

Juniata Tales

Prologue (by Charlotte Houchin Kresge)

We have featured many interesting articles in past editions of our reunion newsletter, but we have never included one about us, the Class of 1971, and our shared memories with the Class of 1970. Since we'll be spending time together on October 7-9, 2021, we thought it would be fun to reminisce in an article co-authored by Robert Hunter, '70 and me, Charlotte Houchin Kresge, '71. Why, you ask, were these two authors selected? In addition to being fellow Juniatiens, we are sister-and brother-in-law. Rob's wife, Shirley Houchin Hunter, '73, is my sister, so our collaboration was a natural. We had a blast writing it, and we hope that you like it as much as we do. So sit back, relax and enjoy a stroll down memory lane.

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Rob: The classes of 1970 and 1971 are in the peculiar position of sharing our fiftieth reunion celebration. That sounds great to me. We spent three years sharing our lives together on campus and many of us have maintained inter class relationships and friendships ever since. Other classes might have cause to be jealous of our opportunity.

Charlotte: *That's so true. Our two classes were connected in so many ways, and we still are! I'm so excited to see everyone again! You know, when I think about our upcoming reunions, it's hard for me to imagine that it has been 50 years since we graduated--well, 51 for you! Most of us are septuagenarians now. Gosh, that sounds so old. In my mind's eye, I'm not a day over 25, -er, well, as Jack Benny so famously said, 39!*

Rob: The mirror suggests that many moons have passed since my graduation, but I can recognize the me of fifty years ago. Something about the eyes. I've enjoyed the changes in each period of my life, especially the experience of raising children. Occasionally we had to find the lemonade solution to a situation, or substitute a window for a door. The liberal arts education we received enabled us to become life-long learners who can handle whatever has been thrown at us, including a pandemic.

Charlotte: *That makes me think about the many experiences that we enjoyed (or endured) while at Juniata. In addition to classes, there were intramural and varsity sports, concerts, plays, class activities and campus jobs. Juniata offered so many opportunities for students. Which ones did you like best?*

Rob: Taking part in class activities and competitions such as the Christmas decorations, Homecoming floats, and All Class Night created a sense of community as well as entertainment. I particularly valued the times spent writing scripts and songs for All Class Night. We had a blast! One such memory was our senior skit when we were attempting to defend our victory of 1969. While our play was not a full blown musical, it did contain several songs for which we wrote lyrics. With less than two weeks remaining, and with comps in the air, a few of us thought we needed a band. Vic and I knew nothing about music, but Wheels did. We had a handful of talented class members who could play instruments and sight-read. Bruce transcribed the music for them. A couple of rehearsals later, poof, we had a band to accompany our singers. We sounded fantastic.

Charlotte: *I participated in many of the activities that you listed, but my favorite was always All Class Night. During our junior (your senior) year, we produced an extravaganza that featured life in a Sultan's palace, dancing harem girls, and two bumbling men who dressed as women and hid within the harem. I seem to recall that our class won first place that year, but that's water over the dam now. All Class Night was always so much fun, and I loved to help write the scripts, sew the costumes, paint the backdrops, and act in the shows. I understand that Juniata no longer holds All Class Night. I actually feel sorry for the kids who will never experience the fun and camaraderie associated with it, and I am so grateful that we had the opportunity.*

Rob: Did you play any sports at Juniata?

Charlotte: *Sports were always an important part of campus life. I enjoyed watching sports, but I loved playing women's varsity basketball. When we first arrived at Juniata, there was no coach. We convinced Mrs. Thompson to accept the position, and we went on to enjoy a successful season. That was a ground-breaking year for women's basketball across the country. A new rule allowed all teammates to travel full court for the first time ever. Could you imagine that women would actually have the stamina for such demands? Ha ha! We loved it.*

One winter during basketball season, my sister, Shirley, a few other friends and I "borrowed" trays from the cafeteria to go sledding down the slopes of Roundtop. We formed a chain by linking our legs around the person in front of us. One of my teammates sat in front as we hurtled down the wooded path. Unfortunately, we crashed into a tree, and my teammate broke her ankle. Sadly, that ended her season! Did you play any sports?

Rob: I, too, love sports and as a young man I was quite competitive. Although I did not have the skills necessary to be a varsity athlete, the college provided me with the opportunity to play organized sports during all seasons. My favorite was Men's Basketball. I captained a team for three years, and we won a couple of championships in our division. But my fondest individual memory came in another sport.

During my freshman year, I was on a fast pitch softball team. I had played plenty of baseball growing up and was good enough to enjoy it. We were playing a team of upperclassmen with a legendary pitcher who had played softball in the Army. My first at bat facing Clair, I struck out with no contact on three pitches. The second time up, I whiffed on the first pitch. Then I managed to foul off the second pitch, which seemed to surprise Clair as much as it did me. Before his third pitch, Clair did several windmills and as he leaped toward me, he released the ball from behind his back. The bat never left my shoulder. I had never seen such a thing in my life. The umpire shouted, "Strike three!" Clair smiled. I tipped my cap. That was so cool and I treasure having had that experience.

Charlotte: *That's such a great story.*

Rob: While you were fortunate to form a varsity Women's BB team, there were not as many varsity experiences available to women, and additionally the school had different rules for each gender. For example, I was free to wander about town and campus whenever I chose. You could not.

Charlotte: *Yes, the experience was quite different for women. During our freshman year, our weekday curfew was 10:00 p.m., and on weekends, it was 11:00 p.m. After Moving Up Day, we were granted an additional hour. Gee thanks! There were far more regulations and rules for women. I remember the "Three Feet on the Floor" rule that our dorm mother rigidly enforced when we entertained our boyfriends in the lounge.*

One of my most vivid memories of dorm life was when our dorm mother, Mrs. Neely, would accompany a maintenance man upstairs so that he could complete a work

order. She would announce his presence by shouting, "Man on the hall. Man on the hall." Sometimes the girls would march up and down the hall mimicking Mrs. Neely, while the rest of us made silly responses to the Man on the Hall mantra.

One day, I heard the cry, "Man on the hall. Man on the hall." Wearing nothing more than my slip and undies, I threw open my door and said seductively, "Here I am honey. Come on in!" You can imagine my horror when I saw Mrs. Neely and a man standing outside my room. I slammed the door shut and stood there shaking. A few seconds later, Mrs. Neely opened the door, poked her head in and said, "That will be three demerits!" Sigh!!!

Speaking of undies, do you remember panty raids?

Rob: Panty raids were a weird manifestation at an academic institution. The major raid of our college time was held as a reaction to feminist Ti Grace Atkinson's appearances on campus. If ever any event demonstrated the need for reform of sexual customs and mores, it was a group of hundreds of boys outside the windows of South Hall screaming, "Pants, pants, pants," at a group of women locked inside. In our day, there were two boys for every girl. Surf City, it was not. Finding a girlfriend wasn't easy. The war was probably a significant factor in that gender ratio for that time, but it was also a time when many of the professions were not welcoming to half our population. By the way, three feet on the floor was not nearly as crippling as dorm mothers supposed. Cramping maybe, but life finds a way!

Charlotte: *You mentioned the war. It certainly had a profound impact on campus life across the country. I remember the draft lottery as a particularly stressful time at Juniata. The tension across our campus was palpable. I remember experiencing two competing emotions--empathy for those men who drew low numbers in the draft and relief for women who were not part of the draft. The entire experience was so unsettling. What was that time like for Juniata men?*

Rob: The United States was involved in a war on the other side of the world and that war was being massively escalated with no exit strategy in place. College students had been exempted from service for years with student deferments. That whole deal was now changed. On December 1, 1969, the first draft lottery was held. It was televised live. I watched in the lounge of North Hall where one of the few TVs on campus was located. All of the room seating was occupied. Desk chairs were pulled in from dorm rooms, and it was still SRO. We were a vocal group as we heard our birthdates called out. Some shouted in anger or howled in pain. Those of us with high numbers were generally quiet out of respect for our less fortunate buds.

Literally, our future plans and dreams depended on a calendar number. Reactions were not based on patriotism or lack thereof. After all, if one wanted to serve, one could enlist, and those who would not choose to serve knew very well that others, non-college students, had been serving in their place. It just seemed arbitrary and unfair. Our final semester at Juniata College was pretty damn grim.

***Charlotte:** I know, but as you said earlier, life finds a way. You and your classmates graduated and moved on to new experiences and new jobs. Speaking of jobs, many Juniata students helped pay for their tuition by working in jobs offered by the college. I was so grateful to have worked in three different positions during my years at JC. As a sophomore, I served as a Biology lab assistant for Dr. Rockwell's freshman course. I oversaw the lab activities, administered and corrected assessments and provided support as the students completed their work. As a Biology major, I found the experience challenging and fulfilling.*

I also served as a Residence Hall Counselor for one year. Fortunately, it was a very quiet year, and there were few occasions that actually required counseling.

Do you remember our sit-down meals, where everyone dressed up and ate together family style? Well, I worked as a waitress in the Brumbaugh dining hall. Each waitress was responsible for setting up and serving four tables. Serving the meals was fun, and I was able to meet so many students that I might not otherwise have known. While working, I also became friends with the cooks and was able to get lots of second helpings of the meat du jour. As a result, a group of guys always tried to claim one of my tables. I'd like to believe that they followed me because of my sparkling personality, but I think I know better! Did you have any campus jobs?

Rob : I remember those sit down meals with tremendous pleasure (even with the ties) and I was definitely appreciative of having a server (always a woman) who could secure seconds for our table. Sparkling personalities were a feature of most dinner servers!

I had two on-campus jobs at Juniata during my days as a student. I worked for a while at the campus print shop, where my duties included fetching the outgoing mail from all the campus offices and preparing it for cancellation by Irv, the printer. It was a really pleasant duty and I got to know all the secretaries of the administrators, who as a group were as lovely as any ladies whom I have known. (And yes, of course they were all women!) I gave up that position because it required me to be at work Monday through Friday in the middle of the afternoon, leaving me no midday social hour.

At the end of my junior year I found another nice gig. Ellis Hall was just being completed, and the plan was for it to have what today would be called a soft opening for the summer of the 69 session. I talked to Will about what might be going on at our new facility, and he asked if I wanted a job. Oh yeah, I wanted a job. I got to run the desk opening day, and since he was going to be out of town, I managed an ice cream social, the first organized activity at Ellis. My instructions were to dispose of any leftovers, so my housemates and I filled our freezer with leftover ice cream.

Sadly, I was also on duty when Ellis was evacuated and closed during the campus shutdown in the Spring of 70. Will received a message that threats to students and buildings had been received. We went room to room and then locked down . The COVID pandemic brought back the emotions of fear and disbelief I felt on that day. The Juniata students of this past year are the first ones since us to have gone through a campus shutdown. When I was their age I don't know how I could have handled such a long period of uncertainty and danger. It will be an honor to share the campus with them during our joint fiftieth reunion.

***Charlotte:** It certainly will. And that brings our conversation full circle--back to our reunions. I am one of those individuals who has never attended a Juniata reunion, but I am so excited about our upcoming 50th. I want to see old friends and connect with new ones. I want to hear about the wonderful things that classmates have done over the years--the hobbies, the travels, the educational and work experiences, the dedication to community and world. Our celebration will be made even sweeter by sharing it with the Class of 1970. So many friends; so many connections; so much to learn and share.*

We hope to see all of you in October, so mark your calendars and prepare for an unforgettable experience.

Rob: And I am one of those people who always goes to Juniata reunions. If the year ends in 0, 5, 3, or 8, Shirley and I are there. Our closest friends are Juniata alums. I even have a sister-in-law whom I met there! Juniata reunions are so easy. We've all had so many accomplishments, so much joy, and so much heartache since we left school, that we're a far better and more interesting "us" than we were then. You just can't go wrong hanging out with Juniata people. Staff, too! It would take three years to talk about all the memories we have from our times together. Who can forget what a big deal it was to see The Association, listen to Martha sing the same set twice, or the strange wonderful goings-on at Colloquy?

Come on down in October, and let's talk!