

Creation Story: Camp Scripps

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Some of you might agree that a 20th anniversary milestone of any kind whether partner, employment, residence or friendship captures one's attention. A 20th reunion after college when you graduated at 21 years old is a *whoa*, take stock moment. The inner dialogue begins, "*Oh, I'd love to attend, but I'm so busy, have so many commitments with work and family. But maybe I can take the time.*" This is quickly followed by flurries of phone calls and texts to sister alumnae, "*I miss you. If I go, will you? Please come.*"

For the Class of 1969, even classmates who had never attended a reunion came – to see dear friends and our beloved campus. After delighted hugs and kisses and wandering the campus to revisit especially meaningful places we gathered to share our 20-year journeys. Later at dinner, we found ourselves bemoaning two problems. First, that reunions were pretty much limited to classes celebrating their decade or half decade reunions, therefore left out so many friends from the in-between years. Second, that the primary contact we had with Scripps College was an ask for donations. Much like you, we were grateful for our exemplary Scripps education, our beautiful campus, our enduring friendships and the formative experiences we had at Scripps as we matured over four years from teenagers to young women. For many of us, early in our careers and perhaps caring for children and/or aging relatives, money was tight.

A little context about the 1960s at Scripps to refresh your memories.

On a national level, the Sixties were not smooth years for those in power, the authorities, including college administrations even here at Scripps. To paraphrase the song, *The Times They Were Changin.'* Major political, social, ethical and cultural shifts were rolling. Youth in general, college students in particular, were fully engaged in the Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War movements, the rise of Feminism (Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique was assigned summer reading for the Scripps entering Class of 1968), the beginnings of the Pride Movement, the dawn of space exploration and the Age of Aquarius, the resurgence of the Environmental Movement (first Earth Day celebrated in 1969 Santa Barbara, my home town, after a massive oil spill) and of course The Youth Movement - *Sex, Drugs and Rock n' Roll*. (As a freshman, my Grace Scripps sisters let me know that I could obtain a prescription for 'The Pill' – approved by the FDA in 1960- by convincing Health Services that I was truly going steady.) And in the background the constant threat of the Cold War and ticking Doomsday Clock - *Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* premiered in 1964.

During the 1960s the Scripps administration as well as faculty were mostly male and tended authoritarian not open to student engagement. In particular, our vocal protests and sit-ins opposing the destruction of the Olive Grove were unexpected and unwelcome by the college leadership especially when alumnae joined us. Realizing that our actions were at least partially effective (we saved the trees, not the grove), we learned to put our heads above the parapet. Rallying others, we could make things happen.

Today you might say – *well, same as it ever was*. And I might add that during the 1960s, great changes were also happening in the Scripps curriculum and student life.

The 1960s and early 70s classes were the last to study the fully integrated, interdisciplinary Humanities Program, *The Scripps IDEA* that was originally developed in tandem with the physical campus under the auspices of the early Scripps faculty notably Hartley Burr Alexander, administration and Board of Trustees in the 1920s and 30s. Similar to the Claremont University Consortium itself which was based on the Oxford model, the Scripps curriculum was based on the classical education taught there. Unique to Scripps, this course of study was a source of identity and shared pride for our college community and an influential model for many liberal arts colleges and programs across the United States. Focused on Western Civilization it emphasized the study of the liberal arts and great books taught chronologically, seamlessly interweaving history, philosophy, sociology, politics, the arts, sciences, economics, technology etc. This education offered us broad knowledge of the diverse fields of human inquiry and endeavor while developing our research and communication skills, analytical reasoning, critical evaluation, and creative problem-solving abilities.

The Humanities lectures and seminars were the primary studies of freshmen, sophomores and many juniors. By class year we attended lectures together, read the same books (original texts) together, studied together, labored over the same assignments together, and suffered through our Humanities exams together all under the Honor Code – without proctors, anywhere we liked. Studying for finals, sophomores taught freshman mnemonic songs and rhymes to remember, say, the reasons for the fall of Ancient Rome: *And the pipes were made of lead and the Empire's on its head, The goats have eaten the grass and the Empire's on its ass* - sophomores were tutored by juniors etc.

Why am I telling you this? Because the Humanities curriculum represented a shared experience not only among each class year but also classes that came before and those that followed, binding us - freshmen through seniors - together intellectually as a community of scholars.

In the 1960s the Scripps Student Body was smaller. The Class of 1969 numbered about eighty-five women. At that time, students typically lived four years in a single dorm. Each dorm housed about equal numbers of freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors and was the center of our residential lives and identify among our peers. Each dorm had a slightly different character in sync with its residents. On schedule, we ate three meals together in our dorm dining rooms. Dinners were by candlelight, and we were expected to dress and behave accordingly, *Gracious Living*. Lunches and dinners were served. Waitresses were fellow students who were recruited, trained and managed by a student Head Waitress – these jobs were a valuable source of income for some including myself. Younger alumnae may puzzle at some remnants of historic dorm entry configurations. At that time cell phones did not exist. Instead, dorm entry foyers contained a wall of snail mail slots and an old-time inhouse telephone system with a switchboard which we all took turns staffing. Through daily dorm life, learning to live together over the years, we became sisters, family.

Classes and campus wide gatherings brought us together as a college community. Faculty and staff as well as Scripps and other students gathered each weekday for tea at Balch Hall's Sicilian Courtyard. Every Scripps student had a turn playing 'mother' greeting then pouring tea for all comers – "*strong or weak, milk or lemon, one lump or two, two cookies only please.*" Throughout the year there were special events, the candle-lit procession to find the living art tableau in winter, Surprise Day, May Fete, the senior art show in Lang, the candle burning in the dorms on the Freshman Humanities final exam day to be blown out when the last student returned. We learned what it means to be an active participant in a community, to listen as well as speak, not only to be served but also to willingly step up to serve.

Sometimes I felt I lived a story book life- studying here in this beautiful place.
*In an old dorm in Claremont that was covered in vines,
Lived three hundred women in a long-ago time.*

The curriculum we studied and the residential life we lived was intentionally created to build our scholarly and familial sisterhood not only with our class year but over the three classes earlier and after ours. This is why we felt so many friends were missing at our reunions.

Back in 1989 at the Class of 69 Reunion, Marga Rose Hancock our Class Scribe reminded us that we should consider our class gift. Twenty years out from graduation, in our early 40's, in the midst of developing our careers and/or family lives, our totaled contributions were not substantial. This led a few of us, all in arts or arts related careers to begin asking, *is there something of value we could give Scripps College outside of cold cash?*

Members of the Class of 69 formed a council that advanced that concept over the next five years via telephone and the new email. You may recall AOL, *America on Line* was founded in 1985, the World Wide Web – the internet! - in 1989. For advice, we reached out to beloved professor and mentor Dr. Lois Langland who became not only our sage advisor but also our inspiration and champion – our Benjamin Franklin. A few years later when our small group was able to gather in person on campus after students left in the summer, we invited a few alumnae from other classes to join us. The Alumnae office sent a recent graduate representative to sit in on our meetings. She was a bit leery of us at first but soon became one of our team.

The Scripps Administration at the time was suspicious of us and we encountered much resistance over those founding and early Camp years. Yet, we persisted.

Gradually over the years, initial wariness turned to support. As you know the Office of Alumnae Engagement has become an enormous asset to Camp. Without their on-going, resourceful help, Camp would not happen.

I take you back to our planning meetings on campus in 1990s – we were Susan Ball 69, Regula Feldmann Campbell 69, Alice Betts Carpenter 57, Professor Lois Langland adoptee of the Class of 69, Pamela Lauesen 66, Susan Dinkle Lindley 67, Kitty Maryatt 66, Leslie Lasher Monsour 69, Marga Rose Hancock 69, Meredith Sabini 66 and Kristin Wiberg 91.

Marga deserves special recognition. In the beginning, she was key to keeping the initial discussion alive among our group of 69ers, coming up with the name of our council '*Creative Caucus*', later instrumental in finagling our stay in the old dorms which proved an irresistible lure and always as a consummate provocateur.

Much like all of you, our forties were especially demanding times juggling the needs of both our working and personal lives. A weekend away was difficult to arrange but a much-welcomed perhaps necessary break. Arriving on campus, moving back into Browning and Dorsey Halls, greeting our classmates, we found that maybe we *could go home again*. Freed from the responsibilities of daily life, the campus could act somewhat like a time machine reconnecting us with our young selves.

I recall one sweltering, smoggy afternoon in the Dorsey Living Room, dust motes lazily floating in the stifling atmosphere (no air conditioning), the wool upholstery scratchy against our bared

arms and legs. Yet the mood was joyful, we were delighted to be together and living again on our campus.

We conjectured, *"Wouldn't other alumnae enjoy the same?"*

We asked, "What *happens on campus during the summer?*"

At that time primarily repairs and renovations, for the most part the dorms lay empty.

Thus, the concept of a long weekend retreat for alumnae was born.

"We could have campfires and activities like a summer camp!"

Someone suggested, *"Maybe there will be a professor to two spending the summer in Claremont who would be willing to give us a lecture."*

Long, long pause, Lois broke the silence, *"Don't you know that there are many more distinguished Scripps alumnae than ever professors who taught at Scripps?"*

Immediately in the manner of MGM musicals of old we decided, *"Hey kids, let's put on our own show! By alumnae for alumnae!"*

I believe it was our group's poets – Alice Carpenter, Leslie Monsour and Marga Rose Hancock who created the camp touchstone, *everything possible, nothing required*.

From the outset, our goal was to provide sister alumnae and into the future a few days away from the requirements of work and family life. To offer a restorative retreat organized, managed, carried out with care, dare I say love, by alumnae volunteers for other alumnae. Recognizing that for many it's not just time and attention that is in short supply, we intended that costs should be kept as low as possible. Importantly, we wanted to provide an opportunity for alumnae to gather here on campus to reinforce our shared experience of living a transformative part of our lives together on this superb campus.

The first Scripps Summer Camp took place June 23-26, 1994. Forty-five alumnae attended, staying in Dorsey and Browning Halls. We dined together in the Grace Scripps Dining Room and attended a wide range workshops, performances and lectures. Some were led by the inaugural Creative Caucus – now the Founding Mothers – including Leslie Monsour who together with Robin Johnson offered a poetry workshop/salon; Kitty Maryatt presented 'The Power of the Scripps Press'; Marga Rose Hancock and Susan Ball presented the Convocation: A Woman's Place in the Arts; Meredith Sabini, Pam Lauesen and Susan Lindley led evening campfires; I offered my first Scripps campus design tour and of course there was much more.

Just as most subsequent Camps, Sunday brunch took place in Margaret Fowler Garden. When we assembled around the fountain for the first closing circle to share our Camp experiences and say our goodbyes, we learned that our fundraising goal had been met. In addition to Camp, we were able to successfully establish the Lois Langland Alumna in Residence Program. Cheers and merriment all around! Astonishingly crowning our celebration, a glistening dragonfly sailed in out of the blue to alight on Marga a sparkling, living jewel.

Shortly after the first Camp Scripps, I was honored to be selected as the Inaugural Lois Langland Alumna in Residence 1995-6. My proposal and project "Dwelling Poetically" was a study of the exemplary design of the historic Scripps Campus as an integrated work of art intended as a setting and catalyst for female individuation and sisterhood. An inquiry I continue to explore.

A few years ago, while investigating the campus once again during Camp, I came upon a basket weaving workshop gathered around the central fountain in Margaret Fowler Garden. The assembled women were conversing about topics of every sort while doing hand work just as

we've done since Neolithic times. One mentioned that her 8-year-old daughter was already determined to attend Scripps College. Why? *Because that's the only way you can get to Camp Scripps.* Enough said!

So now, I return once again to Lois Langland, who from the beginning encouraged us 69ers to invite alumnae from other classes to join our cabal and to keep Camp Scripps planned and carried out exclusively by alumnae. You may recall that on the last day of the Constitutional Convention, September 17, 1787, Elizabeth Willing Powel asked Benjamin Franklin, *Well, Doctor what have we got a republic or a monarchy?* Franklin replied, *A republic if you can keep it.* I imagine if asked about the future of our first Camp Scripps Lois Langland would have answered much like Ben Franklin. Question: *Well Doctor, have we got a single episode or an ongoing alumnae happening?* Lois' answer, *A yearly event, if you can keep it.*

It's true that Camp Scripps would not exist without the Founding Mothers, but it's equally true that it would not continue to thrive without all the alumnae volunteers who have offered their time and energy over three decades to keep it going. Each Camp requires many hours of Caucus planning, organization, meetings and scheduling. Besides initial creation, each workshop requires many hours of preparation and, of course, instruction and time during Camp.

For 30 years including by Zoom during Covid in 2020, over a thousand alumnae have volunteered tens of thousands of hours to create Camp Scripps each summer. Thousands of alumnae have attended, many return year after year forming bonds of sisterhood across many decades of class years. Registration fills within hours. Today, Camp's success is its major problem, how to expand to meet demand. Clearly, what began as the Class of 69's alternative class gift continues to find imaginative resonance throughout the Scripps alumnae community.

Many colleges and universities offer summer conferences, activities even camps for alumnae and their families but these are organized, managed and carried out by their respective administrations. In modest similarity to the original Scripps College Humanities curriculum and historic campus design, Camp Scripps is unique. In its creation and continuing realization, it remains *By Alumnae, for Alumnae.*

Thank you all!