

COMMENCEMENT
AND
REUNIONS



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Editors

Mally Cox
John Geesman

Publisher

Paul Hagstrum

Advertising

Rob Steinbaum

Production

Flip Cheron

Cover

A view of Harkness
Tower through trees
by John J. L. Hunter,
a graduating senior

Thanks to

Doug Garrison
George Guernsey
Richard Lieberman

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Published by the



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The title of our magazine originates from an earlier NEWS venture, NUMBER-one, which appeared Princeton weekend, 1970. The second issue was obviously a long time in getting off the ground, but as NUMBER-two we definitely did try harder.

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First Women Graduate



By MALLY COX

They came. The question is, did they conquer?

June has always been a month of reflection as seniors pack up their memories of four years of Yale. Old term papers are reread and discarded. Co-op boxes bulge with books that probably won't be read again. Lost trivia miraculously reappears under dustchoking beds. And always there is the speculation of what could have been.

The reminiscences of Yale's first graduating women are peculiar that way, for simply coming to Yale was dramatized by the novelty, the media, and a deeply entrenched male tradition.

Are they glad they chose Yale? In the midst of bare rooms and final drafts of senior papers, those that still remained shared their thoughts.

Many, especially those who came from all-women colleges, felt that being at Yale had changed their career expectations.

As one Wellesley transfer said, "Here the pressure for a ring by the spring is not so evident. Not that I would have felt that way if I had stayed at Wellesley—I wouldn't have, it's that I feel normal here. At Yale, it's where you're going to law school that's important. That's unusual."

Some felt that the University had not provided the career counseling that it should. One Smith transfer who will be in the teaching program at Harvard next year was quite bitter about it.

"I was living in a shell until senior year," she said, "oblivious to what came next. Then when it mattered, there was very little guidance in terms of shaping what I'd want to do.

"You need help, advice, suggestions," she continued. "It's very important. I feel very strongly about that," she said.

If nothing else, firm convictions is a common denominator of these graduating women.

One senior who has especially strong ideas is Chrissy Citron, a

transfer from Vassar who will be attending Boston University Law School next year.

She says, "The fighting cause of all my four years of college has been to counter the ivory tower."

While at Vassar, she worked for the Model Cities program for the controversial Legal Service Bureau on housing. Dissatisfied with the Vassar Political Science program that lacked enough courses on the urban problems, Chrissy came to Yale.

By the end of her first year, Chrissy had set up a University-wide recycling campaign. The drive focuses on gathering aluminum cans, newspapers and clear-colored bottles.

There have been other innovations affected by this graduating class. Cathy Bennett, for instance, an English major who will work for VISTA next year, started the girls' tennis team. "It was hard," Cathy commented. "I was annoyed that we got so little support. It is not officially a club sport. In fact, it's officially nothing."

Cathy speculated that it will be a couple of years before the girls' tennis team is given varsity status, or even any funding. "In fact," said Cathy, "even the tennis balls had to come through contributions from generous alumnae."

Why has there been so little support for girls' tennis? "It is partly bureaucracy, because the University budgets a year or two ahead," Cathy said. "But partly it was because male Yale didn't know how athletic the girls would be."

"In a way, that's good," she continued, "because we really worked for the ones we wanted. But it also shows the male Yale prejudice that women shouldn't be competitive."

"It is not verbally overt," she concluded, "it's in their minds."

Cathy can laugh at the difficulties she had in setting up the tennis team, but other graduating women are more belligerent about their experiences with male Yale. Said one, "When we were circulating petitions about sex discrimination, one boy said the only position suitable for women was supine. He wasn't joking. I almost strangled him."

Most are not so adamant. Many have simply found Yale a good place to be and have spent an inconspicuous and happy two years here. Such a one

is Jane Hunter, an American Studies major, who plans to teach in Hong Kong next year.

"I came here because the faculty I admired were coming here," Jane said, "It was to get away from Cornell, too. And of course, it would be hard to turn Yale down."

"I was afraid of this Lady Charity Bountiful stuff," she grinned. "Beaming girls bringing femininity to Yale. Luckily that was dispelled."

Jane was particularly impressed, as were many, with the residential college system. "I think it allows people to do more diverse things," she commented. "You're allowed to be a dilettante. I never would have acted in *Midsummer Night's Dream* if it hadn't been at the college level."

"Coming from Cornell," Jane continued, "which was very chaotic and challenging just in its physical make-up, to Yale with its greater security, was like a step back to safety."

Like many others, Jane felt that there are dangers in this safety.

"It's not always the best to be so protected," she mused. "Outside, you have to gain your own security instead of having it created for you."

"Most people consider themselves special here and are so treated. I wonder how we'll cope with the nobodiness we'll have to face outside."

There will be other graduating women asking that same question as commencement becomes a reality.

Many are acutely aware of the differences between the safe, moat-surrounded Yale they leave and the new lives they are just beginning. Perhaps it will be helpful to remember all the expectations and doubts they had in coming to Yale. In that light, maybe the unknowns they now face won't seem so unconquerable.

