

Fifty Years Later: A Promise Fulfilled, in True Western Style

On May 6, 2006, Catherine Suzanne “Sue” McLaughlin Montgomery ’56 did Miss Peabody proud. She graduated! True, she marched into Kumler Chapel with the Western Program class of 2006 rather than the Western College for Women class of 1956, but in many ways the 50-year delay made the occasion all the more meaningful.

As she wrote to her friends and family — who attended some 22 strong — “If I had graduated 50 years ago we all would not be meeting on this day Many of you would have missed the ceremony, the reunion of family and friends and the celebration.”

She told her story in this letter to Miami’s President David Hodge:

October 26, 2006

Dear President Hodge,

Last summer you sent a letter to alumni and you invited us to share some stories with you. I kept looking at your letter and looking at it and until this day I had not responded. Well, in going over my desktop I again saw your letter. I am responding. Just as I received my degree a tag tardy, so I am also tardy in my correspondence.

I am Catherine Suzanne Montgomery, and in May I came to Oxford with an entourage of 22 family and friends to attend my commencement at Western’s Kumler Chapel. I was 72 years old and 50 years late.

I left Western in January of 1956 to marry my sweetheart. I had at that time promised my father that I would one day finish my degree. The years piled up and my husband’s education took priority and he graduated from medical school in 1961. So my energies were spread over his years of practice and a full life the seven children brought. However, when we and

the children were older, I began to investigate the possibility of finishing my degree. At Oral Roberts University I made the most progress; however, we moved to Illinois before I finished! But we did move to a university town, Charleston, home of Eastern Illinois University. I petitioned for my degree and was accepted into their program. I thought I just might make it there.

Oh, no, my husband had a stroke and we again had to move. This time to Leesburg, Florida, so he could be in warm weather. As you must have guessed, no degree completed.

In the fall of 2005, one of my daughters-in-law, who is a Western graduate through Miami’s interdisciplinary studies program, said, “Have you inquired or petitioned Miami about granting you your degree? You have more than fulfilled the graduate requirements.” With her encouragement I did contact Dean Gracie and with the proper paperwork, transcripts, etc., an advocate to speak for me, I received the news March 23, 2006, that I was accepted for graduation in May.

*The weekend in Oxford was a promise fulfilled and in the presence of my children and many grandchildren, I followed at the end of the line of fellow graduates, lit my candle and Dean Gracie placed in my hand the diploma cover. With the final circle and song of “Will the Circle Be Unbroken,” finally I could lift my eyes and whisper, **Hello, Father, I did it!***

Catherine Montgomery

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Two Western grads: Sue Montgomery ’56, ’06 and daughter-in-law Allison Schweser Montgomery ’93

The Meily Society, named for distinguished alumna and benefactress **Olivia Meily Brice, Class of 1866**, was established in 2001 to honor our **Wise Able Vital Elder** alumnae who have celebrated their 50th reunion and to recognize and encourage the knowledge and energy they bring to the WCAA. “The Anchor” is a periodic newsletter published exclusively for its members.

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Thanks for the Memories ... International Students at Western

President **Herrick Young** is credited with establishing the “international plan” in 1953-54. However, Western not only welcomed foreign students to Oxford but also sent her daughters abroad long before that. Miss Peabody’s “girls” went to China, Japan, Persia and India as missionaries, and in 1902, Suzuno Yukuyama, from Tokyo, entered Western as the first truly “foreign” student. A few Meily Society members — U.S. and international — share their memories.

A special arrangement to bring young women from Chile to Western began in the 1920s and lasted well into the ’60s. Through the efforts of Romance languages professor **Lille Howe** and Dr. J. H. MacLean of the University of Chile-Santiago, teaching assistantships were offered to one or two Chilean students each year.

Dorothy Hopple Buchholz ’34 remembers that when she was at Western, **Rosa Huber-Wastavino** came from Chile and stayed four years as a student assistant to Professor Howe. Another student Dorothy remembers came from a very different situation: After only one year, **Kate Koch-Weser** returned to her home in pre-war Germany to be with her family.

A few years later, recalls **Bea Low Notley ’42**, French exchange students **Monique Damoiseau** and **Dina Baumgardner** could *not* go home during breaks because WWII had begun.

President Philip Henderson (1945-51) was particularly interested in furthering intercultural relations. Scholarships went to countries in Europe, South America and Asia, and according to Western College historian Narka Nelson, “in the years following [WWII], 15 to 20 foreign students were enrolled annually.”

Maria Urueta Wells ’46 was one of those students. From Barranquilla, Colombia, Maria came to the U.S., knowing “some English as I had studied English and French for several years.” She first attended Wilson College, in Chambersburg, PA, then transferred to Western on a scholarship from the Institute of International Education. She met her husband, John — a Miami man — on a blind date to a football game. Married now for 53 years, she says that is “my best memory of Western College. I value the time I spent at Western. I am proud I received my B.A. there, where both professors and staff were helpful instruments in my education.”



Foreign student shows joined sophomore and senior stunts on the entertainment calendar. The shows became so popular that they were opened to the public.

International Relations Club, organized in 1937 and active through the ’40s and early ’50s, promoted “understanding of other countries” through discussion and ethnic dinners — many of them hosted by **Dr. Frank Esterquest** and his wife, Bonnie.

Classmates from ’46, **Betty Buell Baldwin** and **Marty Hall Wedeman** attended some of the Esterquests’ dinners and wonder now “how they managed those events in the days of rationing.” Marty adds, “It is typical of the close and caring attitudes of the faculty we knew so well.”

She thinks back to fellow sociology students **Sophie Relson** (a White Russian whose family had left the most eastern cities in Russia) and **Hilda Beer** (“whose roots were in Hitler-conquered French-German lands”) — not as refugees, which they were, but “simply friends who sat next to us in Alumnae Hall and agnized as we prepared for comprehensives.”

Nadia Kelada ’54 recently retired as president of the Santa Barbara Rotary Club and now lives in Palm Desert, California. She has fond memories of the short time she spent at Western in 1952-53 before she was called home to Cairo, Egypt. Her deep regret is that she just missed President Young, whom she had known since childhood.

We will celebrate Western’s international students at Reunion 2007. Please come, June 15-17! And remember: We want your memories for the pages of “The Anchor.”

Montgomery: continued from page 1

Clearly, President Hodge was impressed; clearly he recognized Sue's "Western" qualities. He responded to her in part: "I have received many wonderful stories from alums ... but I don't believe any story has more amazed me, and delighted me, than yours. ... I greatly admire your tenacity and pride, and now can share in the joy of your achievement. ... your commencement last spring was a great moment for Miami University — and the fine traditions of Western — as well as for you and your family."

Sue's story — not surprisingly — does not stop there. A theater major with a minor in music, she never lacked for a creative outlet. Choosing to pursue her music (with seven children ... "there was enough theater at home"), she sang semi-professionally as the family moved from Naperville, Illinois, to Tulsa, then back to Charleston, Illinois, took those college courses along the way and was at work on a final paper at Eastern Illinois U. when they moved to Leesburg in 1995.

Since then, Sue has discovered and exploited new talents, writing and illustrating historical fiction for young people. The result is a series of stories set on a turn-of-the-century Ohio River sternwheeler with characters drawn from experiences of relatives who live along the river. The first two books fulfilled the "senior paper" requirement for her Bachelor of Philosophy degree from Western. She has now published four (a fifth is forthcoming) in "The LaBelle Series" (after the riverboat *Belle of Louisville*) and occasionally even dons period costume to give programs contrasting life then and now.

Another member of the **Class of '56** postponed her Western graduation, earning her degree the hard way — but earning it! **Sally Derby Miller** also left school senior year to be married. But after 17 years and six children, she returned to school, completed her course work and senior project, fulfilled her student teaching requirements, and graduated — with honors and the Senior English Prize — in Western's last all-female class, on June 10, 1973.

And there's more. Sue is currently considering a contract with Sixth Star Entertainment to give motivational talks on cruise ships — it would involve developing six different 30-minute talks along the lines of "How I Did What I Did." No problem, she'd tell her audiences. Just get started writing, talking ...

From Scrapbook & Album

Thanks to Sandra Merrigan for sending in these recollections of her mother, **Nancy Martin McEldowney '30**, who died in September 2006.

A talented singer and pianist with, says Sandra, "a wonderful sense of humor," Nancy was well known for her eight-year career (1938-1946) as a featured performer on *Don McNeil's Breakfast Club*.



She studied voice at Western, broke in to radio in her hometown of Wheeling, West Virginia, and sang on KDKA in Pittsburgh before moving to Chicago and the *Breakfast Club*. Later on, she moved to Los Angeles, appeared on TV with Steve Allen and Garry Moore, made several records and wrote a number of songs.

From the 1942 "Breakfast Club Family Album":

Nancy's specialty is her own interpretation of popular songs with interpolated recitations which she writes herself. Perhaps the most requested song she sings is her famous Christmas version of "Santa, Bring My Mommy Back to Me." When she discusses the latest in fashion hints, the cast says, "Let's get fancy with Nancy."

She is a very attractive brunette with brown eyes and curly hair. She has a smile that's as fresh as a spring morning. She weighs 115 lbs. in her nylon feet, likes red dresses, men, new shoes, men, composing songs, men, Red Cross work, men, good books, and men.

To view more pictures and hear song clips, go to: www.richsamuels.com/com/nbcmmb/breakfastclub/1942/nancymartin.html.

What's in your family album — a photo? a clipping? Share it with "Anchor" readers!

An Afternoon for the Ages

Trustee emerita Jane Alexander Durrell '47 offered to share this lovely vignette with Bulletin readers. We thought our Wise Able Vital Elder "Anchor" readers deserved a preview.



Frances, front and center, at Reunion 2004, honoring Trustees Emeritae. She is joined by Jane (on her right) and other admirers from the Class of '47.

The June when **Frances Hall King '29** graduated from Western College I was not yet 3 years old. We couldn't, then, have spent an afternoon together to the pleasure of both, but on New Year's Day this year we did just that.

By the time we actually knew each other, our shared college was gone, but as board members of the newly empowered Western College Alumnae Association, we had common concerns and Frances — to us of a slightly younger generation — seemed in her frank, smart, sensible feminism exactly what we would like to grow up to be. We may or may not have made it, but Frances, I am happy to report, is still as always.

The Hendersonville, North Carolina, retirement community where she has lived for many years is at the far end of Carolina Village Road, immediate right turn from exit 49B, I-26. I was on my way home from the coast and had realized I could stop to visit Frances, whom I hadn't seen in a few years. Would she know me? 1929 graduates had to be deep into their 90s. Was she even still living? So at the desk I asked, nervously, for my old friend. "She may be in the medical wing," I said. "No, her son's there, she's in her apartment," the attendant told me briskly and called Frances to say I

was coming. She was in the hallway waiting for me, firmly on her own two feet, as clear of eye and mind as ever.

I convinced her to go into Asheville for lunch with me, and in the bright sunshine of the first day of the year we drove through that beautiful landscape ("Oh, I'm having a lark!" she said), went to a coffee shop/restaurant filled with young people (Frances, from her years in academe, caught the atmosphere like a person coming home), and talked from start to finish. Of Western and the Western College Program (What does this latest blow mean? Was it ever practical to encourage unconventional majors, in the face of education's huge costs? wondered this veteran of higher education), of Edith Wharton ("When I think of what she had to overcome, to do what she did"), of the talk she would be making soon on Robert Frost ("I knew him when he was young, thatch of blond hair, didn't look like a poet ... and then later I knew him at Bread Loaf"), of Pisgah National Forest, which I would drive through later that day (her husband, whose career was with the Fish and Wildlife Department, had helped to establish it), troubles of aging ("I'm 98. It's harder to do things, and short term memory goes. Exasperating."), and any number of other things. Conversation never flagged.

Some things stay the same. I still want to grow up to be like Frances.

Tribute to Edgar Stillman Kelley

Honoring the 150th anniversary of the birth of **Edgar Stillman Kelley**, a celebration will be held in the Center for Performing Arts Souers Recital Hall on the Miami Campus on Sunday, March 25.



Kelley, America's first artist-in-residence, was brought to Western College in 1910. Happily ensconced with his wife in the Stillman-Kelley cottage on campus, he composed many of his greatest musical works here.

The event will feature a lecture on Kelley's life by Dr. Charles Freeman of Palm Beach Atlantic University and a performance of selected works by pianist and MU professor Siok Lian Tan. The public is invited.

“We Sing, Alma Mater, to You”

That last line from the chorus of our original Western Alma Mater could aptly be applied to the post-Western life of **Beth Shirk Bevan '45**. Beth made music all the while she was at Western and has continued to sing its praises ever since, giving not only her talent but her time, energy and financial support.



Beth, June 2004

A music major, Beth played piano, organ, flute and chimes. As an unofficial college carillonneur, she was called upon to play the chimes for 15 minutes many mornings, summoning students and faculty to daily chapel. Years later she commented in a local newspaper interview, “You train yourself not to listen to the music while you’re playing. The feedback delay would throw you off completely.”

Beth didn’t stop there. Always a faithful Reunion attendee, she assumed the role of music director through the late '70s and '80s — putting the alumnae choir through its paces at Sunday chapel services. And after the Heath Chime was restored and placed in the commemorative Molyneux-Western Tower in 1978, a new feature was added to the program. As people left Kumler at the conclusion of the service, Beth took her place at the console to play a nostalgic concert on the chime, the carillonneur once more.

Beth is one of many alumnae for whom Western is a family matter. Two of her three daughters are Western alums: **Annette Bevan Gallagher '69** and **Lynn Bevan Klein '75**. Extending the legacy one generation farther and linking “old” and “new” Westerns, Annette’s daughter, **Megan Gallagher '02**, graduated from the Western Program. Early in his career as a musician and songwriter, son Alex Bevan played a concert on the Miami campus that was reviewed in the Fall '79 *Bulletin*. Wrote then-editor Dixie Golden, “Children of Western alumnae benefit indirectly from the Western education of their mothers. Witness Alex Bevan We know that

Beth’s own Western-kindled interest in music sparked Alex’s talent.”

All the while balancing her various roles as homemaker, school teacher, piano and flute instructor, church organist, and community volunteer, Beth remained ever loyal to her alma mater. She happily undertook every task Western asked of her — whether it be transporting prospective students to campus, editing *Bulletin* class notes, hosting Cleveland area reunions, participating in major gift campaigns, or serving on the WCAA board of trustees (1978-84). Plus, the aforementioned years as choir director and carillonneur at annual reunions!



Beth, in Kumler Chapel, directing the Alumnae Choir at Reunion '78

It is no surprise that Beth’s name is on every donor list, from special campaigns such as the solicitation to restore the Heath Chime, to Reunion gifts, to Annual Giving, and most recently, the Narka Nelson Circle. Beth has made arrangements for a gift to the WCAA through her estate, so she can keep the spirit of *her* Western alive in perpetuity!

And, *that* is sweet music indeed ...

If you would like more information on how to make a gift to the WCAA through your estate and join Beth Bevan as a member of the Narka Nelson Circle, please complete the enclosed card and send it to us today!

Western College Alumnae Association, Inc.
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A WAVE from our Meily Society members to YOU!
Reunion Luncheon, June 17, 2006

Coming up: Reunion Luncheon, June 16, 2007