maestro. At that time, the L.A. music center for The Performing Arts was also brand new (1964). The size and function of the music center with several theatres was similar to that of New York's Lincoln Center. The building was spectacular, tall and partially rounded with large, teeth like windows giving on to the gathering space below with a huge fountain that never stops flowing. I seem to be following the music from East Coast to West Coast.

Fast forward to yesterday: It was a wonderful day for my "coming out" after the Covid 2-year culture-deprived scare! My good friend Lise, picked me up yesterday for an art lecture Alliance Francaise. Mike Norris, of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, had graciously given several previous talks on French Impressionism during Covid winters; three in-person, pre-Covid, and four later on zoom. Yesterday's in-person topic was impressionist painter, Berthe Morisot, for a good 2-plus hours without a moment off subject. Inspirational to be sure. Today is Sunday March 6th 2022 the second day of my 'coming out' after Covid. Since my husband, John, is unable to accompany us today, I am picked up by Lise and her husband Amadeo. We are 'en route' to a concert by our own

Waterbury Symphony concert hall at the College (Naugatuck Valley Community College) in Waterbury, CT., where we had tickets to a special concert: (We Stand with Ukraine). Our conductor of the past 27 years is Leif Bjaland. It is the beginning of the second week of unprovoked invasion and war on the peaceful country of Ukraine by Russian leader, Vladimir Putin. Today we remember freedom-loving Ukraine and her people. We sing our National Anthem to start the program and while standing, Leif also conducts the orchestra in the Ukrainian National Anthem. It is followed by the singing of their anthem, this time by three area Ukrainian American women.

Next, is a Bandura Folk Song. Brief note on the Bandura: It is a traditional Folk instrument with history dating to the 12th century. The Bandura is an ancient stringed instrument resembling a Lute or a Zither that was played by Ukrainians for centuries. Leif then tells us that he found this Bandura Folk Song just six days ago on Monday. With amazing good fortune, Leif has a friend who was willing to write the arrangement for this song for the entire orchestra in four or five days. It was an amazing feat to be finished in such a short time. Leif had to have it in his hands by Friday so he could study it and by Friday night present it to the symphony for rehearsal. The resulting arrangement for the full orchestra was beautiful and deeply moving. We were grateful beyond measure to be present for the debut of the meaningful piece of music. It was full of emotion as it reflected the deep feelings of the Ukrainian people trying to flee under siege and bombardment. I hope this Bandura Folk song will be heard in Ukraine and surrounding countries where they have fled for succor.

But, wait there is more. Leif conducts two preplanned numbers: The “Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini” with orchestra and featured pianist Evren Ozel. This one has a familiar melody that is often repeated to set our heart chords quivering. The pianist plays a terrific flawless score that ends in overpowering applause just prior to the last hurrah, then more applause. Then, for closure, Leif, again at the raised platform, lifts his arms to commence “Tchaikovsky’s symphony number five in E minor Op. 64”. What seems like a few minutes after the opening, I am plunged into deep lament by the soulful mourning of the Tuba solo. The sadness takes me by surprise. Tears start to stream down my cheeks. Through my tear-streamed-eyes, I continue to watch Leif’s every move until the last. I think of how, in these last 27 years, he has climbed taller and taller to attain great respect in his profession. And lest I forget, Leif has simultaneously held the position as conductor of the Sarasota, (FL) symphony. Bravo Leif!

After the concert, we three walked down the stairs to the reception area to look for Leif. I have not seen him since before Covid began. I want to let him know what an outstanding job he did today on the Podium! How proud I am of him. We find him. I walk up to him, tear off my mask and greet him. He focused on me and flung open his arms to hug and kiss me, saying, “Jini, the ‘Alliance Francaise’!”. We embrace for a brief moment. I beam with happiness for him and his great accomplishment at this afternoon’s performance. This man has style; more than that, he has heart! We cannot talk long. I introduce him to Lise and Amadeo. All too soon, Leif is surrounded by fans. We take our leave.

#53 1960's - present

Jane Cook and Peter Steiner

Since I knew Jane beginning in the early 1960s and did not meet Peter until they were wed in the 1980s, I shall begin with my friendship with Jane.

It all began in around 1961 in New York City while I was working at the French embassy on Fifth Ave., "Presse et Information". That year I (Jini Jones), had the pleasure of meeting Jane Melius, a fellow Francophile. Even though she was working in the division that translated President De Gaulle speeches, and I worked in the section called Presse et Information, where I responded by phone and by mail to all the questions posed by people of all ages, of countries, all backgrounds, regarding France.

Our paths crossed inside the building of the French Embassy, N.Y. (Not to be confused with the main French Embassy in Washington, D.C.) That is how we met and how we began to forge a friendship that has lasted for the ensuing 60 years. Besides the common love for all things French, Jane and I have another point of connection. It was horseback riding. You say, Ok, but how does that fit into the life of two underlings at the French Embassy? Easily, really! We soon found that we both loved horseback riding. So, using our resources that come naturally to two young, up and coming city gals, we looked in the phone book for the number of the stable that we had both heard of on the upper West side. Mind you, that was a long way from our upper East side apartments. But, having a sense of excitement to try new things in the Big Apple, we traveled to the West side one early Saturday morning, to find the stables. I wondered where would there be room for horses in Manhattan, this crowded city? I knew, of course, that there was a mounted police division in New York, but where was there home base? Certainly, there were no stables facing Central Park West, too fancy for horses. Et voila, Clairemont Stables were located at 175 West 89th Street.

I am guessing that our Grandmothers (and or Grandfathers) both had ridden here earlier in the 20th Century. It was called the "Clairemont Riding Academy". I just did some research to get my facts straight. "Clairemont was the oldest, continuously operated equitation stable in New York City and the last public stable in Manhattan. The building was listed on the National Register of Historical Places in 1980 and designated a New York City landmark in 1990." At the end of the 19th Century the four-story building served as a stable for horses as well as storage or parking for carriages. Horses were available for rent and or boarding. The address was expanded later for more horses to include 167, 169, and 171 W. 89th. St.

In 1927, when our (Jane's and my) ancestors likely rode horses there, there was a plan to encourage more use of the riding paths in Central Park, only a couple of blocks away. In 1961, precisely when Jane and I went over to rent a couple of horses together, the Clairemont building was condemned per the West Side Urban Renewal Project. However, The Clairmont Academy remained in business at a month-to-month rental basis for the

next 37 years! Imagine that. At any rate, it did not matter to us. We reserved two healthy steeds, mounted up and rode carefully on the pavement across 89th street to the park entrance.

The bridle paths in Central Park are a tradition in New York City. They have been in use for 150 years and had been included in the planning since the park was created. There are over six miles of bridle paths built especially for horses' hooves, all made of hard-packed dirt. I know that my Grandmother, Nina Rawson Jones had a fine riding horse that she rode side saddle. I even have a photograph of her Nina riding side saddle in her formal riding attire. As I study this photo today, I wonder if she and my grandfather, Harold, might have ridden in Central Park in the early days, some 40 years prior to our ride.

As an aside, my Nina, and Harold, both loved horses. I know that Jane's family lived not far from the city, along the Hudson, Scarsdale, NY, I think. My family also had a "Cutter" (a one-horse open sleigh), "de rigueur" for those days, that I drove with my horse, Tanbark, in the 1950's at our country home, The Oaks, in Hornell, NY. So, to conclude my background on horses, in the 1950's my mother took much pleasure in restoring our old cutter to its former beauty. She had it painted a midnight blue with red and gold racing stripe, gold trim and finished with red velvet upholstery. After the restoration, she brought the sleigh into the living room each Christmas season and filled it with gifts. I inherited the cutter in the 1970's and stored it in our shed here in Connecticut. Talk about tradition!

While writing about my meeting with Jane and remembering our ride in Central Park, I wanted to know some of Jane's memories of her parents' connection to horses in NY. Jane and I exchanged emails, and she agreed with me about the possibility of our 4 Grandparents having ridden along the same bridle paths as we did in the 1960s.

As for details of our ride that Saturday in 1961, I recall we took a short walk to get used to our mounts, then picked up speed. It was quiet on the West side that day. After an hour or so we were trotting up the East side of the park where a parade was marching along Fifth Ave. beside us on the other side of the iron fence. I remember that our horses were excited by the sight and sounds of the marching band. No problem with control. Our New York City horses had seen and heard it all by time we mounted them that day. We walked for a while until we left the parade behind.

Then came the best part of the ride. Jane and I decided to head to a path that led to one or more of the overhead picturesque old bridges. We were both ready for a fast canter, even stretching into a gallop. What fun! We ducked our heads down as we sped under the bridges. It was the kind of thrill most city goers never experience. No need to wish for the country! We found the best of both worlds in Central Park.

Over the next many years Jane and I both became engaged, she to a lawyer and I to a doctor. We attended each other's weddings and moved out West and back East to Philadelphia. One Christmas our annual cards crossed paths with the message that we both were getting divorced. After that we often saw each other with the children in tow. Either near me in New England or her in McLean, Virginia. After a good interval we both

remarried. She before me, to Peter Steiner, whom she met quite by chance while swimming her usual laps. And I met John who appeared quite by chance in my driveway in Watertown, Ct. Then, another period of time during which we got together whenever we could, either in Ct. or VA. Jane and I took long walks in her neighborhood in McLean, in Arlington Cemetery, never missed a special exhibit at the National Museum of Art in DC. Then Jane and Peter moved to Sharon, CT. which was a great choice.

Peter is a cartoonist whose work for many years, was regularly published in the New Yorker Magazine. He has a great style that sets him apart from other cartoonists. He is the greatest at the understatement and the unexpected outcome. In 1993e the New Yorker published a cartoon that lifted him to the heights of his profession. It was a cartoon about a dog who used the internet. The dog said: "No one knows you are a dog"! How true!! Peter was the first to proclaim the obvious, yet, at that point in history, had not yet found total comprehension or expression. That was in the early days of the internet, users were just getting used to the idea of sending notes through the air by internet. Peter became the icon of the computer era for his (the dog's) pronouncement. Peter is a deep thinker, constantly looking under the obvious to find the underlying truth and subtleties, that can hopefully lead to a hearty laugh! In my book he is the best! For example, I never get tired of his cartoons featuring a cat. The cat does not have to say anything sometimes to bring a chuckle or at best, say only a few words as a doctor in a white coat giving the prognosis to a fearful patient.

There were many special visits spent in their French home. These were the most wondrous of times. Sometimes I was there alone, or I brought a friend who was traveling with me, or, best of all, with my husband, John. Usually, we would go shopping in town for whatever Jane wanted to cook for dinner that night. It was always the freshest and most beautiful choices: most often local products found in small markets. Then we would take all the goodies home and Jane, who is a cook 'par excellence' would put on her apron and start to prepare a meal. She would make 'hors d'oeuvres' and set a beautiful table in their country kitchen or if the weather was perfect, outside on their terrace. Following such a meal, we would all sit back in our chairs, roll our heads back and look for falling stars until it was pitch dark.

With Jane and Peter living in CT. we began a casual New Year's Eve plan to attend a concert of Early Music in Great Barrington, MA. followed by a celebratory dinner in town. We avoided crowds and luckily weather did not intervene to keep us from meeting for our favorite entertainment, good music and good eats.

Peter also loves to paint landscapes, often capturing the view he sees across the fields from their rural home in France. Several years ago in the winter when he was back in CT, he decided to paint portraits of people he knew, as I recall, well over 150. These were to be quick portraits catching people in a moment at a glance. One day he asked John and me to sit for such portraits. He took photos of us, heads only. At some point, later on, he produced two quick studies of us. Then he collected all these portraits and had a show. We were invited along with his numerous subjects too his "opening". It was a fun event; we all

showed up to support him. It was a big success. The portraits were for sale too! Peter said he would gladly make photos of ours and send us copies.

Regarding my many visits to Mclean, VA with Jane and Peter, on occasion, Jane who worked as a nurse would often be late coming home, so I had time to sit and chat with Peter. We would cover all matter of subjects, and I found him easy to talk to, open and friendly, sincere and humorous. I must say I got to know him very well over the years and enjoyed his company and his discussions about his preferred art forms and my interest in French Impressionism, and so on and so on. As a matter of interest when I was Vice President of Alliance Francaise, I invited him to speak at one of our meetings. It was well-attended and people liked hearing him talk about his work and the many art forms he pursued. By then he had found a new form of expression, writing!

Peter had begun to write Mysteries. The first one was called "A French Country Murder". Guess what? The mystery was set at their country home in France and, at the end of the story, he told me that I was one of his characters under a pseudonym. Isn't that a kick? At this point there is only one problem for me, that is. Following his first book, which I read greedily, I was no longer able to read per se. That is to say that I could not hold a book in my hands and read the type due to progressive Macular Degeneration. As a result, from that time on I read all my books on Audible. So, I have not read the rest of Peter's books which is a true sadness for me. Rusty tells me that Peter's mysteries continue to be intriguing as he keeps reading them.

#54 1970's to present

Leonore and Robert Templeton

Our story goes back to the late 1970s when I was on my own, supporting three active growing kids while simultaneously, balancing 6 different jobs at one time. My major occupation, after motherhood, was at Woodbury Ski and Racquet where I was employed in two distinct jobs. First, was Public Relations and second Cross Country Ski instructor. I was available in the ski shop or tennis shop, as the season allowed. One day I had the great good fortune to make the acquaintance of Leonore. She walked in with her clip board under her arm to inquire if the owner, Rod Taylor, wanted to run an ad in Voices (local Southbury rag) where she was a part time employee. This is how we met first. She came in regularly and we found time to chat and get to know one another. I had my three kids (two girls and a boy), and she had three boys. We were both busy as can be.

As time went on, we incited each other to the different activities and favorite causes in which we were involved. Over time she began to spend time at my favorite one, The Alliance Francaise of NW CT and I, spent time working with the women's committee of the Waterbury, Symphony. Well, this was the beginning. Just watch our dust!

I recall one New Year's Eve spent at our house with a nice group of friends. We had some source of music that we just had to get up and dance to. The music got louder and the beat, faster and faster. Robert was in the midst of it too. It was great fun. I looked over at the large white fridge in our 200- year-old kitchen and saw it begin to bounce up and down with the pulse of our collective feet! Oh! Oh! After that scare, we slowed down the music for fear of falling into the cellar below. Our spirits were still high, and we welcomed in the New Year together.

As I was getting to know Leonore, I was becoming familiar with Robert's painting. In those days I rarely saw him outside his studio – a separate building reserved uniquely for his work, his paints and easels and finished works. And of course, their home was sprinkled with his work. I loved looking at them, hearing the stories that accompanied each one as well as where they traveled for Robert to find inspiration to create them.

Then came a period of total creativity for Leonore. It paralleled a similar time in my life as I changed my trajectory and took on graduate school in French studies mostly in France, at age 49. For Leonore it was a goal to bring young people, children and entire families, into the realm of classical music. The latter was indeed a lofty and exciting goal for her to set in stone. I will follow Robert's last years as this piece continues, but for now I shall concentrate on our growing camaraderie that gradually led to a life-long friends with Leonore. In four words, our shared interest in family, music, art and travel became the glue that kept us close.

In my story on Eleanor Anderson, another close friend of both Leonore and me, I go into detail of all the things we worked on together. In the early days, it was the three of us, plus Ginny Murray, a multi-talented local artist, who gathered for simple, but sweet, homemade lunches at each other's homes. We even spread our picnics on grass. These precious times together were often followed by a nearby house tour or art exhibits. Following Robert's sudden early demise, we were three widows and me.

Leonore was the ringleader and directed our paths toward her lofty goal to encourage a broad-based, larger group of classical music lovers in Litchfield County, the center of which was the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra. Her followers and music devotees grew as we attended regular planning meetings and fundraisers under Leonore's leadership. We knocked on doors of businesses and private homes to put the first programs together from scratch. One of our bridge members, Lea Winslow, took it upon herself to make and bring snacks to the entire orchestra for their Friday night rehearsals. Natural we all pitched in with goodies during the concert year. This went on for years as well with all of us supporting each other's favorite cause.

By the mid 1990s Leonore reluctantly became a bridge-player in my newly formed group of 2, and rarely 3, tables of weekly bridge games. We rotated house for these fun gatherings. We were not your usual die-hard bridge players, but fun-loving. Just to give you an idea of our commitment to the game, too getting together for fun, we started each week with the hostess setting out her best table settings of silver and fine china AND with tea served alongside of a yummy dessert. It was a marvelous afternoon, beginning with an hour for our catch-up gab, the "organ recital" as Ann Smith named it, during which we indulged our 'sweet tooth' and new choices of fine blended teas. We loved the process.

By now you realize that we were all involved with at least two causes at once, the Symphony and Bridge. We finally initiated Leonore's annual "Picnic and Pops" summer Concerts. The program would include 'light classical' to bring in the families who brought blankets, chairs and picnics. One very important detail, how to prepare for inclement weather. The back-up was the auditorium of the nearby Nonnewaug High School. Luck was usually with us and fair weather as well.

Leonore had some unique ideas for the 'entrance' of our now famous conductor/maestro, Leif Bjaland (see my #52 for more about Leif). She imagined him flying in on a helicopter and other fun entrances to tease the audiences. And on occasion, we would hold the concert at a different location. Once time it was at the nearby local airport with a luncheon served to the guests at tables under a tent or was it in a hangar? That one was really special and well-attended. Other venues were explored in outlying towns to stir up interest in our Symphony. For the outdoor concerts at The Hollow in Woodbury, the home of the Picnic and Pops, our group of aging but peppy background helpers even took our places on the tarmac entry to the Hollow to sell tickets. We each wore a cash belt to making change. Those afternoons were hotter than hot! We were not daunted!

The icing on the cake finally came after ten years when the Waterbury Symphony decided to take over the planning and producing of the "Picnic and Pops" Summer concert series

and included it in their yearly plans. Hip, hip hooray for our team. Leonore was feted for her accomplishment! Our group of ladies who had so much fun backing her ideas decided to make her a special gift to commemorate the occasion. We bought her a gorgeous braided silver necklace from Tiffanys – only the best for our Leonore! Now, in 2023, some 22 years later, the tradition of the summer Picnic and Pops Concerts is still carried on.

Now, I turn to Leonore's husband, the well-known portrait painter, Robert. I would really need a book to write about him and his work. Robert was born in 1929 in Red Oak Iowa. He passed away suddenly on July 16, 1991 at his home in Woodbury, CT. Life on the farm in Iowa was difficult beginning with his birth in the same year as the big stock market crash in 1929 into the 1930s as he came of age to begin his life work. The family grew their own vegetables to survive. Robert's father supplemented the low family income by working with the WPA (Workman's Progress Administration) under the New Deal along with government rice handouts. Things lightened up a bit when his dad took a job to manage a farm in Montgomery Co. Iowa. "Templeton said that all the deprivation of his childhood taught him rather than defeated him."

Templeton had begun to draw as a boy and remembered looking forward to the arrival of the Saturday Evening Post. He painted what he called, "Lest We forget images of the black civil rights movement" the Civil Rights Collection and the cover painting by Norman Rockwell, all of which contributed to his decision to become an artist. He filled a sketchbook with local scenes of country life. His high school principal saw his work and encouraged him to pursue art. He won a national merit scholarship. He applied to Kansas City Art Institute at 17.

In Kansas City he began to block. He studied under Thomas Hart Benton, who eventually sat for portrait by Robert. He was more than pleased. In 1949 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, he met artist John French Sloan and his wife, Helen from which visit grew a lifelong friendship. After that Templeton moved to New York City to study at the Art Students League while still meeting regularly with Sloan, learning as we went. With a recommendation from Sloan, he earned a Ball Grant from the Art Students League two years in a row. He had classes during the school year and got a job ushering at Carnegie Hall in the summer. He also worked as a sidewalk artist in Estes Park in Colorado in the summers. Through his ingenuity, he gained enough income to last him throughout the school year.

In 1952 Robert was drafted into the army for a 2-year tour of duty in the Ozarks of Missouri. While there, he painted a forty-foot mural he called "Portrait of America". While following his basic training, he was sent to Germany. On furlough he made good use of his time by visiting museums of Spain and Italy to study the Old Masters. Robert's European tour of duty proved to be wonderful for the young, budding artist who was fast absorbing art on every side. While in Europe, he met his future wife, Leonore where they were married and upon his discharge in 1954, they went to the United States to live on the lower east side of New York City.

N.B. This next part I had to copy and paste it into my text as I am running out of time to fill it in as we are preparing to move. Copied and pasted Wikipedia portion of Robert's life from here on, mostly in Connecticut:

Templeton won a [National Merit Scholarship](#), and Buffington helped him to apply to the [Kansas City Art Institute](#).^[*citation needed*] He was accepted and arrived in [Kansas City](#) in 1946 at the age of seventeen. During that year Templeton was awarded the Vanderslice scholarship.^[*citation needed*] Early on, Templeton was able to cover his living expenses with portrait commissions. He spent his summers in Colorado, honing his skill in portraiture on the sidewalks of [Estes Park](#).

In Kansas City he came under the influence and tutelage of [Thomas Hart Benton](#), who sat for him for his portrait. Templeton had gone to the Benton home for the sitting, and when the sketch was finished, Benton called in his daughter to get her reaction to the portrait. When she approved, Benton was delighted, and autographed it.

In the summer of 1949 Templeton traveled to [Santa Fe, New Mexico](#), to visit with the artist [John French Sloan](#) and his wife Helen. A lifelong friendship developed from that visit, and when Templeton moved to New York to continue his studies at the [Art Students League of New York](#), Sunday afternoon teas and discussions about art at the Sloan home became a regular event in Templeton's life.^[*citation needed*] With a letter of recommendation from John Sloan, Templeton was able to get a Ball Grant from the Art Students League two years in a row. He attended classes in the Fall, Winter, and Spring, and he supplemented his income by ushering at [Carnegie Hall](#). He continued to spend summers as a sidewalk artist in Estes Park, which generated enough income to last him through the school year.



With President Carter in the Oval Office

In 1952, Templeton was drafted into the [United States Army](#) for a two-year tour of duty. During basic training at [Fort Leonard Wood](#) he painted a forty-foot mural *Portrait of America*, which showed the influence of Benton. After basic training Templeton was sent to Germany. There he took advantage of his furloughs to visit the great museums of Spain and Italy, studying the [Old Masters](#). While still in the army, Templeton met and married his wife Leonore, and upon discharge in 1954, they settled in New York City,

where he shared a studio on the [Lower East Side](#).

In 1963, Templeton and his then pregnant wife moved back to Iowa. Inspired by the newly constructed [superhighway system](#) covering the [Midwest](#), he devoted his energy to creating works with a transportation age theme. He participated both in the Mid America Annual at the [Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art](#) in Kansas City, and the Annual Iowa Artists Exhibition at the [Des Moines Art Center](#).^[3] His work focused on the effect the automobile had on the landscape, and the way we live. One of the recurring images in his work is the long-distance trucker, whom he uses as the protagonist of high stress modern man. He experienced the life of a trucker first-hand when he accompanied his brother Darwin, who owned a trucking company, on cross-country hauls. The paintings and constructions of trucks and highways were shown in 1964 at the Banfer Gallery in New York under the title *L'Homme Machine (Machine Man)*, and posthumously in 2004 as *Life on the Road* in the Founders Gallery at the Golden Age of Trucking Museum in Connecticut.



Templeton's portrait of President Lyndon Johnson

In 1965, Templeton and his wife purchased a farm in Connecticut to live with their three sons. The Connecticut period was filled with commissions of leaders in government, industry and entertainment, among them presidents [Lyndon Johnson](#) and [Jimmy Carter](#),^{[4][5]} First Lady [Rosalynn Carter](#), Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#), author [William](#)

Styron, baseball player Stan Musial, poet Carl Sandburg, former Texas Governor John Connally, and opera singers Luciano Pavarotti and Joan Sutherland.

Civil rights period



Robert Templeton finishing his portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Portrait showcasing the collection Lest We Forget: Images of the Black Civil Rights Movement

Templeton continued to add paintings to his Machine-Man series, but in 1967, he was an unwitting participant in an event which inspired him to take his art in a new direction. In the summer of 1967, Templeton was in Detroit painting private portrait commissions, when riots broke out. Templeton recorded the chaos in his sketchbook, observing [looting](#), fighting [National Guardsmen](#), firefighters battling blazes, and even the governor's press conference. His sketches of the events became the cover art for the August 4, 1967 edition of *Time* magazine, the second cover he had done for the news magazine.^{[6][7]}

In 1971, Templeton was commissioned by [CBS News](#) to be the [courtroom artist](#) for the [New Haven murder trial](#) of [Bobby Seale](#), founder of the [Black Panther Party](#). Because the court was closed to artists and reporters, Templeton had to create his sketches secretly. The resultant images are perhaps the only visual record that exists from the trial.^[8] Templeton was flown with his sketches to New York City, where the images were shown by [Walter Cronkite](#) on the [CBS Evening News](#).^[9] In 2007, Templeton's Black Panther trial sketches were acquired by [Yale University](#) and exhibited at the [Beinecke Library](#).^[9]

After his experience in the Detroit riots, Templeton devoted more time to paint a record of the leading figures in the [Civil Rights Movement](#). He disdained inequity and felt that with the profound change in [race relations](#), the nation owed the participants recognition for their devotion to the cause. For nearly twenty years he arranged portrait sittings with leaders in the movement with the help and advice of Dr. [Benjamin Mays](#), mentor and friend of [Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

The resulting collection of over thirty paintings was first shown at [Emory University](#) with a grant from the Georgia Council of the Arts and the [National Endowment for the Arts](#). The title "Lest we forget... Images of the Black Civil Rights Movement" came out of a conversation Templeton had with Dr. Mays,^[10] who worried that so many people, their work and sacrifice, might be forgotten someday. Since its first showing in 1986, the collection has toured the country. *(end of Wikipedia copy)*

In a short word, Leonore's and my children grew up in Litchfield Co, two going to Taft School near my house, and before Robert's death in 1991, I was taking my French Studies grad course not only in CT at SCSU, but in France. The summer of 1991 I was abroad for my usual 6 weeks and did not learn of Robert's death until my return. It was indeed a sad time.

Looking back to Robert's painting in CT, One day Leonore called up to see if my son, Rusty, and I were home. We were indeed. She said: "Would you both like to pop over here to see the packing up of the Jimmy Carter (U.S. President 1977-1981) full size portrait. We stepped into Robert's studio and watched the process. It was thrilling to see it finished up close and personal and a little sad that it was going to leave the property. But, on the other hand, that is the way of all grand paintings. If a portrait is a one-of-a-kind item such as this one, of a sitting President of the United States of America, it will be on view for the world to see and appreciate, then all hopes are realized. This portrait will reside in the National Portrait Gallery, Hall of Presidents, of the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC. Surely Robert was pleased beyond measure to know just where his work was going.

Robert's Carter painting. Evidently, she got a call when the truck and packers from DC were to arrive saying that the truck was stuck in a field at the bottom of Carmel Hill Road. It sees the truck, but in turning off onto Peter Road, they made an error and ended up in a swampy property and could not get out! I had not heard of this when Rusty and I arrived to witness the packing and exiting of the famous painting! Robert and son, Mark went down the hill to push and push until the vehicle was finally-freed! A near miss. Better it happened on the way to the Templeton's rather than with the precious painting on board!

Those years in CT were Robert's super busy painting years. Just prior to the above scene with the Carter painting, Robert painted a fine portrait of Hubert H. Humphrey (U.S. Vice President 1965-1969). It also was destined to be hung in the National Portrait Gallery. The day I was there with Rusty in DC, we viewed them both. Very impressive, large likenesses! When standing in front of these two portraits, the Carter and the Humphrey. One feels as if the two might, at any moment, step down and tell their side of the story of their creation under Robert's deft hand and brush.

Today Leonore added a detail of the day the Humphrey painting was hung at the same gallery in DC. It is tradition that the artist and family were invited to the opening reception, the unveiling, as they say. With great good fortune, Leonore's Mother just happened to be visiting from Germany. Her presence made it even more of a thrill for the entire family.

In Robert's later years and months, I recall his mentioning, even complaining, which was rare coming from him, that his hands and especially his fingers, bothered him often. He would show me his hands so I could see how red they were and that the skin seemed to be allergic to something in the paint he used day in and day out. I think he was fighting pain and the mental anguish of his peeling fingers and hands. I know he was searching for something to stop the allergic reaction and to cease the pain. I remember his pain even to this day, some thirty years ago. Didn't Michelangelo endure similar hindrances? At any rate, Robert and Michelangelo could not stop painting, for painting was their compelling calling, their life, in their blood, to keep on painting. They were both masters of their trade.

I cannot even tell you how many portraits Robert completed in his lifetime. Leonore tells me that there were hundreds of portraits sold all over the country. Sadly, she muses, she never took photos of them, but she lives with some that were not taken after being commissioned. There were about four that were requested by Time Magazine for instance. Then with changes in politics, two orders were rescinded at the time of the Detroit riots.

Robert started painting portraits of children and gradually moved to adults. I recall that he and Leonore were travelling often to the home or workspace of Robert's subjects. They also traveled to particular locations for a painting/vacation., i.e. Robert was drawn to whatever location it may have been because he knew he wanted to paint there. One of these places was Puerto Rico. Another was The Greek Islands. He painted glorious views of these places. Some of these paintings still hang in their living room and other downstairs locations of their home. I love the ones of typical Greek islands architecture, rounded roofs of white stucco overlooking the water. One with a bell tower with sloping

roof and rounded doorway. Another of a restaurant scene that is most enchanting. This one is very large and fills the end of the dining room wall-to-wall. The welcoming table and chairs in the painting reflecting hers in the nearby setting, for example when we celebrate Leonore's 90th birthday at that table a year ago, the same spot where we so often played bridge following lunch in her dining room.

A note of special interest to me was a painting Robert did of the Marquis de Lafayette, one of my favorite historic figures. John and I visited the natal home of Lafayette in central southern France. When we returned home, we were in the midst of redecorating our new bedroom. We named it the "Lafayette bedroom" following the colors and design of his natal bedroom in the Massif Central of France. Robert had painted a wonderful likeness of the Marquis. I had the pleasure of greeting the Lafayette painting each time I entered Leonore and Robert's foyer. One day long after Robert was gone, she told me that she was in the process of selling it. The price was way over my head so had to pass him up. As a follow up, Leonore had a photo of the painting that she printed for me and had it framed. I keep it now on the dresser in the Lafayette bedroom where he feels at home! Am I lucky or what?

One more thing to add re: the two above paintings of Carter and Humphrey. Some months after the Carter was packed up and set to DC, Rusty called me on the phone to say that his Rock and Roll group, made up of several of his classmates, (now graduated) from George Washington University was invited to play (have a gig) in the garden of the National Portrait Gallery in DC. Yes, I mean the same one where Robert's portrait hangs. With no hesitation I drove down to DC to attend the gig on a clear, sunny afternoon. When the music was over and the musicians were packing up, Rusty and I stole into the museum to find that the Jimmy Carter painting was hanging just inside where Jimmy could have heard the music. While there we saw another of Robert's paintings. It was of Hubert H. Humphrey.

In the ensuing years, our bridge group that I instituted in the mid 1990s. We played at Leonore's as well as my house, and we also were Mark devotees of Leonore's son, Mark, world famous classical, jazz and you name it with his magic fingers whenever we could in NW CT or MA. He played at John's and my wedding reception in 1998 and in our living room before that. One of those summers when many of us packed our picnic to attend Mark's annual concert at Music Mountain in MA and , just to hear Mark play, Leonore and I were so enthralled by his joyful Joplin notes, that we two crept to the rear of the theatre to do a fast jitterbug to the beat of his rhythmic notes. Oh, was that a kick! Another time that I cherish was when Leonore called to say that Mark was planning to play and to record several selections for a friend from Hart School of Music in Hartford and would I like to join with some of our ladies in the bridge group to take a comfy seat in Mark's studio (the studio of his father before him). We all said yes. We would not miss it for anything. It was an intimate setting, and the music stunning. Mark has been a longtime teacher of piano at Hart and privately on his own.

Next I want to mention our friendship with Leonore's son, Kevin, the talented drummer, accompanist. He and Mark do gigs together whenever there is an occasion. Often they play with a bassist as a trio or with two singers whose choice of songs takes us (John and me) back to the good old days when they sing the 'golden oldies' the ones with which we like to hum along. Kevin is also a painter in his spare time, and I mean a

house painter, inside and out He is a whiz at it. We are amazed when he sets up his ladders on the sloping roof to reach the high- pitched peak of our house. This is his side job when he is not employed for his drumming talents. Last summer he painted two sides of our house. And we enjoyed his company very much. He is always so kind and loving to us old folks. We love his wife, Elaine who joins with Kevin to take part in Wednesday evening Zoom prayer services. No doubt about it, his calling is to be a drummer. And he is good at it! The two brothers also performed on the road for years from coast-to-coast presenting their version of “Beatlemania”. They traveled with that gig as long as the mania for the Beatle craze continued. We heard them perform this show outdoors to a very large crowd when they were in our area. Kevin also teaches drums. He tells me; “I love the drums. It is what I was trained to do.” More fun with music!

I barely know Tim, Leonore’s third son, because he lives with his wife in Laguna Beach, California., and we rarely see them as it is only their ‘pied a terre’. They are an amazing couple who travel the work with their joint business.

Up periscope: Leonore and I continue to be in close touch as the aging process goes on. She is pressing into 91 and me into 86 this year of 2023. We talk a few times each week to compare notes.

#55 1990's - 2014

Eleanor Anderson - dear friend, bridge player 'par excellence', and 'mélomane' (music lover)

Her husband, Leroy Anderson, was a composer, organist, pianist, arranger and conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra among many other ways in which he excelled, using his music skills.

Eleanor Jane Firke Anderson (1918-2014), married Leroy Anderson (1908-1975) in 1942. In the early 1950s they moved to Woodbury, Connecticut where I met Eleanor.

Today, December 3, 2016, was a red banner day for me and for the rest of our bridge group, with which Eleanor had played a major part for many years.

Since losing her husband in 1975, Eleanor devoted much of her time promoting his music legacy. When I became a subscriber to the Waterbury Symphony in the 1980s, I noticed that she attended concerts, generally around the Christmas holidays when Leroy's 'Sleigh Ride' song was played. The conductor announced her presence in the audience. We became friends in the 1980s when we were both members of the Alliance Francaise and then, just after the turn of the century, I invited her to join our bridge group. We alternated playing in our homes each week. In our intimate home settings Eleanor kept us apprised of her worldwide work to keep up with Leroy's music. His music continues to be played around the world. Eleanor employed Mary to help, not only around the house, but also to aid her in her desk work that revolved around constant updating of his music. This portion of Eleanor's job was never-ending and exciting.

Eleanor's future plans included the opening of her home as a museum in Woodbury, CT. Before that, the house would have to be designated as a cultural landmark on the National Register of Historic Places.

Even the house was closely connected to Leroy's success in music. This is how that happened and how deep that connection turned out to be. In late 1951, Leroy wrote a beautiful, orchestral heart throb of a song with a lilting melody that took the country by storm as they say in the music business. It was released and on the market by December 29, 1951 and soon was played on the radios all over America by January 1952. He named it 'Blue Tango'. It is an orchestral piece (He later wrote the lyrics for it). Decca Records recorded it on 45RPM. The flip side is Leroy's:

'Belle of the Ball', equally danceable. Billboard ranked 'Blue Tango' 'numero uno', on the charts in 1952. It lasted in the number one slot 18 weeks on the 1952 charts.

Leroy's appealing instrumental was also recorded by Hugo Winterhalter and released by R.C.A. Victor records. After that many famous labels recorded it with great success from New York to England to Australia.

According to Leroy's son, Rolf Anderson, the stunning success that followed 'Blue Tango' came to flower when, in 1953 and 1954, Leroy commissioned the architect, Joseph Stein of Waterbury, CT, to build his new home in the design of the mid 20th century modern on a gentle slope of

property on Grassy Hill, Woodbury, CT. The Andersons would bring up their four children in this house thanks to the success of 'Blue Tango'!

It had also been Eleanor's ultimate wish that her home be open to the public for free, intimate concerts in her former living room. But, first things first. While she was still able to begin her house plan, she had much to do.

So, the first step in her pre-planned house museum was several years prior to today's grand opening. Eleanor and her family prepared the ground floor of her home to serve as a mini museum with lighted displays of Leroy's life and his career in music. When it was complete, our bridge group of eight ladies was one of the first to take the tour. It had been Eleanor's turn to host bridge that day. So, when the afternoon of bridge was over, we all followed her down the stairs to the lower level to view the result of her work.

We were shown the study or 'workroom' as Leroy called it, where he penned his music. As we enter the room, the desk is on the right. I was surprised that he did not write at the Steinway piano in the living room on the main floor. His 'workroom' is not fancy nor cluttered, still arranged with the tools of his trade: pens, pencils with plenty of room for the five-line music staff manuscript notebooks. As I stood in the doorway, I imagined how his desk looked when he was writing. There would have been many already-filled workbooks with Leroy's latest creations and ample space for the new, blank ones ready at hand. There was certainly storage space for his accomplished works, perhaps, under the window at the rear. It would have been a quiet room where he could think, listen to the melodies in his head and write peacefully. That is my guess. To be specific, I learned later that Leroy did most of his orchestrations in his 'workroom'. Evidently, it was his habit, after supper, to compose in his head while walking very slowly around the house. Then he sat down at his desk to score his head notes on paper. His 'workroom' was built with fully insulated interior walls. No sound incoming. No sound outgoing. That was a must, especially when one has the privilege and foresight of building one's home from scratch as Leroy did.

Still on the ground floor, in the main room of the new museum, were examples of Leroy's writing, his records, record covers, sheet music covers for his songs, some of his original instruments and more. Many were illuminated. I shall have to return someday to refresh my mind on the exciting mementos that are on display there.

Fast forward a few years to December 3, 2016, two years after Eleanor's passing. Our mutual friend, Leonore Templeton, had word from Rolf that we, the bridge group, might be interested to in touring their home, now a real museum. We had witnessed Eleanor's progress toward her final goal, that of creating the mini museum dedicated to Leroy's life and works. Now the house had been accepted as an Historical Home on the National Register, and Rolf was ready to hold private concerts in Eleanor's living room.

As many as could make it, from the bridge group, attended the first several concerts. For me, I felt heart pangs of sadness as I entered her private space filled with matching, comfortable chairs in rows. Being in her living room without Eleanor, struck me hard. I had known her so well, and I missed her warm smile.

December always brings back more memories of the annual Christmas luncheons for our bridge group. Eleanor and her righthand gal, Mary, prepared for us. The oval dining table was decorated for her bridge mates. And how we loved it! She had the table set up differently each Christmas, just for us. She decorated the table with mementoes of Leroy and his most famous song, 'Sleigh Ride'. She added little music-related decorations from years ago. Most were from special occasions shared with her family, reminders of Leroy's music. Eleanor recalled the details of all the reminders of past Christmases.

Oh, yes, Eleanor never forgot to get out their actual, full-size sleigh and to place it outside on the patio only a few feet away from where we sat by the sliding glass doors. Sometimes it would even be snowing. What perfection! The sleigh, the snow and the music playing on Eleanor's phonograph. These were some of the tender, warm memories I hold close to my heart.

Rolf worked to put the house on the list of Historic Homes. With this done, Rolf began to put together dates and musicians to present live concerts in the living room. I daresay, I have missed only a few. My husband, John, and I, along with members of our bridge gang show up often to hear young, budding artists perform here now. There have been cellists, pianists, violinists and more on stage in the middle of the living room with new faces all around. Sometimes there are refreshments and we see some of Eleanor's best friends, such as Lily Wadsworth attended. In 2021 and 2022 Rolf has been fortunate to pick a few date to set up chairs outside. Most everyone brings his own chair, to make it easy. We sit once again under the spreading boughs to listen to the best music ever in the lovely setting, where music can flow and music lovers can enjoy every note.

For the grand opening, I gathered the diminishing bridge group (Marcy Jackson, Leonore Templeton, Genie Rigopoulos, Nancy Richardson, Peggy Healey) for our second tour and suggested that we have our Christmas lunch at Carol Peck's resto. I wanted to include 2 of my friends, Mary Conseur, and Yolande Bosman, both French teachers and true Francophiles. All of us are, to a person, retired and most of us, former French teachers as well as members of the Alliance Francaise, as was Eleanor..

Just as an aside, we have lost three from our group over the last several years, first to go was Lea Winslow, Middlebury, (not a French teacher), but one who loved the Waterbury Symphony and who worked with us all on the Symphony women's group for years. Lea took it upon herself to offer 'heavy hors d'oeuvres' as snacks for the symphony musicians during rehearsals on Friday evenings prior to concerts. Naturally, she rustled us up for donations of food, sandwiches, cookie, brownies, and any other yummys we could think of to quench their hunger before our Conductor, Leif, Bjaland put them through their paces. Lea was a very good friend of mine as we both adored going to concerts, heavy on classical, that is, anywhere in the greater CT/ MA area.

Next we lost Abby Grondona, not a teacher but she was involved with Leonore and the rest of us in all things historical, including the Woodbury Historical Society of which Abby was the President for years. She was another pearl of Woodbury and a consistent bridge player in our little group.

And all of the above and more worked with our dear friend, Leonore, to aid her in the creation of the Woodbury 'Picnic and Pops' summer concert created to encourage families to take an interest with their children in classical music. Then we lost Jean Fuller to Florida after all that. At any rate, we all worked with Leonore on her 'Picnic and Pops' concert project for at least 10 years until the Waterbury Symphony elected to take on the summer concert as a regular part of their annual concert season, all in the name of encouraging families with children to become familiar with the wonders of classical and light classical music relaxing on a blanket outside with a sandwich in your hand.

Eleanor was, of course, involved with the Waterbury Symphony as a major supporter. Even some 40 years after losing her husband, Leroy was still remembered as a local composer, conductor, arranger, pianist and musician he was from the time Eleanor met him in the 1940's in New York City. Their son, Rolf, was re-telling this story to us yesterday (December 3, 1916).

We all knew Rolf over the years as he traveled south from his home in northern Vermont to see his mother or for family events. He is truly a loving son and a caring one who is willing to carry Leroy's music well into the 21st century.

But, I digress. Following is one of the most amazing love stories!

Rolf began to relate to us, how his parents met. It is a moving story of being in the right place at the appointed time. As Rolf described it, Leroy had a job playing the piano in New York, when one evening he saw Eleanor walk by. He looked over at her and lost his heart instantaneously. It brings chills to my back just writing about it. He quickly gathered his courage and approached her to ask her for a date **later that night** since he could see that she was occupied with a date already. He was patient and she was gracious. She hesitant to talk with Leroy as she did not know him. So, turned him down saying that she was busy and could not accept. He replied: "I will wait for you." And she left with her date. From Rolf's description, he just waited and waited right there knowing that she would return sooner or later, and he was not going to miss her return! I think it was the International House at Columbia U. in NYC (?), 50 Riverside Drive, where they first met. This is a residence for research graduate students in the city, open since 1924.

Well, Leroy waited, and she finally returned! Leroy approached Eleanor when she was at last alone, having said good night to her date. Leroy and Eleanor fell in love. Theirs is a wonderful love story. They were wed in 1942.

Certainly, there are more amazing things to tell about this wonderful, loving man. Remember, it was in the middle of World War II. First of all, he was multi-lingual. He was fluent in about 5 languages as I recall. Because of his language fluency, he was recruited by the US Government to help during our side as a translator. Of course, he was fluent in Swedish (his parents came from Sweden) and many other European languages. This kind of proficient

language facility and in one man proved very useful to America during the war. This is only one side of Eleanor's fine young man.

Let me jump ahead many years. I am now remembering Eleanor's celebration of what would have been Leroy's 100th birthday (summer: June 29, 2008) at their house. I received an invitation to this event from Eleanor. It began with lunch on the patio. Fortunately, that day was perfect weather to eat outside on her lovely patio under the spreading trees that lent shade to the group of mostly family members and close friends and was followed by a concert at Nonnewaug HS, Woodbury by the US Military Academy Band, West Point, NY. Very moving all in all! There were at least 5 tables of us on this fine weather summer's afternoon.

Following are some of the many concurrent events and prestigious salutations received by Elenore and her family in honor of her husband:

*CT Governor, Jody Rell pronounced it 'Leroy Anderson Day' in the State of CT!

*Leroy's eldest son, Kurt, Station Manager of WMNR Radio, Monroe, CT played special music all day and featured recorded performances of Leonard Slatkin conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra and Leroy Orchestra playing Anderson's music.

*The US Post Office of Woodbury CT issued a stamp by son-in-law, architect Peter Vercelli as a special commemorative one day stamp, with help by Leroy's daughter, Jane Vercelli.

*Woodbury's First Selectman, Paul Kinkley presented a proclamation of excellence to Mrs. Anderson with the Waterbury Symphony's Brass Quintet playing on the grass outside the PO.

*Conductor Leif Bjaland and the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra performed a concert in honor of the Centennial celebration of Leroy's 100 birthday at The Palace Theatre in Waterbury.

*Swedish Radio celebrated Anderson's music all day.

*The Boston Pops Orchestra presented a tribute to Anderson and his music conducted by Maestro Lockhart.

*The Boston Landmarks Orchestra presented a concert in the Latch Shell in the Charles R.

*The Cambridge Mass. Historical Society published a special anthology of Leroy's life and music music prepared by Jane Anderson.

*The Leroy Anderson Foundation is writing a history of his 100th celebration.

Although I just missed meeting the composer, Leroy Anderson, I feel that I have been close to his genius through my friendship with his wife, Eleanor. She and I began to see more of each other as a result of my long- time friendship with our mutual acquaintances, Leomore Templeton and Ginny Murray. The four of us and not so often, another widow, Midge Baldrige (Her husband had served as the Secretary of Commerce under President Reagan.) We ladies began a regular gathering at each other's homes in the 1990's. We alternated houses for intimate luncheons every few months. We had grand house tour outings tramping through interesting homes in Litchfield County. We, all widows, save 'moi', would gather to discuss art, music, travel and projects they were initiating to keep the work of their deceased husbands alive. I was journeying to France every summer to attend Masters' Degree studies at two Universities in Tours and Dijon, France. Ginny, whose deceased husband had been a revered architect was a bit of an exception since she was an artist in her own right, a sculptor potter and artist of some note in Connecticut. Ginny's trips to the far east and other places she loved, such as France, inspired her works when she returned home. She was showcased in Washington, Ct and other towns where she showed her unusual 'objets d'art'. She was in her hay day! I was just beginning to write seriously. I am sure now that these ladies inspired me to continue what would become my second career with the writing of my first book, the biography of French General "Rochambeau. Washington's Ideal Lieutenant: A French General's Role in the American Revolution".

Each of us would prepare a light/hearty lunch and we would continue through mealtime with nonstop talk about world affairs, how the world is changing for the worse in so many ways, how we loved to go into New York to take advantage of the arts and music there.

I recall one beautiful lunch we packed and kept on ice while we went on a local house tour, then drove to Ginny's childhood home to have lunch on the grass beside the stream which ran through her former family property. Yes, we often centered our meetings around house tours for a period of time. They always seemed to be on super-hot days of July or August, but we all had a love of home decor, architecture and the rolling Litchfield Hills where we all had lived for many years.

A few years later, I started a bridge group which included Leonore and Eleanor. Ginny did not like bridge. We began to meet in another mode for a while. When at Eleanor's, I always felt so privileged to sit next to the piano which Leroy used to play his many beautiful, very American classics like the "Bugler's Holiday". Their 1950s home was architect-designed and sits atop beautifully groomed grass slopes anchored by a few well-shaped mature trees. It sits on a knoll, on a country road called Grassy Hill in Woodbury. Eleanor loved her garden. In fact, she gave me some amsonia plants one year which John and I transplanted into our garden. They are a part of my friendship garden now. When the bridge group took off, I would climb up the steps to her front door. In the foyer, very contemporary in style now hangs the portrait of Leroy. He is still very much there.

Ever since the 1980's my husband, John, and I were subscribers to the Waterbury Symphony. They played at least one of Leroy's pieces every year in commemoration of his continuing appeal. His music is happy, i.e.: 'The Typewriter Song', is up lifting and very American in style and pace. This Symphony year, 2007-2008 is a celebratory year as it is the year of Leroy's 100th birthday. To tell the truth, his music is being played around the world all the time no matter what year it is anyway. Eleanor has a full time assistant to handle the work including tracking

his music and following up on inquiries which come in every week from musical artists who want to include Leroy's music in their productions and concerts of all kinds. Every time an empresario, conductor, radio or television producer, wants to showcase Leroy's music anywhere in the world, they must write to her, asking permission and ultimately, to pay for the right to play it in public. She is the pivot point for all this and as a result, has a fulltime job keeping up with the demands of Leroy's public. She loves to share with us the unusual celebrations people are planning around the world to fete his music and his name.

Our conductor, Leif Bjaland, on special occasions revolving around Leroy's music, specifically at Christmas time, will call upon her to stand up in the near front row, to acknowledge the composer's wife before playing his famous "Sleigh Ride" for example. Eleanor dutifully stands while the audience shows their approbation of her husband's talent. We have witnessed this often at WSO concerts.

Even in her 80s and 90s Eleanor still plays a better than average hand of bridge. We have enjoyed musical evenings at her house; for example, when a young pianist, Catherine Wilson, came to play Leroy's music on his piano for us. She was making a series of recordings of Leroy's music exclusively. This is only one example of such events. Many of these musical evenings were held to benefit our local Waterbury Symphony, as Eleanor is a continuing contributor and sponsor and has been for all the years I have known her.

This fall she and her family went to Carnegie Hall a week or so ago for a special concert of Leroy's music to celebrate his 100th. She went with family in a limo to spend this special celebratory evening at Carnegie Hall. Right now, she is planning a multitude of celebrations

around the world for orchestras and individuals who wish to celebrate Leroy's 100th in a different, unique way. She has shared some of these plans across the bridge table with our small group as she becomes aware of interesting or unusual request as she is apprised of them by snail mail, and email.

There was to be a memorable celebration in Sweden in the small town where Leroy's family still lives. The committee of that town will fly her over with her family and put them up for a week or so during the festivities.

Even on a recent Saturday here in Waterbury, at the concert of the Waterbury Chorale, they played Leroy's "Trumpeter's Lullaby". They brought out three music stands and set them up at the front of the stage, followed by three horn players who performed the haunting theme to perfection. Leroy wrote this melody (1949) as well as the arrangements for orchestral accompaniment (1950). The piece was debuted by the Boston Pops Orchestra with Arthur Fiedler conducting in the same year. (It helps if you know the right people) The tune is arresting and stays in your heart after you have heard it. I know as I am listening to it now. The melody would be a triumph for any composer. It is simple, uncomplicated, unyielding and compelling. And Leroy heard it in his heart first! My daughter, Heather Woodring, who listened to it just now first the first time as I played it for her, said that it reminded her of two people in a field who were searching something and then, found it.

Now, let us discover another of Leroy's memorable tunes. He named it "Bugler's Holiday" (1954). This one is totally different from the last on many levels. The "Trumpeter's Lullaby" was just that, a song to 'lull' a child to sleep. This new one has the opposite effect of waking up the

listener, setting him or her on their feet and sending them off at a brisk, marching pace! After all, it is meant to be, as the title suggest, music for a holiday mood! So, strike up the band and pick up the march! I hope you will listen to these two marvelous creations of Leroy's musical mind. "Bugler's Holiday" came out on Decca records, 40RPMS and has been played by orchestras of all kinds including youth bands. It has been presented in a multitude of countries for all kinds of celebrations. It is music to make one happy. There is a section of the tune that is reminiscent of "revelee" in double time, energetic enough to wake up any lazy military men or woman!

Another thing to remember is that in the 30s-40s military band music was all the rage! There was still a great influence of John Philips Souza's patriotic marching band repertoire.

The last time I heard "Bugler's Holiday" played live, was only a few months ago at the time of Eleanor and Leroy's son, Eric's funeral in Woodbury, CT. The beautiful memorial service at the Episcopal Church in Woodbury concluded with this very same piece, performed by, perhaps the same three buglers we heard first on the stage of the Waterbury Symphony. Only this time the buglers who were in the balcony of the church (I have sung in the choir in that church in the past with our Episcopalian choir from Watertown, CT). This time I am here again with my husband, John, to attend the memorial service, for Eric who died far too young. It seemed like the music was coming from a heavenly cloud overhead. The music which Eric loved so much was one of his favorites and definitely carried him on his joyful way to heaven. Such a poignant send-off!

Eric was a soft-hearted, physically challenged young man who had lived on his own most of his life but ended up living back at home with his mother for the last 10 or so years. He had diabetes and many other afflictions and had to be carefully monitored. He and Eleanor were very close of

course. I recall one time when I met Eleanor and Leonore for lunch in Woodbury about one and a half years before Eric's death. We met at our favorite, French, Good News Cafe where he had lunch almost every day. Eleanor did often too. She had to drive him in her white Volvo most of the time. since he did not drive.

The three of us ladies sat in a booth and began our meal. It was just next to the one which Eric occupied. I had said hi to him and spoken briefly with him as we came in to sit down. Eleanor wanted to have her lunch alone with us, so she could spend quality time with us, her lady friends, thus the separate booth. She indicated that she needed her space and not to worry. After quite some time, Eric began a conversation with me over the top of the booth. I naturally felt sorry for him relegated to eating alone over there. After a while I guess it was I who invited him to join us since he wanted to so much. He came over for dessert to join us and insisted in buying our lunches at the close of the meal. He always had a special place in his heart for me and I for him.

Another time I recall back in the early 1990's it was my turn to invite the three widows for lunch (Leonore, Ginny and Eleanor). I almost forgot to mention Midge Baldrige, still another widow I used to see every now and then. Midg's husband was Malcolm Baldrige, who had served as The Secretary of Commerce under President Reagan. I said a silly thing to her one time when I invited her to join us at my house for our ladies' lunch – "I'll bet you did not eat on any more beautiful china than this, even at the White House." I had served dessert on my very best plates that were decorated with encrusted gold from the Vanderbilt's collection. Midge had kindly offered to help me some years before. She used to pick up my daughter, Heather, and her horse at our farm back in the 70s in her horse trailer. At 4 am I would get up to prepare Heathr and her

thoroughbred horse, Foreign Legion, for a Litchfield Pony Club event. So, we had known each other for years. By the way, the horses were full sized horse, not small ponies as the name might suggest.

Another event to mention just now, was the very exciting time when Eleanor's son, who manages the radio station, WMNR, adopted his son, Ivan, from Russia. Eleanor invited me for lunch on the first day she met her grandson, Ivan, as a little boy about 2. We had a lovely lunch on their flagstone patio outside where the Anderson often entertain, under one of the large, spreading, shade maple trees. It was truly a memorable time. Now Ivan is about 10.

Regarding Eleanor's son, Rolf, she gave me one of his calendars for 2007 which he had designed to artfully illustrate his photos reflecting his love of the out of doors in his favorite Vermont where he lives.

Eleanor has a daughter named Jane in our local area too. More about her below. I am now reminded of a musical afternoon in Danbury's Richter Park. Leonore tells me that in the summer of 2005 Eleanor drove us that day to the park where we had our picnic lunches overlooking the greens. I just found a photo of me there, taken by Leonore as I eat my paper bag lunch in a gazebo-like garden structure. Eleanor's two grandsons, Anders and Lars along with Leonore's two sons, Mark and Kevin, were to present a concert to a small group of us. The event began with an introduction by Eleanor's daughter, Jane, who dressed in Swedish garb, announced the musicians. Anders played the piano for his brother, Lars, who sang. Mark Templeton played the piano, his forte and Kevin took his place at the drums. The music, as I recall, was exclusively

Leroy's. It was a great afternoon. It is always a thrill to know that the younger generation is carrying the mantle forward. Leonore and I think that Eleanor drove us, so it must have been around 2010 or so. Since I am apt to see Mark and Kevin, I will ask them when this happened and see if they can add more details of this fine musical afternoon 'en famille'.

Up Periscope: a note of interest regarding Eleanor and her family. I recall her mentioning 'a propos' of nothing, that her maternal grandmothers' name was Anderson. Did that mean that she and Leroy may have had common Swedish ancestors?