



Class of 1958  
**50TH REUNION**

BENNINGTON COLLEGE



## Class of 1958

Gail Gutterman Abrams	Barbara Davison	Joan Howard*
Priscilla Alexander	Anita Dickhuth	Judith Outerbridge Hughes
Cynthia Wilson Altchek*	Rachel Shor Donner	Charlotte Stroud Ingersoll*
Suzanne Wolf Applefeld	Judith Eckman	Tordis Ilg Isselhardt
Janet Levy Aronoff	Phoebe Crary Ellsworth	Sheila Hirschfeld Jacobs
Suzanne Asbell	Sandra Knox Englehart	Joan Shapiro Johnson
Phyllis MacAlpine Barrus	Patricia Falk	Eleanor Kahn*
Ann Mendelsohn Beilis	Joyce Lister Feldstein	Marlene Mintz Kandel
Roberta Bennett	Amy Ferrara	David Karlofsky
Wendy Ann Birnbaum*	Lilias Moon Folan	Grace Guaragno Kass
Sandra Leland Bissex	Marjorie Rubin Freeman	Joanne Goldstein Katz*
Jane Eisner Bram	Mary Garst	Audrey Kahn Katz
Anne Harriss Bugbee	Ana Berliant Glick	Annetta Knox*
Mary Muir Burrell	Wilma Greenfield	Jacqueline Kroschell
Cedra Canavan	Ruth Berman Greer	Marilyn Kropf Kurtz
Frieda Rowell Carnell	Barbara Koch Grossman	Muriel Altman Ladenburg
Kate Sherman Cenedella	Nancy Poling Guest*	Susan Freund Lamb
Joy Carpenter Chadwick	Rennie Halpern Halsband	Carole Glover Lawder
Darla Stimpson Chafin	Judy Harris	Ursula Ruppel Lawder
Susan Ullman Chapro	Mabel Darrow Haynes	Abigail Morgan Lawton
Harriet Clifford*	Evelyn Uhler Helgeland	Leonard Lesser
Ellen Osborne Coolidge	Margaret Jackson Heussler	Elieba Olshansky Levine
Frances Allen Cooper*	Rosemarie Yellen Heyer	Myra C. Friedman Levy
Judith Daker	Annette Hidary	Christine Loizeaux
Elinor Stockheim Davidson	Marnesba Hill*	Anne Fulton Magai
Arlyne L. Davis	Jill Rosenthal Hope*	

continued on page 2

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\* *Denotes Deceased*

Judith Jacobson Magee	Marquel Pettit*	Pat Sloan-Jones
Cornelia Ward Makepeace	Joan Partridge Piciocchi*	Frema Sindell Solomon
Anita Schaffer Margrill	Joan Simon Rand*	Helen Waterman Squibb
Liane C. Marston	Phyllis Reich	Sheila Crawford Sullivan
Lynn Donovan McCann	Hester Renouf	Noel Bausher Szundy
Joan Johnson McDermott*	Mercedes Reyes	James Tenney*
Alice Meier McGrath*	Judith Powers Robbin*	Sarah Winslow Thacher
Patricia Harris Mendel	Judith Cohen Ross	Carol Abernathy Thelen*
Patricia Sullivan Meyers	Ellen Katz Scheckter*	Rhoda Chaprack Treitler
Phyllis Miller	Joy Gitlin Schein	Katharine Kirkham Turner
Marianne Petrie Miller	Sarah Holt Schwarz	Rosamond Tudor van der Linde
Pamela Battey Mitchell	Diane Wiener Seessel	Denise A. Vando
Jill Seward Montgomery	Susan Settel	Jane Berry Vosburgh
Martin Morginsky	Grace Schwartz Sevy	Jeremy Yaffe Wakefield
Bourne Gafill Morris-Buss	Greta Shapiro	Pamela Gordon Wedner*
Honora Fergusson Neumann	Gloria Cummings Sherwood	Kathryn Kading Wheeler
Sarah Colbert Noble*	Michele Siegel*	Terry Connelly Whiting
Barbara Israel Nowak	Linda Lasker Silverberg	Irene Chipurnoi Williams
Margaret Beckwith Parsons	Florence Myers Silverman*	Martha Calhoun Wood
Susan Pragan Pereira*	Treva Silverman	Isabel LaFollette Zabriskie*
Carol Robinson Perlman	Donna Schacter Sinanian	

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\* *Denotes Deceased*

## Phyllis Eleanor MacAlpine Barrus

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### **What were your primary interests while attending Bennington and what are you interested in today?**

Arts: music and creative arts (painting and clay “anything”). I also enjoyed writing experiences from technical writing to my own stories and poems. Currently, I am a volunteer-commissioned Stephen Minister—an extension of regular Protestant church ministers—doing one-on-one work with persons in need. For a change from ministering, I part-sing weekly as the only harmonizer with five sopranos to entertain low income and homeless people at a donated supper.

### **How did the Bennington experience influence your life?**

It increased the development of art experience through taking hands-on art courses, along with many art history courses and crafts courses. I picked up teaching credits at Southern Connecticut Teacher’s College and taught junior high art for one year in Norwalk, CT, and the next in Natick, MA. I always keep up choral music as a part singer and I do creative writing for the church and community.

### **What ups and downs have you experienced?**

I had too many areas of interest, which pulled me in many directions simultaneously, so it was difficult to concentrate on any one area.

### **Do you have any family notes you’d like to share?**

My family was concerned about my total experience. It would have been much easier for me to excel in my favorite areas of talent if I had not been overtired with necessary campus jobs as a partial scholarship student: 1) waitress at multi-needs per day 2) Dining Halls duster 3) office help 4) babysitter for professors’ children 5) server help for professors’ socials 6) “leotard poser” for sketching and 7) Saturday night movies “runner.”

### **Are there any comments you wish to make on the past, present, or future?**

I wish I had spent more time in music related fields, particularly dance program related fields—both at Bennington and later, at Southern Connecticut Teacher’s College—but I had taken so many art classes that my family would not allow extra time and money in music areas. On the positive side, I had so many experiences in so many areas that I had a great variety of jobs, including florist manager, social worker, Hallmark manager, top salesperson, day care and home health worker, co-activities director at a nursing home, party clown and Stephen Minister.

## Jane Eisner Bram

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### **What were your primary interests while attending Bennington and what are you interested in today?**

My primary interest was psychology. After college, I got my PhD at NYU and am now a practicing psychotherapist in private practice.

### **How did the Bennington experience influence your direction in life?**

I developed a love of learning when I was at Bennington for two years. I believe that Bennington taught me how to think on a different level. I then transferred to NYU to continue my education.



### **What ups and downs have you experienced?**

Tragically, our wonderful son-in-law was killed by the terrorists on September 11, 2001. This has had a profound effect on our entire family.

### **Do you have any family notes you would like to share?**

I have three wonderful children and six terrific grandchildren and have been married to the same man for fifty years—wow!

### **Are there any comments you wish to make on the past, present, or future?**

I am very fortunate to have a lovely family and a successful career as a psychoanalyst.

## Amy Ferrara

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In retrospect, my experience at Bennington changed me greatly, although I went there for three wrong reasons.

First was a decision to escape from a somewhat repressive college in Pittsburgh PA, where we were told that, as privileged members of American society, it was our duty to pass our genes on to many children, and where I was too often “campused” for minor infringements of the many regulations.

Second was the example of a much-admired step-aunt (Mildred Hubbard Cummings '40), who was an early graduate of Bennington. Indeed, if I correctly recall the circumstances of my admission to Bennington (despite my checkered academic record), it was Aunt Mil's special relationship with Rebecca Stickney '43 that made the difference.

Thirdly, my father could afford to send me there. The tuition figure of \$2,200 still rings in my memory, for that is the number Daddy used whenever he scolded me for wasting his money. As a Bennington professor once said, at Bennington there were “students” and then there were “boarders.” I knew that I was a “boarder.”



This boarder had very few bright academic moments at Bennington. Indeed, when Warren Carrier reported that I was a “good-natured philistine,” I did not even know what a philistine was!

With a vague sense that I needed a skill to ensure a decent livelihood, I decided to major in natural science and mathematics, but I remember that once, in a qualitative analysis (chemistry) lab, when I accidentally swallowed an “unknown” solution while trying to pipette it, the professor (Mr. Coburn?) assured me that my “unknown” was not poisonous. And he added that to give *me* a poisonous unknown would be tantamount to murder.

I did learn enough mathematics to land a job as a teacher at the Richard J. Bailey Junior High School in Greenburg, NY, where

continued on page 6

continued from page 5

my only weapon for classroom control was to keep any deviant “after school” until the reason for the detention was acknowledged. I remember hearing one student admonish a newcomer: “Watch out for Miss Ferrara, she’s got plenty of time.” A bright moment in that tough year was when Gordon Parks visited my basement classroom during a PTA/parents’ night on behalf of his son, David, who was one of my students.

However, I must admit that my experience at Bennington was not entirely bleak. Although a “science” major, I did take “lit” courses for refreshment. And John McCormick’s introduction to the *Bildungsroman* (actually the course was entitled “Forms of the Novel”) was especially interesting. Also I sensed that Mr. McCormick was rather open to a boarder like me. Indeed, he even invited me to read aloud a short paper I had written on the use of color imagery in one of Virginia Woolf’s novels—much to the surprise (perhaps consternation?) of the “lit” majors.

The change in me that Bennington brought about is quite simple: *I learned to think “outside the box.”* This life skill has contributed to a very satisfying and rewarding fifty years, which I won’t go into here because I have already taken up too much space. Will save that for the 60th reunion booklet.

Until then, best regards to any who may remember me.

P.S. I am especially fond of the enclosed recent photograph of me beneath The Rat, which in turn was installed in front of the Yale Club on Vanderbilt Avenue, NYC. The photo was taken by a picketing member of the Teamster’s Union who was amused by my enthusiasm about The Rat. The other photo is just me.





## Ana Berliant Glick

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### **What were your primary interests while attending Bennington and what are you interested in today?**

I applied to Bennington for the dance program. Today I'm a practicing psychiatrist.

### **How did the Bennington experience influence your direction in life?**

They were the four happiest years in my life until I became a mother. Bennington's flexibility allowed me to take pre-med courses and still dance.

### **What ups and downs have you experienced?**

The ups are my children, grandchildren, and career. Down was my divorce. Then another up was my last twenty-eight years with my husband and his family.



### **Do you have any family notes you would like to share?**

My daughter, Rachel, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and Cornell Medical School. She is now a pathologist. She spent one summer at the Bennington summer program for high school students. Her two sons are my joy.

My son, Jonathon Micah, graduated from Emory University and its law school. He now lives and works in San Francisco, where he lives with his wife and their son, also my joy.

## Marilyn Kropf Kurtz

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I absolutely loved Bennington College!

I had the great privilege and unsurpassed joy of taking courses and some tutorials with the best minds and talents that Bennington had to offer—the renowned: Howard Nemerov, Ben Belitt, Stanley Edgar Hyman, Francis Golfing, Wallace Fowlie, Rush Welter, George Finckel, Claude Frank, and others.

How fortunate I was. I read Dante's *Divina Commedia* in Italian under the direction of Wallace Fowlie. Howard Nemerov wrote that I was “an outstanding student of literature.” I went on to become a professor of literature.

Today I have the joy of teaching literature at Nassau Community College in Garden City, Long Island, New York. I have been there for almost twenty years.

I am also the proud parent of three wonderful sons and two marvelous grandsons.

I earned a PhD in 1989 at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. My critical study of Virginia Woolf's fiction was published as a book.

I have, indeed, been fortunate, and I look back on my years at Bennington College as a major highlight of my life.

Thank you Bennington!



## Anne Fulton Magai

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I graduated as a Social Sciences major. I entered planning to be a music major, but soon decided the place was way too interesting to spend that much time in a practice room. I resumed my musical studies later and became sole proprietor of a piano teaching studio in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, which I did for about 35 years.

Upon graduation, in a fairly deep recession year, I went back to my Cleveland home so I could afford to find some time looking for an interesting job. My first gig was caseworker for the county welfare department, with a district in one of the poorest parts of the city. I learned a new language, enjoyed meeting all sorts of interesting colleagues and clients, and weathered the frustrations of working for a government agency. After two years and as a bride, I found I was too involved with the work and had difficulty leaving it behind at the end of the day. I got a job as a technical secretary at a solid-state research firm. My years of scanning my dad's technical journals (in the bathroom!) paid off because I knew the language and could help ESL techies write government contract reports.

I became a full-time mother with two children 16 months apart. I was asked to do a piano playing job, as an accompanist for children's modern dance classes. I loved that since I had done dance technique classes at Bennington College for years and found improvisation at that level pretty easy. That led to a return to teaching group piano in neighborhood centers in the inner city, which I could do while being almost a full-time mother. That led to a few neighborhood piano students, which led to seeking a way to teach them that would cover what they need to learn and could not in a half-hour weekly lesson. I studied a group piano teaching method and began a studio for group teaching in my home. I did that for the next twenty years.

How had Bennington contributed to all this? The pre-school department and child psych class, Margaret DeGray's Philosophy of Education class, lots of music courses (rural school music teaching!), and above all, learning how to take a wish to know something to competence with that subject and to keep learning.

We moved to Chautauqua County, NY, in 1994, when my husband retired. We enjoyed a rural lifestyle and I continued teaching. I had to do private lessons there because of the distances to be traveled. It made sense for me to do the driving and I had some delightful students for eight years there.

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

Physical problems made it necessary to get out of snow country. In 2004 our daughter, living in Seattle, became pregnant. With a son in Troy, NY, the choice was clear—move West! We've been here four years now and enjoy it very much. I have become very interested in quilting and do other kinds of sewing, which I began at age 12, so it's nothing new. I spend three mornings per week at the YMCA taking care of my body and enjoying my fellows—hiking, field trips and serving as chair of the Senior Connecting Team.

I was the most surprised person when our daughter applied to Bennington and then decided to go there! It was good for her in much the way it was for me. When our son experienced life at Bennington, visiting his sister, of course he had to go there. He's fortunate to live nearby and, as a dancer, to maintain contact with colleagues there. He performed at Reunion last year, which was a thrill for me!

Probably most important was contact with like-minded people. They can be hard to find in pre-college situations! Also we are very independent folk and need an environment where that is prized and the facilities are there to make the most of that trait.

## Anita Schaffer Margrill

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The greatest influence in my professional life was Alexander Dorner, with whom I studied art history at Bennington. Although I reveled in the 'open studio' policy—taking full advantage of every medium offered in the painting, sculpture and printmaking departments (and even beyond—learning how to weld from the Town of Bennington welder)—Dorner's Bauhaus oriented philosophy directed my life's work towards creating art and architecture that is functional and participatory. From the outset of my career, I have sought to meld my art, design, and architectural practices, and, as a result, my work ranges from public art in parks, plazas, transportation corridors, corporate lobbies, private gardens, and discovery museums to designing energy efficient housing and houses of worship.



## Lynn Donovan McCann

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*My husband and I live in a diverse Queens neighborhood and continue to perform whenever we get the chance. I retired recently from consulting work in technology and am preparing several writing projects for publication. Among these is a book working-titled The Sacred Act: Common Roots of Poetry and Song, in which the piece below may appear as part of a section devoted to memoir.*

Dear Mr. Fowlie,

I just read *Journal of Rehearsals*, ordered recently from Amazon.com (this may require some explanation). As a singer of art songs these days, I favor doing my own translations of settings for *melodie* and thought I might find inspiration in your beautiful memoir. I was so right. I love your spot on description of Mme Povla Frijsh: “She performed, not the poem nor the music but the fusion between them, which was a third work.” How I wish I could revisit your Beginning Poetry class, as described in Chapter XIII: Bennington in the ‘50s.



You might remember me sitting with the other girls in semi-lotus on the living room floor of Welling House. The windows were wide open and the threadbare pre-WWII carpet exuded damp mold, so it must have been spring semester. From the only chair in the room that offered back support, you read poetry to us in a soft, musical voice. You carried the words in your body gently, like privileged passengers.

In those days, I thought poetry was over my head. I didn't get it. My holy calling was dance. This had come upon me young, but lacking good, steady, early training, I was behind my peers technically, and feared I'd never catch up. I really didn't want to take on a similar tough challenge, but my best friend and roommate who was very-brilliant-and-wild urged me to try your class. So, there I sat that spring, turning in a first effort freshly torn from my Royal Quiet Deluxe typewriter. I cannot remember one word of my poem, but the comment you scrawled in the margin has never faded from my mind:

“... you tend toward attitudes of the poetic rather than poetry.”

I understood this as a terminal diagnosis and hid out ignominiously for the rest of the season. Oh, Mr. Fowlie—I know I don't have to say this—it was not your fault! It has taken me decades to understand that your words were merely good counsel. How many times since have I shed a fashionable garment that was not

continued on page 13

continued from page 12

*me?* How long have I struggled to learn that rules, formulas, and grand theories only make me comfortable, that they do not have the power to transform? I must have heard you, however. Your passengers arrived at their destination, because, down deep, I have never doubted language, the poem, and the power that creates it.

There came a redeeming moment that semester that has also not been forgotten. For the Dance Workshop, I choreographed a piece based on Yeats' "The Three Bushes":

*Said lady once to lover,  
None can rely upon  
A love that lacks its proper food . . .*

I understood *that* well enough. Having taken Stanley Edgar Hyman's course Myth, Ritual and Literature, I set about to dance it all to Samuel Barber's Capricorn Concerto. My friend supported me through moments of creative panic as I strived to avoid the illusion of safety in "attitude." When the performances were over, word got back to me through the student grapevine that you had liked my work a lot. I don't think a better compliment was paid me in four years of college.

I continue to appreciate your guidance. I am a somewhat more experienced and less resistant student.

With gratitude,  
Lynn Donovan McCann, Class of '58



## Patricia Sullivan Meyers

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I am not quite sure how I ended up at Bennington, though I suspect that the absence of math, science, and PE requisites played a part! Sheer luck and serendipity were responsible for some of the most satisfying, broadening, and interesting years I could have imagined, as well as for friendships I cherish. I can't say I am wiser, smarter, more tolerant, or less opinionated now than I was then, but I have had a wonderful time along the way. Bennington encouraged me to follow my interests, take risks, and be adventurous and curious. The adventures have not always had happy outcomes, but they have always been interesting.



I went on to get a MA in Middle Eastern Studies, was on the Kennedy campaign staff, and was one of the early Peace Corps staff members. I spent an extraordinary four years working on programs in North Africa, Cyprus, and Afghanistan while based in Washington. I married, divorced, and had three terrific kids, while running a variety of non-profits. A few years ago, I moved back to the family home in New Hampshire, where I now spend much of my time.

I revived my early interest in architecture and planning, and am still working full time with several preservation and economic development programs. I am having a wonderful time re-learning my state and hopefully being useful, though I must admit I haven't figured out what I am going to do when I grow up! So much to do! So many places to go!

Like most of us, I expect, I found the past eight years deeply depressing, and am delighted that—for some inexplicable reason—America has been given a second chance (though I'm not sure we deserve it). The old curse was “may you live in interesting times” and we have certainly had them in full measure, but it has been a fascinating time to live in, and I can't wait to see what happens next!



## Jill Seward Montgomery

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### **What were your primary interests while attending Bennington and what are you interested in today?**

At Bennington: Theatre, Literature, Art, Anthropology. . . and the man from Williams I met two weeks after arriving at Bennington in '54 and married the summer between my junior and senior year, in 1957. It was he who insisted I return to Bennington for my senior year rather than transfer closer to where he was stationed in VA.

### **How did the Bennington experience influence your direction in life?**

Bennington opened my mind to oh so many possibilities, and ever so gradually, my self-confidence grew (though without a doubt, they were the four hardest years of my life). Completing my Bennington education gave me the confidence to explore many avenues and to tackle new learning adventures throughout my life, which included graduate school during my forties. Of course, the faculty was primary in my being able to finish at Bennington—Bill Sherman of the theatre department and Lucien Hanks were supportive and encouraging. And I truly felt that to survive Stanley Edgar Hyman's classes and not fail was a major triumph. Instead of becoming a dilettante, I learned focus and total immersion. Most importantly, had there been no Bennington College, I would not have met my life partner and shared fifty-one years of a good marriage.



### **What ups and downs have you experienced?**

The “downs” pass from my memory almost before they're over.

The “ups” keep happening. They include a Masters in Early Childhood Education from George Washington University, and close to 20 years teaching in many different places abroad and in Puerto Rico, Maine, Maryland, and New Hampshire.

continued on page 16

continued from page 15

Later training in maritime archaeology and as a dive-master led to volunteer work on shipwrecks in Bermuda, several places in the Caribbean, Virginia, Maryland and New Hampshire, working with archaeologists from Brown, Texas A&M, and East Carolina University.

As my spouse pursued a career with the US Navy, we went to live in Puerto Rico, England, Japan, and Russia (when it was the Soviet Union). In each of these places, I was privileged to be able to teach, study, and travel extensively.

Retirement beckoned; we moved to New Hampshire in 1996 and have been studying mycology, taking courses at Plymouth State and the Humboldt Research Institute in Steuben, Maine. Also, together we volunteer for New England Handicapped Sports and in addition to teaching skiing and helping with the kayak program, have worked in the office and as shop technicians. On vacations we either hunt mushrooms, scuba dive, or visit with family and friends here and abroad. It's all UP!



**Do you have any family notes you would like to share?**

Family is my joy. We were blessed with three kids (two sons and a daughter), two adopted and one biological. Each is a wonderful person, though it's obvious they're from different gene pods. Their career paths are very different, but each is committed to helping build a better society and they have produced (so far) seven grandchildren who are, of course, smart, talented, athletic, good people.

**Are there comments you wish to make on the past, present, or future?**

The present is good and the future looks precarious—but, a born optimist, I believe that with great effort, we can unite and learn to be respectful and caring of all humans and our environment.

## Carol Robinson Perlman

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### **What were your primary interests while attending Bennington and what are you interested in today?**

I came to Bennington with an interest in Literature. Studying with Stanley Edgar Hyman, that interest became a passion. I was a person who was terrified of science, but loved physiology with Mr. Woodworth. I took wonderful classes with superb professors. I also had a wonderful group of friends at Bennington.

### **How did the Bennington experience influence your direction in life?**

Bennington gave me the tools to pursue my interests as they developed. I ultimately became a social worker.

### **Do you have any family notes you would like to share?**

I have one daughter, Shannon, who graduated from Cornell and the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health. My son, Jeremy, graduated from Amherst College and UCSF Medical School. He is a pediatrician in LA. I have been married for 36 years to Art Perlman, a psychiatrist.



## Donna Schacter Sinanian

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I attended a large, coed high school in Brooklyn, NY. Consequently I wanted to go to a small, all-girl college in a rural setting. Bennington was one of my choices. The college advisor was horrified. Naturally I chose Bennington, a very good choice for me.

In my freshman year, I was encouraged to take an art course. Eventually I took ceramics, graphic arts, and architecture. I found how essential it is for me to work with my hands.

After graduation I found myself enrolled in the female section (Harvard Radcliffe Program in Business Administration) of Harvard Business School. A long story. Culture shock. One had to wear stockings and high heels and use a slide rule. At the first study group I used my Bennington experience and said, "I'll do the thinking, you do the math." That worked really well.

After another graduation I returned to New York and drifted into Wall Street. The timing was perfect and I made enough money to leave and travel for a year. Then I returned to Wall Street. I balanced the environment of fear and greed by studying weaving.

At some point a Bennington friend asked me to help her with her tax return. She exclaimed that her refund amounted to two months' rent. I was thrilled and decided to study tax law. For the past twenty-five years I have continued the Non-Resident Term tradition by working for ten weeks each winter. Occasionally a Bennington grad drops by and it is as if we are together on campus again.

One of my best memories concerned a Duke graduate who had Mr. Fowlie for Dante as I did. Mr. Fowlie required us to memorize and recite, in class, various cantos. I was too shy to recite in front of the class, but whenever I saw Mr. Fowlie on campus I would tap him on the shoulder and recite. Once something occurred with respect to this graduate's tax return and I said "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura" and he finished the recitation.



continued on page 19

continued from page 18

I have been married for thirty-four years and have wonderful daughter, Ruth, who is in the writing department of *The Conan O'Brian Show*.

We have a house in Vermont about three hours drive north of Bennington. I have a studio (a tiny house in the weeds) where I clean, card, spin, and weave. It is still a surprise when people buy my pillows and rugs.

Thank you, Bennington.



## Jane Berry Vosburgh

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My high school guidance counselor encouraged me—“an unusual student”—to apply to Bennington. I'd had good grades and had my own radio show, wrote for the teenage column in *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, and soloed soprano-wise, district-wise. I was also an officer in student council, volunteered at church, worked summers, et cetera and so forth. Bennington offered me a scholarship but I had to turn it down, as my family still couldn't afford it. I planned night school somewhere, downhearted. Here's proof that there are miracles: Bennington upped their scholarship!



There, I had six roommates in four years, which included a year and a half of single rooms! I have five very best Bennington friends to this day and fondly remember more than a half dozen dear buddies who've died. With my long-lived activities in the Alumnae Association, I've met scads of Bennington girls (and boys) who are absolutely terrific. And Helen Webster Wheelwright '37 remains a darling friend of mine.

Second week of my freshman year I was trading rooms in Welling with Ursie Ruppel Lawder '58 and Wendy Birnbaum '58 (everybody else was at a Community Meeting). Masculine voices boomed the familiar “Anybody want a date?” and we three did. The guy who drove the car had first dibs and I heard him tell his fraternity brothers from RPI, “I want the one with the legs”—ME! Paul and I recently celebrated that 54th “pickup” anniversary. I was pinned freshman year, engaged sophomore year, and was married between junior and senior years. We have two daughters: Susan's an artist and entrepreneur on eBay, and Kay is a merchandising manager for Chico's White and Black.

Bennington College was/is the most beautiful place in the world, with the best food in the world, and small classes that indelibly impressed me with all smallness. Ricky Blake, favorite teacher and favorite counselor, advised me to take dance class so he could see me in a leotard(!). My two-column thesis fireplace-burn-ceremony nearly set a Bingham conflagration. And I was first to discover that Carol Channing '42 would LOVE to raise money for Bennington, starting a very profitable relationship. She told me in the middle 1960s that no one had ever asked her before. And my husband arranged for his company, Alcoa, to donate aluminum to cover buildings and build sculptures.

continued on page 21

continued from page 20

Paul spent 26 years with Alcoa in design while I worked and volunteered and studied and housewifed, and mothered at appropriate times. I loved my life before, during, and after women's liberation. I typed the first minutes of NOW. Paul and I always work(ed) to help fix community problems and have a long list of useful, satisfying activities. Non-Resident Terms put me way ahead for challenging jobs such as Gulf Oil, WQED-TV, Carnegie Museum; mostly writing, research, and public relations. I edited my husband's Van Nostrand Reinhold book, *Commercial Applications of Wind Power*, which used—or perhaps continues—to be in the College library. [It still is! –Ed.]

With some Alcoa technology and a shoestring, we located to Albuquerque where he (and I a bit on the Board) built a manufacturing/erection/maintenance company of 44 employees by 1985 (enormous in NM at the time), which built large vertical-axis wind generators to be placed on the California coast. When Congress voted to eliminate tax credits for alternative energy, our publicly owned business was dead in the water in a day.

Hard times followed: crappy jobs for me, low-or-no paid jobs for Paul; today, at 73, he's the manager of a business development company for minorities. His "hobby" is designing and building smaller VAWT wind-mills, collecting data to bid for grants. These electricity generators would be suitable for supplying power to small housing developments or farms.

Seventy-three is the new fifty-three, I think. I've learned to work out three times weekly; we set up an endowment in Albuquerque for historic preservation and alternative-energy growth. I've slowed down and am not particularly unhappy about it. After too much stuff, I'm proud to participate in the Library of Congress veteran-interviewing project.



I think what I got most out of my Bennington education is my constant search for more information (on everything) and delight from the arts. People to this day tell me I'm too judgmental on a myriad of subjects. My response is that I went to a college that made critical thinking a requirement.

What's all this have to do with Bennington College?  
Just about everything!

## Irene Chipurnoi Williams

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When I was at Bennington there were no core curriculum requirements, so I studied mostly what I loved—literature. Ben Belitt especially, my advisor and instructor for four years, fostered my curiosity, praised my gifts, bestowed kindness and understanding, and modeled for others and me the joyful work of reading, writing, and teaching strenuously. Mr. Belitt—Ben—was the Gold Standard: a lifelong practitioner of literature, he could say as Gertrude Stein said, “aesthetics is the whole of me.” We know from his work that his response to the world was devotional, an act of thankfulness for “these things (that) were here and but the beholder/Wanting.” He ravished us when he read “Spelt From Sibyl’s Leaves” or “This Is Just To Say” or any poem he wanted us to really hear and to know viscerally. I always thought of him as Mr. Belitt, anything else seemed lacking in respect. He inspired awe in me, and gratitude. Except for him, I might not have learned about vocation, might not have chosen a profession that is my work and not just my job. “So you are professing literature!” he said to me on the phone when I called his home number after forty plus years of silence. I am quite sure he didn’t remember me, although he didn’t actually say it. Yet it didn’t matter, I understood, I was one of thousands; and I had already received from him the recognition, support, instruction, and belief (his word) that helped me live my real life.

Since 1982 I have been at the University of San Diego, where I am a Professor of English. The College of Arts & Science at this institution is small, so I conduct my own “Bennington” classes, fostering in my students, I hope, conviction and stamina for their own large projects, whatever those may turn out to be. Once a student told me: “You taught me to stand up in my mind.” I knew then that I was practicing what I learned from studying with Ben—respect for work and for each person’s distinctive intellectual disposition.

As an academic, I have been dismayed for years because of Bennington’s wholesale dismissal of its former literature faculty. I hope someday to read the full story of that debacle; maybe there is extenuating information of which I am unaware. In the meantime, however, I have rotated my love and respect for the institution backward into the past, before this shameful event was perpetrated; an event that does not stay buried, no matter how many awards the College receives, no matter how many students it graduates who know nothing of what happened at Bennington before their arrival. For those in the profession, the stain on the College’s reputation has not come out.

continued on page 23



continued from page 22

I have much to thank Bennington for. Those glorious four years of devotion to learning and to appreciating the natural beauty of the College's setting, its educational principles and values put into practice, the example of others around me. I want to remember a classmate, Malina (Barker Weedman '59), whom I knew only slightly from Howard Nemerov's literature class for entering students. Malina asked questions and Mr. Nemerov was obviously not pleased. She interrupted him when he was thinking and talking. I, on the other hand, responded to his cues. I was silent, listening. I wanted him to think well of me. One day after class I spoke to Malina. "Why do you ask questions, Malina? You see he doesn't like it." "It's how I learn," she replied. I felt as if I had been hit by a brick. She was there to learn. I was there to appear to be intelligent. I have never forgotten her reply and her magnificent example.

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Martha Calhoun Wood

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Joyce Lister Feldstein  
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Judy Harris  
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Barbara Israel Nowak  
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Greta Shapiro  
Katharine Kirkham Turner

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