

## Reunion 2008

### Reunions: Unique, Universal Memories of SJC

*During Reunion 2008, Lois Lipps Edwards '58 delivered remarks on behalf of her Golden Jubilee Class. Following are excerpts from her talk.*

“ . . . In gathering memories I relied upon three r's—not the ones we learned in first grade, but **R**esearch, **R**ummaging and **R**emembering.



Do you remember your first Reunions years ago? We were new brides, new mothers, newly professed sisters, new in new careers. We looked at the golden jubilarians and knew we would never be that old—not in 100 hundred years. Now here we are, the golden girls of 1958! Through my rummaging I came upon the *Alumnae Quarterly* for spring 1958 and found the photo of the golden jubilarians for that year. There were five attending. What year did they graduate from St. Joseph College? 1908! In the entire issue of that *Quarterly* there was hardly anyone pictured who did not wear a hat—or a lovely white cornet! Who among us here owns a hat—one that isn't a beach hat or a sun visor—or maybe a red hat!

My research produced a renewed appreciation for the remarkable women who made possible our education at St. Joseph College. We just presented to the Daughters of Charity our contribution to repay in some small way the benefits that we received years after Mother Seton traveled to Emmitsburg and started her first school. When I think of Mother Seton, I think of her as a saint for all. She was a daughter who knew the loss of a parent in early life; she was a stepdaughter; she was a protestant and a convert to Catholicism. She was a wife, a widow, and a mother. She was a religious sister.

I think we tend to think of Mother Seton most often in her role as the foundress of the Sisters of Charity in the United States, who started the first Catholic school in this country; but she was first and foremost a mother, not only to her religious followers but to her own dear children. She faced a dilemma shared by so many mothers today. Would her vocation, her job as educator, her ministry to the sick and poor interfere with what she deemed to be her first obligation, her obligation to her five children?

In her own words: “If at any period the duties that I am engaged in should interfere with those I owe to them, I have solemnly engaged with our good Bishop Carroll, as well as my own conscience, to give the darlings their right and to prefer their advantage to everything.” Obviously, she worked things out . . .

My remembering led me to many interesting conversations and communications. When I asked a member of the class of '69 (who happens to be my sister) what she would like to hear if she were about to listen to a reunion banquet speech. “Reminiscences,” she told me. Memories. That is what Reunion is all about. We have at this Reunion alumnae from five decades, and I've

spoken to alumnae who were on campus in each of those five decades. Our memories are unique and they are universal.

I daresay all of us remember the thrill and anxiety each of us felt as we stepped onto the campus that very first time as a college girl—we called ourselves girls back then. We can remember the beauty of the mountains, getting to know the girls across the way or down the hall. Those girls were to become our lifelong friends—though we didn't realize it at the time. I wonder if my classmates remember—or if any other classes had the same experience—that very first night in the dorm, amazing as it seems in today's world, we slept with our dorm doors open. As it was still warm that first September night, our windows were open too. During the night the wind arose, and for hours we were kept awake (as if we were able to sleep anyway) by the noise of slamming doors all over Seton hall.

We can remember not being allowed to enter the chapel in sleeveless attire. An alumna from the '30s remembers that if they were wearing short sleeves, they were provided elastic net sleeves to cover their elbows. She also remembers having to be inspected by the Sisters before attending a function at the Mount. The bloomer gym suits of the '30s thirties, complete with long cotton stockings, must have been stunning.

Our dining room memories include required attendance at all weekday meals. We sat at assigned tables, which afforded us the opportunity to get to know members of other classes. I discovered then that round tables make for the friendliest mealtimes. All of that changed when we returned junior year to find cafeteria service for our meals. As I talked with an alumnae Sister from the '40s, I learned that dining room memories for her include the effect that wartime rationing had on their menus.

I was interested in hearing how wartime invaded the St. Joseph campus. Sister helped me out. As the Mount boys left to join the military, the Navy moved in with what was known as the V-12, a Navy educational program. Tea dances were held most Sundays. The girls watched the newly installed mailboxes for letters with an APO return address . . . V-E day was celebrated with a High Mass. Sister also remembered that one of her 1947 classmates had a pilot's license, and another lucky girl had her boyfriend pick her up in his private plane, which he landed in a field across from campus.

We alumnae of the '50s were privileged to spend our high school and college years in a relatively peaceful world. As close as our college experience got to war involved general Eisenhower. He was President Eisenhower then. As he returned from Washington to his Gettysburg farm to recuperate from a heart attack, he was greeted on Route 15 by the entire student body of St. Joseph College--in full academic attire.

During the '60s a contest was held at Christmastime to determine the best hall decoration. The winner was one with a Vietnam War theme—a reminder that once again our world was at war.

The '70s have their special memories, some of which I learned from a 1972 yearbook-- candlelight marches, moveable phone-booth pranks, 100 in the infirmary during the first few week of school. But all of us remember that '70s April announcement. How could we believe that St. Joseph College was closing? Close it did, but it didn't die. All of us here are proof that St. Joseph college lives on. It lives in us and, through us, in our children, our students, and the lives of all we touch.

Not long after I graduated, I worked for insurance company in San Francisco. My boss got a kick out of telling people that I had graduated from an eastern finishing school. We did wear hats and white gloves; we learned the proper way to eat fresh fruit at the table and how to pour tea. We learned the finishing touches of etiquette; but the real finish that we took from St. Joseph College was the intangibles. We learned the value of an education, the blessings of our faith. We learned loyalty, discipline, and the value of friendship. We learned to appreciate the sacrifices others made for us.

During these Reunion days we've caught up with each other's lives; we've remembered our long-ago lives together. During our daisy chain ceremony in the spring of 1958, Miss Julia Christie, an alumna and a teacher who was so dear to many of us, spoke to us, the new alumnae of St. Joe's, of what she called a treasury of painting and music—the stone house at sundown; the avenue in autumn; the flowering trees of a campus spring; the breathtaking sunsets; Virgo Potens guarding the Valley; the chapel at benediction; the bird symphonies in the sunken garden; your college mates singing Christmas carols or the alma mater . . .

Take these old memories. Add to them the new. And cherish all.