

CHAPTER LXVIII

WELLESLEY COLLEGE

And, so, after a wonderful summer spent at Brookfield, Connecticut, at the summer music school then conducted by Herbert W. Greene, studying voice, Ruth entered Wellesley in the fall of 1922.

George was in his second year at Harvard Law School so we had two years together in Boston. And what fun!

At that time there was dorm-dancing every Saturday night in two of the dormitories (alternating each week). Frequently on Saturday afternoons George would call up and say, "There are some men who would like to come out to dance. Do you think you could get some girls?" And Ruth did. When the hour arrived, the maid would come to Ruth's room and say, "A gentleman to see you Miss Parlin." Before Ruth could collect her things, the maid would return with "There are two gentlemen to see you, Miss Parlin." And then frequently (until she got accustomed to the idea) she would come flying up with consternation all over her face and say, "Miss Parlin, I fear there has been some mistake. There are eight men down there asking for you!"

Chaperonage rules in that day were very strict and Ruth was the envy of many because she had had George made her official chaperon and stayed many nights at 54 Garden Street, the only girl in a house full of men. We could not even begin to enumerate all of the good times we had during those two years, so we must suffice it to mention shows at the Copley Theater, Operas, dinner at the "Seville", scallops at "Ye Olde Oyster Shop", steak and strawberry shortcake at Durgin Parks and, last but not least - Chinese food at Joy Hung Low's.

At the end of Sophomore Year, Howard came up from New York to return home with Ruth. George accompanied us, officially as chaperone. We took the Merchants and Miners Boat from Boston to Philadelphia. We had gorgeous weather and we sat out on deck in the evening singing and playing (George had his banjo along). After all had gone to bed, the boys overheard some women talking outside their stateroom. One woman said, "Can you figure out the relationship between those two men and that girl who are always together?" and the other one replied, "No, I can't. She seems so fond of them both."

Perhaps it would be well to insert a bit about the academic side lest those who read should get the mistaken notion that Wellesley in that day was all social.

There had been a mix-up in Ruth's College Board Exams, so that it was necessary for her to utilize a credit in Harmony from the Hyperion School of Music. This meant that she entered an advance class in Harmony (having had none for five years), the only Freshman in a class of Juniors and Seniors. That meant work. However, Mr. Mac (that is, Mr. H. C. MacDougall, head of the Music Department) was an old dear and pulled her through with a creditable mark.

Another irregularity in her college career came from the fact that, according to the college curriculum, a student was not allowed to study more than one "practical music". Ruth wanted to study both voice and piano but they would not let her. So she solved the problem by studying piano at Wellesley (under Prof. Clarence G. Hamilton) and going into Boston twice a week to the New England Conservatory, where she studied voice with Mr. Percy Fenton Hunt. Of course it took four times as much time to do it that way as it would to have studied at Wellesley, but rules are rules and

must be obeyed! As may be guessed, Music was her major study and with but one exception, she took every course in the department that was offered at that time. Later she studied organ in place of piano but returned to the piano after her accident when she was unable to use her legs for the organ pedalling.

This accident referred to occurred in February of her Sophomore year. George had brought Karl Gibbon and Buck Kellon out for dorm-dancing that night, but it was such a perfect night that we decided to take a few slides on Tower Court Hill before going to the dance. We had taken several but decided upon one last slide before going in. As Buck and Ruth started down they jokingly shouted back over their shoulders, "Send us red roses!" And the next thing they knew they were heading straight for a huge hole which had been dug to plant evergreens and had never been filled in. Buck put out his foot to stop the force of the sled, getting a badly broken ankle and Ruth was thrown so that the sharp edge of the hole cut across both of her legs. The rest came shouting down the hill and soon they were rushed to the infirmary where Ruth spent a couple of weeks, hobbled around on crutches for a while and finally went home where the sun put in its miraculous cure. But that was the only tragedy connected with Wellesley.

The next year brought Junior Prom. By October we had planned our dance programs completely, had engaged the rooms for our men and had even decided what fruit we would put in their rooms for their delectation at odd intervals. Ruth having invited Howard for this great event, is forced to smile now at the care with which she selected fruit for his room.

Junior Prom at that time was held on Washington's Birthday week-end and we were blessed with phenomenally warm weather for that time of year. The boys did not even wear overcoats. It was a serene week-end except for

the fact that we were in for an undue amount of kidding, due to the fact that when we took a walk in the Hunniwell gardens prior to the Prom dinner, both of our watches stopped and we were somewhat late.

There were five of us who had stayed together since Freshman year! Helen (Bobs) Bassett (now Mrs. Alfred Hauser), Jane Whigham (now Mrs. M. M. Atwater), Constance Bailey (now Mrs. M. S. Blake) and Kitty Reeve. We always considered ourselves "roommates" although we did not actually live in the same room. We were always close although we did not have a great deal in common. Bobs was interested in aesthetic dancing and class politics, Connie head over heels in Art, Jane an outstanding student in Chemistry (though she was on "pro" a large share of the time), Kitty was interested particularly in Math, and Ruth, of course, in Music. We had loads of good times together and are all especially grateful to Connie and her parents for the dozens of wonderful week-ends spent at their summer home, "Pemaquid", at Norwell, Massachusetts.

Senior Year was the gala year. First of all, Ruth was chosen one of the twelve Seniors to take charge of a Freshman house. We were the last of the species to be known as "Vil-Seniors" because the custom was abandoned the following year. At this time each Freshman House had a senior living there who conducted all of the house meetings, checked up on "irregularities" and helped in any way possible to accustom the Freshman in their charge to the new life and ways about them. Ruth was in charge of Leighton House and enjoyed the experience so much that although it did mean losing a close contact with one's own friends, we all regretted the change in policy.

Both Junior and Senior Years Ruth sang in the choir under the direction of Mr. Mac. Both years, but particularly the last year, she did solo work. The thing which thrilled her most was to be asked by Mr. Mac to

sing a solo at the Academic Chapel Service. This is held each year in the very beginning of the year. All of the faculty and invited celebrities march in, in their gorgeous robes (Pres. Pen----- that is, President Pendleton in her flaming scarlet Ph.D. robe from the University of Toronto) followed by the Seniors in their caps and gowns. Every seat is taken and hundreds are left standing. It is a gripping and thrilling sight.

This opportunity was what probably led to Ruth's election to the Society of Phi Sigma shortly afterwards. Her "gang" were as divided as to society as they were in everything else, Bobs being the only other one in Phi Sigma.

The biggest event of Ruth's life time up to that date came on April 10th of that year (1926) when her engagement to Howard Sanborn was announced. Grandmother and Elizabeth Wertsner came up from Germantown for the announcement party at Phi Sigma. We gave each one a little corsage with our names attached to each one. It was a great day in her life and ended very romantically by being serenaded by her Freshmen that night just as she was "turning in."

That meant, of course, that Senior Prom, which came less than a month later, was a splendid affair. Howard came up from New York for it and all of the gang went, despite the foolish tradition present then (which I hope died out now) that you are not supposed to go to Senior Prom unless you are engaged. Everyone there seemed to have a grand time, engaged or not. Perhaps Ruth had rosy glasses on but she does not think that was the only reason for the impression.

The end of the year is rather a hectic blur filled with exams, packing, rushing around from one thing to another, finally walking down the aisle of Alumnae Hall to get a diploma (already the Chapel was too small to hold the graduating class) and home - after four glorious years.

A few days at home and we were off on another wonderful trip - but that is not my province to write about.

In the fall of 1926 Ruth went to New York with the idea of doing some intensive work on voice under Mr. George Fergusson. She lived near Columbia so it seemed sensible to take a couple of courses there. She became so interested in the work that she decided to work for a Master's Degree and the second semester took considerable more work, still continuing with the voice work, however. Mr. Peter Dykema, Miss Alice Bivins, and especially Mr. Louis Mohler are remembered fondly. Mr. Mohler, although a bachelor, was certainly a master in the art of getting response to music from children. It was a joy to watch one who so thoroughly loved his work. The music profession lost a devoted worker when it lost Mr. Mohler.

In the spring of 1927 we began plans for the wedding, because all had to be complete before we left for our long trip in June. This had to be done during hasty week-end trips, but we managed to have all complete (even the wedding invitations addressed and stamped to be sent out before we returned). by June 20th, when we took the train to Chicago en route for a three days stop in Wausau. The trip is still vivid in our memories though for Ruth, at least, it is surrounded by a filmy wedding veil.