

**Hollins University
Alumnae Reunion 2010
June 4, 2010**

**Honor Guard Luncheon Remarks
By Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey
Class of 1960**

I don't need to bite into a madeleine to take me back 50 years to our graduation day. Fifty years!
Can you believe it?

For me Proust's "search for lost time" begins not with a cookie but with the memory of the dress I wore that day – a blue silk dress with an empire waist and a discreet flat bow at the bosom. What I remember especially was that Maria Hall was wearing one just like it!

A year earlier Oliver Hailey had seen me in the dress when I walked into the City Room of The Dallas Morning News after my year abroad in Paris, hoping to reclaim the summer job I'd had since high school. Oliver turned to a friend and said, "Do you see that girl in the blue dress? That's the girl I'm going to marry!" And two weeks after graduation he did.

How many of us were serenaded in this very dining room the spring of our senior year with a chorus of "Let's all stand up for ----. She's engaged."

Does that still happen? Probably not with so many young women today going on to graduate school and launching careers right out of college.

Many of us did it the other way around. First came marriage and motherhood then, in our 30s, tentative steps toward a career. I hope we can share all our stories this weekend.

We could probably all write our autobiographies in terms of the clothes we wore at key moments in our lives. Many of you will remember a book by Ilene Beckerman called "Love, Loss and What I Wore" that did just that. But did you know that book was published by our very own Shannon Ravenel?

Last year a stage version of the book, with additional material by Nora and Delia Ephron, opened in New York, and two nights ago I saw it in Los Angeles. I just loved telling all my friends that a former classmate of mine from Hollins had midwived the book into the world.

I don't know how many of you felt as I did as a student when I would see older alums returning to campus for their reunions. I would think to myself, "I'll never do that! I want to look ahead, not back. I don't want to be one of those old women who lives in the past."

But a funny thing happens in mid-life as your children grow up and leave home – especially if you find yourself living alone for the first time, as I did at 55 when my husband died. You look back on your life and collect fragments from the different chapters and try to reform them into some kind of coherent narrative.

My husband died in 1993 and in 1995 I returned to Hollins for our 35th Reunion – but it was my first. I couldn't believe how at home I felt, taking up conversations begun 35 or more years earlier. I couldn't wait to come back for our 40th. And this one has been on my calendar for the past decade.

Some years ago I was asked to speak on Founder's Day. I looked at all those young faces and realized they were looking at me just the way I used to look at those older alums coming back to campus.

My advice to them that day was to get in touch with their inner old ladies. To start speaking their minds and standing up for their beliefs. I quoted Gloria Steinem who said, "The feminist movement is the only revolutionary movement in history whose members get more radical as they age."

This has certainly been my experience. I missed the sixties when I was in my twenties. I was too focused on being a wife and mother. But in my sixties I started marching – against war as a

means of achieving peace and in support of equal rights for everyone, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. I get more outspoken every year. Just wait till our 100th Reunion!

I first got in touch with my inner old lady in my thirties when I started writing about my outspoken Texas grandmother. And I was further inspired when I returned to Hollins in 1998 as Writer-in-Residence and began writing a series of stories for the Alumnae Magazine on friendships begun at Hollins in the 1920s and 1930s that had lasted a lifetime. At that time I met some remarkable women, at least two of whom are turning 100 this year and still leading amazingly rich and fulfilling lives.

But this weekend is not about getting in touch with our inner old ladies. They're being outed even as we speak. We're here to reclaim our inner 21-year-olds, the girls we were when we graduated in 1960, eager and excited and more than a little scared of what lay ahead. We must bring those young girls and indeed all our former selves along as we embark on the adventure of aging for which our generation of women, as we have done in every decade since graduation, is making new rules as we go.

Do you remember the last verse of that song we used to sing: "Where oh where are the grand old seniors? Lost now in the wide, wide world."

We may have felt lost at times – I certainly did – but one way or another we found ourselves and now here we are in Act Three or as the French, who always have a better word for it, say, "le troisieme age."

To be continued...