

Mount Holyoke College Class of 1965 In Memoriam

Ann S (Bug) Beddingfield

News of the passage of Ann (Bug) Beddingfield as it arrived at the college:

From Her Friend, Alexandra McInnis

Date: 03/25/20

Text: Hello, sadly I am informing you that Ann S. Beddingfield, class of 1965, has passed away. She was a close family friend of mine. I'm sure Ann's classmates will have memories to share. I do recall her saying that after she graduated from Mount Holyoke she felt like there was nothing she couldn't do (and subsequently joined the Peace Corps in Asia). That's no small statement for a woman in 1965 and my understanding is that her education fostered her independent character that she was so known for up until present day. She will be sorely missed by those who knew her and my condolences to her classmates as well.

The Reactions of friends & classmates:

From Patricia (Patty) Mills Hinkle, '65 Thoughts about Bug Beddingfield:

- Her intellect was staggering.
- Conversations with Bug were always wide ranging, moving between the very deep and the raucously funny.
- No doubt there were books she hadn't read, but I can't think of one.
- More than half a century after graduation Bug could capture the heart of her MHC classmates, her teachers, even her housemothers, in short, affectionate, poignant and sometimes hilarious recollections.
- She clearly loved the area where she lived and the friends she had there.
- I wish I had met her dogs. They sounded special too.

From Judy Smith Paltrow, '65: My most important memory of Bug was finding her in the smoker about 4 am before the first day of comps when I couldn't sleep. She had some good advice. I was in awe of her intellect and her humor. It seemed that she was always a half second away from laughing. Did you all know that Bug could do the NYT crossword puzzle in her head?

From Meg Conkey, '65: I SO remember Bug. She was so wonderfully casual in dress but not at all casual as a smart and focused student, and I am sure she was wonderful as an attorney.

From Rose Corbett Gordon, '65: From the outset Bug was a distinct feature of MHC '65; so much so that her absence alters the portrait of our class. I daresay most of us knew Bug and clearly remember her intellect, her sturdiness, her informality of attire, her self-possession, and her laugh. Bug did like a good laugh, but an important part of her was very serious. Her reading material tended to be substantial; she spoke with authority about philosophy, politics, literature and more. That Bug was also familiar with popular culture we know for certain, because she was far and away the best among us at the Times crossword puzzles.

Bug had come to the college from Black Mountain, North Carolina. She would carry its melodic accent throughout her life, but I don't really recall her discussing Black Mountain, except with the one story about writing her freshman research paper using only one source: this as demonstration of the weakness of her high school background. Despite that background, she came to Mount Holyoke as one of only a handful of National Merit Scholars entering in 1961, and it was clear from the start that she was smart as a whip.

Bug was instinctively rational. Over the years if a friend would come to her with one of those irrational problems or dilemmas that make up the human narrative, her brow would furrow, and she would puzzle her way toward a logical explanation, attempting to help - but usually ending in a burst of laughter. Her professional life profited from this natural tendency toward reason, which she combined with an ability to master complexities and a tendency to speak in composed paragraphs. In addition, Bug was rigorously ethical, and over the years of reunion chats, she did talk of times she had encountered straight-on the more relaxed standards of some in the lofty reaches of NYC law firms. That made for a couple of rough spots for her. But Bug was tough.

Self Reliance sounds old-fashioned; for most of us it is the title of a high school reading assignment. It was also a virtue of Bug's: while she would join in as a lively and entertaining companion, she really was always quite all-right on her own. She traveled off for a Peace Corps year in Thailand just after Mount Holyoke; upon return, her college friends saw her quite a bit in the Boston area until she went off to law school. In following years we would always see her at reunions, and I spoke to her sporadically. Once about 30 years ago, on my way back from Michigan, I actually stopped at her place in Garrison, NY. Now Bug, we can be sure, never cracked open a House Beautiful or Martha Stewart's Living. The garage level of her house was given over completely to her bikes and bike equipment. On the main floor, pride of place was given to books. BUT in addition, she had several really beautiful hand-made quilts, as well as various pieces of unique and handsome furniture: wooden benches, stools, tables and such, made she said by her "Daddy," another rare reference to her North Carolina roots. Moreover she had fixed a delicious dinner, using two impressive cookbooks to fashion a healthy

vegetarian chili and mole sauce. So much for Good Housekeeping. She sent me on my way with a gift of books for my daughter.

The last time I saw Bug was at the 2015 reunion. She rode in on her bike; just back from a rigorous outing, she told some wonderful anecdotes, demonstrated some deep knee bends and responded to our comments about Middlemarch and Magic Mountain. Bug had read these books decades earlier, and in fact, this encounter in its entirety could have occurred in 1965; age had changed her very little. The last time I spoke to Bug, I caught her on her cell during a bike ride along her beautiful Avery Road, which meanders up and down above the Hudson River: rough bike ride for most. I told her I remembered it from my visit as the most beautiful road I had ever seen, and she loved to hear that. She loved Garrison and, as you can see from comments in her town's obituary, Garrison had embraced her. Anyway, we exchanged thoughts about the Democratic primaries. Looking back on it, I realize that, as infrequently as I spoke to her, she was a touchstone for those larger matters of the world and its workings. I will miss that.

How to say good-bye to someone who was so unsentimental? I guess just this: we heard you, you made a difference, and your absence makes a difference too.

Antonia Valentine on March 25, 2020 at 8:43 pm said: Ann was such a sweet woman - always a story to tell with her thick Southern accent. Always enjoyed giggling with her about her dog Perky. Sorry to see she has passed.

Eva Sharpe on March 25, 2020 at 8:58 pm said: I will always remember Ann's deep love of animals. She will be missed.

Margaret Yonco-Haines on March 25, 2020 at 11:22 pm said: I enjoyed many long, insightful and often hilarious conversations with Ann. She was a real character, in the best sense of the term.

Lillian Rosengarten on March 25, 2020 at 11:30 pm said: I feel very sad as there was no ending. We had a nice talk at Foodtown a few short weeks ago.

Michael Reisman on March 26, 2020 at 1:31 pm said: Ann was one smart lady, and very kind. It's hard to believe that she's gone. She especially loved dogs and they loved her (our dogs keep thinking they see her car down at the Foundry). I just found and pinned to my home office bulletin board a Robinson Jeffers poem that she printed out for us years ago after a beloved dog of ours died. The last line: "I am not lonely. I am not afraid. I am still yours."

Goldee Greene on April 11, 2020 at 10:25 pm said: Struck to hear of dear neighbor

Ann's passing. I do declare, just cannot believe I will never see that trademark orange sweatshirt ever again. Sure hated that Hillary! Rest in peace, rebel lady.

Obituary from The Highlands Current of Beacon, NY:

Ann Sterling Beddingfield, 75, of Garrison, died on March 20.

She was born in Black Mountain, North Carolina, on June 24, 1944, the daughter of Woodrow and Eunice Beddingfield. She was the valedictorian of her class at Owen High School in Black Mountain and went on to graduate from Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, and the University of North Carolina School of Law. She held various jobs as an attorney.

Her family and friends said she would be remembered for her quick wit, love of life, sense of humor and natural curiosity that led to many adventures, outdoors, intellectual and otherwise. She loved nature, including bird watching, photography of nature and was always ready to embrace the outdoors whether biking, kayaking and hiking or visits to a garden or a wolf preserve. Rain or other elements never seemed to get in the way of her explorations and adventures, they said.

She was also an extraordinary Renaissance person, an incredible storyteller, a fearless adventurer and a wonderful friend and neighbor, they said.

Ann is survived by her sister, Jody Floyd, two nieces and a nephew, as well as three great-nephews. Memorial donations may be made to any animal rescue organization.

(Posted May 2020)