

Another Ward-Belmont Girl Makes Her Contribution to Society

There was never a discussion about where I would "go off to girls' school." Both of my aunts and my mother had attended Ward-Belmont. The three considered it a necessity for me to be packed off to Nashville so that whatever the parents had neglected in childrearing would be completed. In other words, one became "civilized" under the supervision of the best professionals, teachers and loving house mothers.

At home, the good news came that I had been accepted at W-B. I was riding horseback in Wyoming at the time, but the day had come for the cowgirl to dismount and take the Texas Flyer (the fastest train in the West) and go South that September, 1946.

Baggage was filled to the brim with every conceivable kind of apparel (we had to dress for dinner six evenings a week)—hats, gloves, stockings BPH (Before Panty Hose), jeans, big white shirts from Dad's closet, saddle shoes for dorm and campus wear. Much to my surprise, people from the East and North looked about the same as the "normal people."

The normal people, of course, were all from the West!

Everything that happened in Nashville gave me grit, fortitude, ability to think objectively, logically and to give up any ideas about being punitive. I learned to laugh at myself and others. Best of all, Ward-Belmont gave me a foundation that contributed to creative thinking and progressive attitudes. Because of these lessons, I have been able to make my goals become reality.

After graduating, I married and had a family. Later I had a job with the Department of Human Services that was demanding, fulfilling, frustrating and rewarding. My work with the Child Welfare Department was most challenging. Sometimes the system pits children against adults, and the children lose out because they have little protection against a system that is weighted in favor of adults.

There are many successful cases within the welfare system but I feel that it is a system that perpetuates itself. When the third generation came through our door I resigned my job as a social worker and went to work as an educational outreach

specialist for the Battered Women's Center. I visited schools, clubs and other groups in ten counties teaching about potential abusers and how to protect both adults and children. It is satisfying to me that women have thanked me for helping to rescue them and their children from lives of pain and suffering, and for lifting them from hopeless despair.

As I reflect on my past, Ward-Belmont gets the praise for my having a full, richly satisfying family and professional life. The school taught truth and morals, as well as an appreciation for the beauty of music and the arts.

I am grateful to the school for having a hand in preparing me for things I did in life—write reviews of plays, write articles for newspapers, run for political office, chair the board of regents of a college, serve on various boards of directors and committees. Ward-Belmont gave me a foundation of rich religious principles and enabled me to meet some of the finest young women in the world, women with whom I still have strong friendships all over Texas and Oklahoma! *

The Devilish Little Miss Helen Parker, Class of 1933—Still Remarkably Progressive!

by Mary Kay Carmichael*

Helen Parker is living proof that Ward-Belmont was not just a provincial school with polite Southern students.

Helen came from Georgetown, Ohio to Ward-Belmont with a school friend. From the first day she created a stir. Helen and her friend had known each other for twelve years. They had to attend social functions in Rec Hall (The Mansion) to get to know other students. They were not as skilled at making small talk as some of their classmates, so they devised an ingenious plan.

Instead of having to meet and talk to a lot of new people, they arranged to "meet" each other over and over. The two girls walked from opposite ends of the room, "bumped" into each other and acted as if they had never met before. Then they chatted for awhile, said good-bye, walked to opposite ends of the room and started over. After "meeting" each other like this several times one of the teachers called them aside and said, "Girls, don't you think that I can see what you are doing?"

There was, of course, the Blue Book of Rules. One of the rules was that girls were not to wear make-up. Helen didn't break the rules, she just found ways to get around them. She related, "I rubbed my face with Listerine, which set it on fire. Miss Sison said, 'Helen Parker, you are wearing rouge.' I told her that I crossed my heart hoped to die I was not wearing rouge." Miss Sison replied that the book could never be written that would hold all the rules. Afterward a report went out to Helen's father that said, "Miss Helen is so well-adjusted socially that she may not be in the graduation line."

Mr. Parker taught his daughter that, no matter what color you were, you could be a lady; that being a lady was based on having an innate consideration for other people and their cultures; that everybody's work is important and that there were very fine people who were black. He also taught religious tolerance, saying that more people have been killed in religious wars than in any other way. When she aired these views in class, Helen stirred up controversy, but her teachers supported her philosophically. Helen said that she had never had any teacher at Ward-Belmont who did not support a person's reasonable

views. Several of the faculty had taught in the East at Smith and Wellesley, retired and come to Ward-Belmont.

In spite of the warnings, Miss Parker did graduate and entered Ohio State as a last quarter junior. The school not only gave her credit for her coursework at Ward-Belmont, but actually raised each of her grades a letter because of the academic reputation of Ward-Belmont. In 1933, W-B ranked academically as one of the three best junior colleges in the country.

"I was going with a young doctor who died before we could get married. After that, for many years I taught English in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. I was successful in my Masters in Education and did 47 hours of advanced work. I was told that my real gift was in encouraging people. I started with what the students loved. I told them, 'I will do what you do. If you want to write ballads we write ballads.'"

"I had the excitement of learning. I am enthusiastic about many things. I can bring out people's best qualities and am not jealous of others' talents. I admire other people and their talents. I got so much from Ward-Belmont that I want to give back to people. I believe that you feel better and live longer when you are enthusiastic and consider what you can give to other people."

"You learn a lot of things by just recognizing people and their differences. I spoke to a Japanese man many years ago and he asked, 'Why did you talk to me?' Some people don't like Japanese." I told him that I thought he was a nice person. And he broke down and cried.

"We have Chinese and Japanese children in the Cleveland Schools. We know it is going to be a global world. Black people are becoming well educated. We need all of the fine people we can get in this world—people of every color."

"I have lived with the values of Ward-Belmont all my life—academic excellence, discipline, living by rules that everyone respects. I believe this."

"A person cannot love or like another person until he has learned to love or like himself."

Ward-Belmont tried to instill this love in all her students. *

*Mary Kay Carmichael interviewed Helen Parker by phone in the spring of 1994.

Excerpts from the Scrapbook of Mary Stewart Carter ('19)

A moment of courtesy will take a man as far as a whole afternoon of apology. (from *The Youth's Companion*, 1918)

Joke circulating around campus:

Miss Morrison—"Jeannette, portions of one of your posterior appendages are exposed."

Jeannette—"What?"

Miss Morrison—"Pull up your stockings!"

Breathes there a girl with a soul so dead
Who never to herself hath said...A string of cuss words?

Son Remembers...(continued from page one)

war was over. With the men gone, she was made a high-ranking officer in the Civil Air Patrol. She saw a need to organize a Forest Air Patrol and flew her plane in the area to search for forest fires. Like many resourceful women, she used her organizational skills during that time. After the war, she went back to being a mother and raising a family.

"Life changed drastically for me in 1950. My father was killed when his small plane ran into a tree and crashed into the Ohio River. I was the oldest in the family (first born of twins) at age fourteen. The youngest was nine. The lady who had had a storybook family suddenly had a big problem. She had to raise four children alone."

"After two years my mother met and married Norman J. Neely, a widower in Bloomington. He was an attorney, the father of two younger children, and a prominent Republican in the state. He was a member of the House of Representatives and was often designated as Speaker Pro Tempore."

"So Helen Neely, now mother of six children, became interested in politics. She helped her husband by organizing his political campaign and managed her responsibilities well. The only problem was that my grandfather liked neither attorneys nor politicians, so he did not like Mr. Neely. It was said that he withdrew his support, both financially and emotionally."

"We children grew up and left home. Then, in 1962, my stepfather was forced to retire because of a heart condition. He and my mother moved to Naples, Fla."

"In October of 1963 Norman Neely died and my mother, now in her 50s, worked to provide income, made friends, became active in the community—once again showing that determination and resourcefulness that she had called on before. She became active in the Collier County Republican Party, serving as county chairman, and throughout the years was known as the 'Grand Dame of the Republican Party.'"

"Mother was immensely independent to the end. She

never wanted to be a burden on her family. She lived in Naples for 26 years and had a constant stream of family in and out, but never lived with her children."

"We Rechter children inherited the Rogers Company. It is a tribute to her that we worked harmoniously together, utilizing our particular strengths, and built a healthy, successful company. We were very happy to be able to take care of her financially during the last years of her life. Today the company is a medium-sized group of companies. The grandchildren (all 21 of them) are involved in the business in some way, if just by serving on a board. It is unusual that a family business can be in its third generation of management and still be intact—the family intact, that is! My mother gave us this."

"Throughout her personal and financial struggles she always wanted what was good for the family. She put the needs of family members and the family business above her own. We thank her today for the implicit sense that we are a family and would never consider jeopardizing this."

"Life with my mother was never dull. We grew up following her example—playing sports, flying airplanes, reading books, studying art. She had interesting social contacts so the house was a lively place. She introduced us to plays, big sporting events and burlesque shows (all a part of our education). As a result, I've never had a boring day in my life!"

"When she died, Mother was 79 and lived in a retirement complex in Naples. She was very proud of her children, shared all of our achievements and was surrounded by hundreds of family photographs."

"My brothers and I were happy to be able to honor our mother by helping to restore to their former beauty. Generous Ward-Belmont alumnae made contributions and when it was apparent that the project was costlier than expected, the Rechter children were glad to have the opportunity to honor our mother with a lasting contribution to her beloved Ward-Belmont." *

Excerpts from my 1946 Diary

by Mary Dugger Becker, Class of 1948

Prepare for a return visit to Ward-Belmont in the 1940s. Put on your war-surplus saddle shoes, black Chesterfield coat, white gloves, hat, and sweater with single strand pearls. Slather on Revlon's "Rosy Future" and your pancake makeup. Douse yourself with "Tabu" or "White Shoulders" and straighten the seams in your rayon hose.

September 4, 1946

Nashville station. Met by loads of cute W-B girls. In Founder's Hall, room 172, with Betsy Holton. Campus is beautiful!

October

Midnight. Out on Founder's sundeck to watch shooting stars. Mrs. Eastin said star-gazing was against W-B rules and to go back to bed.

Halloween. Formal dinner. Someone rang the chimes at 2 a.m. Fidelity girls locked Mrs. Collins in her room. I wrote English paper at 2:30 a.m.

November

Betsy and I and three other W-B girls to Vanderbilt dance with dates. Miss Jackson is chaperoning. At 11:00 she came out on the dance floor and tapped each couple to go back to school. WE COULD HAVE DIED! We cried coming back in W-B taxi.

December

Triple date in a car! Boys picked us up here and we walked six blocks to their car. Drove to night club out in the country and crossed river on little ferry. Place was closed so drove back to SAE house and danced.

Rumor that Miss Morrison is chaperoning train to Cincinnati. Ann, Peggy, and I sharing one berth. Train too crowded with servicemen (and Miss Morrison).

January

Movies and Cross Keys. Bought L. Miller shoes for \$11.95. Didn't wear hats or gloves. Mrs. Asper saw us. One week later...appeared before council for "seen downtown dressed unbecomingly a Ward-Belmont lady...campused one week."

Saw Maurice Evans in "Hamlet" for \$1.80.

Senior Dance. Miss Ordway lectured us not to spy. Deep snow at night. All of Founders and Fidelity sneaked out to play.

A/K wins swim meet!

March

Senior Mid Dance. Fun, but I think more girls than boys. Tried to raid icebox but Dr. Provine was there!



April

I have three tardies and two cuts and must take an "overcut" exam. We move furniture in our room.

April 19 was Senior-Senior Mid Day. Seniors' part was neat; Senior Mid wasn't. Some Mid hired an airplane to fly over and drop Mid hats. She also called LIFE magazine. Neither came.

A/K and T/C to Rawlings for great party. Sunburn!

Practiced for May Day. Sunday afternoon took bus to Percy Warner Park. Beautiful Tennessee Spring!

May

May Day. Thelma Back was Queen. So pretty, except our Drill Team. PFC exercise group was worse.

Study, study, study for exams. Someone locked

five of us in our room. Arnold had to remove door.

Steamer trunks and packing in our room. We can't believe our year is over. It's so sad!

Good bye, Ward-Belmont!

Now, in parting, one last vivid memory:

While waiting for someone's parents, we were sitting on the wall at the entrance gates. We looked up to see one of the darling elderly "hostesses" tripping down the walk from Acklen to admonish us. "Ward-Belmont ladies NEVER sit with their knees facing the street. You girls turn around and sit facing the school."

And, one more:

"Breathes there a girl with soul so dead who never to her roommate said 'Who's got food in their room?'"

They were marvelous days. No words can express the joyous warmth of those days of precious memories and friendship.



Heartfelt sympathy is expressed to the families of these Ward-Belmont alumnae:

Helen Dickinson (Mrs. John S.) Bransford ('28), Nashville	Martha Ellen (Mrs. Wymen) Finley ('32), Vero Beach, Fla.	Helen Rogers (Mrs. Norman J.) Neely ('30) Naples, FL.
Emmie Leake (Mrs. Keith) Caldwell ('39), Franklin, TN	Deborah Silber (Mrs. David) Fields ('22), Milwaukee, WI.	Elaine Frost (Mrs. Clyde L.) Reed ('27), Grosse Pointe Woods, MI
Sibyl Kell (Mrs. C.C.) Cahoon ('19), Wichita Falls, TX	Kathryn Geny ('31), Franklin, TN	Lollie Ruth Kimble (Mrs. Wymen) Robertson, Stone Mountain, GA
Jean Howerton (Mrs. John R.) Coady ('44), Louisville, KY.	Mattie Lee (Mrs. Clyde) Gwinn, Dallas, TX	Ann Figgins (Mrs. Roy H.) Ruenstahl ('37), Louisville, KY
Helen Sue Hinchison (Mrs. John R.) Carroll ('46), Saratoga, CA	Hippi Beardon (Mrs. John E.) Harwood ('34), Brentwood, TN	Marion Green (Mrs. Robert Grady) Spann ('44), Waverly, TN
Georgia Sawrie (Mrs. Leslie W.) Doss ('25), Dallas, TX.	Barbara Shields Kelley ('35), Los Angeles	Marian Allen (Mrs. Fred) Tippit ('22), Nashville
Jeanne Cummings (Mrs. Quinton Dews) Edmonds ('30), Nashville	Katherine B. (Mrs. Hazen B.) Hirsman ('16), Rome, NY	Dorothy Thompson ('28), Nashville
Katherine Seamon (Mrs. Braden L.) Finch ('22), Corona Del Mar, CA.	Rosalba Gonzalez (Mrs. Manolo) Lavandero ('39), Miami, FL	Anne Louise Eidell (Mrs. Thomas P. Jr.) Wall ('40), Nashville
	Martha J. Lindsey ('41), Clarksville, TN	
	Ruth Robinson Marshall ('34), Shreveport, LA	