

**Hollins University
Alumnae Reunion 2008
May 31, 2008**

**50th Reunion Remarks
By Wyndham Robertson
Class of 1958**

Isn't it wonderful that so many members of the class of 1958 are here today, and more than two-dozen husbands! We had the most superb supper last night at the home of Sybil and Bob Fishburn, who can't seem to get enough of us - thank heaven! Thank you Sibby and Bob, for being the Queen and King of our Reunion, every time. In her spare time, Sybil dreamed up and sewed up these aprons we are wearing - some of us are wearing one for the first time in several decades. We are grateful to you, Sybil and Bob, and I'm sure it pleases you to know we'll be back in five years! Well, maybe not quite THIS many of us.

Some other people are making this reunion special, including too many to name who reside weekdays from eight to five in Cromer Bergman House, better known to us as Tinker Tea House. You know who you are, and we are grateful. I must also thank members of our class who nearly killed themselves, either lifting the last bill from your wallet - and you know who you are, Kitty Clark Stroud - or getting you to tell all your secrets and assembling the remarkable memory book, Hemmie Sheffield Gilmore, or hosting the planning committee ages ago on Maryland's eastern shore, Elizabeth Vann Hobbs and Worth, Jennie Fowlkes Hyatt and John, Anne Payne Wood and Barry. Polly Ketner Garnett, the mighty co-chair for our 50th, called me about seven years ago - at least it seems that far back - and asked if I would give our class speech. Figuring the odds were high that I would not survive to this day, I readily agreed.

I'm sort of joking about that, but the sad truth is that 37 of our classmates did not live to see this day, including our talented, funny, indomitable, and much beloved senior class president Ruth Dickerson Bell. Liz Hobbs has been speaking with the families of our lost classmates, and has arranged a special memorial service for them in the chapel tomorrow at 8:30 a.m. I hope you will come if you can. When Liz emailed me the list of names, I found that I could conjure up a visual image for almost all of them. A few were among my closest friends. None closer really than

Anne Gregory, who in 1954 as a freshman I thought was perhaps the scariest human being I had ever met. It was not just that she was foreign (from Southern Canada), but also she had gone to prep school and I had not. I was terrified too, though less so, of all you St. Catherine's girls in our class. Anne Gregory had a dry wit that was like a Stealth bomber: it seemed to come out of nowhere and it could destroy you, or make you die laughing.

Anne was here at Hollins for our 25th reunion, although reunions weren't really her thing. We were playing tennis on back campus, partners against superior athletes, probably Temple Forsberg Martin and another jock. Anne, always extremely competitive, seemed out of sorts after I missed a couple of easy shots. She loped over to me wearing a look I had come to know though not always to read. Pointing skyward beyond the president's house, she deadpanned: "Were these mountains here when we were students?"

This wonderful line helps move me to another thought. I've been looking back over the events of our four years at Hollins, 1954 to 1958, and it is striking what a seismic time it was in the history of Civil Rights in our country. After the Supreme Court struck down segregated schools in 1954, we were here in school when Ike sent the army to enforce integration in Little Rock, and we were here when in other places in the South resistance to integration got ugly. I was talking with our classmate Jane Parke Batten about this when she was here giving the commencement address two weekends ago. Jane recalls that we just weren't that aware of what was happening in the outside world, at least not by comparison with students today. And of course we were supposed to be The Silent Generation, meaning sort of passive and not really involved. Those mountains were here, but they didn't move us then the way they do now.

That might have been because we had so many rules to keep track of. No shorts on front campus, no smoking on front campus, only on back campus. Under "Standards of Dress" in the Student Handbook this was one of many entries under the heading: "Skirts *must* be worn at all times in the following places: The dining room...there will be no socks and loafers worn during the evening meal; no kerchiefs, rolled hair, or raincoats over shorts and blue jeans at any time." We also had to wear skirts to class, which I don't even remember. (I probably wore crinolines!) The dating rules were a masterwork of complexity: all students may date on Saturday until 1 a.m. and

on Sunday until midnight. Underclassmen could only date during the week until 7 p.m. although under certain conditions most of them could date once a week until 11 OR Friday until midnight. HOWEVER, if your date were from more than 150 miles away, you could date every night! Temple was the only girl I knew who actually dated to the full limits of these laws. I myself led a nun's existence.

One thing I wish is that smoking had been banned entirely. No doubt, more of our classmates would be here today if it had.

The great surprise to me was re-reading the old handbooks about our drinking rules, which were far more lenient than today's laws allow. Of course, drinking was not allowed on campus. And it was not allowed within a twenty-mile radius of campus, UNLESS you were in a private home or had a chaperone OR - get this! - a male escort. Otherwise, utterly without respect to age, the rule outside that 20-mile radius was simply: "Drinking at all times and in all places is to be done with discretion and moderation." As I recall, that system worked just fine. Binge drinking had not yet been invented, perhaps because it did not need to be.

Of course the minute we graduated, we immediately got married, unless you were hopelessly out of it like me. I had lunch before graduation with some impressive young women from this year's senior class at Hollins, and they could only name a couple of classmates who were engaged. There is certainly no panic to marry these days - but there are other anxieties. The choices women have today have added a layer of complexity to these young lives. Hollins, through its faculty, is helping our students address the complexity through heightened emphases on global experience and cultural understanding, on workplace internships, on environmental sustainability, on women's leadership, and - while this is nothing new - on creativity across the curriculum.

Our class has lived though, been at the vanguard of, a revolution in expectations for women. And I'm proud of what we've achieved. I look around at our classmates and I see people like Florence Fearington who made it in the "man's world" of money management, and was a star. While also a wife. I see leaders like Nancy Nash Campbell who has held the highest volunteer

role in Historic Preservation in the United States. I see people like my roommate Alice Burroughs Culler, who lost her husband, her money, and (temporarily) her health, and still managed to raise four fine children while establishing and running an exemplary day-care operation for old people. I also like to brag that we may have been the first class in Hollins history to crown a May Queen, happily I should add, whose virginity was highly suspect.

Other classes will be glad to know I am not going to name all the other wonders of the Class of 1958. It was not my assignment to prove we are the finest class in the 166-year history of Hollins, though of course I could. It is just my job to let you know that our theme - still stirring - has plenty of meaning, and that we are going to be stirring for many years to come. Class of 1968, we'll see you at your fiftieth. Class of '78, we'll see you too. Class of '83 - in 2033? - we'll try to steal your thunder as only a feisty bunch of Hollins nonagenarians can.

Levavi Oculos? Means eye-lifts. We'll be around, still stirring and looking even younger.