A Nice Place to Lib & Learn

Hunter College, established as Normal College more than 102 years ago, has always offered bold, educational opportunities to women... In fact, it's still a far from normal place.

By Joan Dim

LORI STEINEM and Germaine Greer are impressive modern-day champions of women's liberation. But they are Javie-come-lately when compared to some trailblazing women who embarked on a college education more than one hundred years ago in what is now Hunter College.

One early Hunter graduate became the first woman to be a New York Municipal Court Judge, another founded the Lenox Hill Settlement House, still another became a "lady doctor" at a time when medical residencies for women were almost impossible to get.

These women succeeded, at least in part, because of Hunter. Then called The Normal College of the City of New York, Hunter opened Feb. 14, 1870, in a rented loft at 694 Broadway.

At the time, New York City was a lively, rapidly growing community with most of its population still living below 14th Street. Central Park had already been characterized as a "suffian refuge where ladies, children and the unprotected are safe from the merrty of williams." Park Avenue, uptown at 68th Street, was still isolated, although occasionally a wild goose might be seen idling along the street. The Third Avenue Elevator train was being built. Cars were horse-drawn, and the Brooklyn Bridge spanned the East River.

Although the 1870's were ripe with change, women remained second-class citizens. It would be another fifty years before they would be allowed to vote.

One of these girls, a member of the first Normal College class, was Harriet Rutter. Harriet, at 14, had sparkling eyes, light brown hair and enjoyed playing the piano. She had been handicapped for Normal College by Lydia Fowler Wadleigh, the school's first female superintendent. Harriet's father owned a book bindery on 14th Street. She had four younger sisters, all of whom also attended Normal College. After graduation, Harriet continued her education at Vassar College. There, she met and married William A. Eagleson, a gentleman who sold butter, eggs and cheese. The Eaglesons moved to Harlem, a fashionable neighborhood, and raised a family. One of their children, Georgia Reid, class of 1916, became the first Hunter College graduate to be admitted to the settlement founders provided day care for the children of old Yorkville residents plus social and health services for their families. Today, the number of people served by the settlement, now called the College Club of New York, has expanded and is so great that many other groups have been incorporated into it.
Fame Is Highlight Of Alumni Homecoming

The annual Alumni Homecoming, featuring the first alumni-sponsored film “Once There is ‘Fame’... There is Hunter,” will be held on Thursday evening, Oct. 26, at Roosevelt House, 47 East 65 St. Film showings will be at 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

“Fame,” premiered at last April’s Birthday Luncheon, interweaves material from the Alumni Association’s archives with interviews with 12 notable alumni: Jessica Eaglestone, 1899; Meta J. Schechter of the Diamond Jubilee Class of 1912; Mina Rees, recently-retired president of CUNY’s Graduate Center; Lorene Hershey, managing editor of Ladies Home Journal; N.Y.C. Deputy Police Inspector Gertrude Schimmel; Congresswoman Bella Abzug; actress Ruby Dee; Gunther Marx, director of corporate communications at American Standard; N.Y.C. Counselman Barry Saltman; Rita Robinson, assistant to the publisher of Time and Life; Frederic Brandes, ’70, of the CUNY Student Senate; and Mauro Casci, ’72, former student body president.

An added attraction will be a short film of the Hunter Alumni-Broadway Show League softball game.

Chairman of the 1972 Homecoming Committee is Enid Gittens Foreman.

Come and meet with friends, some of the notables above, and the newly-elected alumni officers and directors. Send $3 for each reservation to the Homecoming Committee, Alumni Association of Hunter College, 505 Park Ave., N.Y.C. 10022. Graduates of the Class of 1972 will be admitted free of charge.

Scholarship and Welfare Sponsors Art Show

Twentieth Century American artists will be featured at the Scholarship and Welfare Fund art exhibit, to be held at the Kennedy Galleries, 20 East 56th St., on Saturday, Nov. 11. The show, the second art exhibit sponsored by the Fund, will run from 4 to 7 p.m.

Mrs. Ira Goldenblum is chairing the art show committee. Sponsors are President Jacqueline G. Wexler, Mrs. David Klau, Commissioner of Consumer Affairs Bess Myerson and Metropolitan Opera soprano Regina Resnik. Mrs. Mordecai Rochlin is president of the Scholarship and Welfare Fund.

Tickets, at $15 each or two for $25, are available at the Fund’s office, 505 Park Ave., Rm. 1902, telephone 360-2860. All proceeds will be contributed to the Second Century Fund, earmarked for student aid.

CULTURE LINE

Starting this month, New Yorkers will be able to call a single number for information on cultural happenings within all colleges of the City University. The new “Culture Line,” (212) 360-2834, is a community service of CUNY’s University Student Senate.

HUNTER ELEMENTARY MOVES TO 53rd ST.

The campus elementary school has a new home this semester. Rental of 50,600 square feet of space at 425 East 53 Street was approved by the City University of New York Board of Higher Education during July. The building was formerly the United Nations School.

The new site, which is under contract for the next ten years, is viewed as “superior to where we are now,” by Dr. Bernard Miller, director of the campus schools.

The elementary school has moved twice in two years, and the current temporary location at 329 East 63 Street is inadequate for the needs of the school. Approximately 350 students attend the grammar school.

Instead of traditional classrooms, the building, originally a warehouse, has been partitioned into 3 large areas. One will be used for each of the three new divisions—preprimary (nursery and kindergarten), primary (first to third grades) and intermediate (fourth to sixth grades).

The children work at their own speed within each of the new divisions. There is a large area which will serve as a gymnasium, and facilities for science laboratories are also available.

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mitted to the Cornell Medical School. She became a doctor of obstetrics and was named professional woman of the year in 1955.

Dr. Reid, an active woman in her mid-seventies, described the difficulties of being a “lady doctor” in the early 1900s. “Even as late as 1916,” she said, “it was very difficult to get started. All the good hospital residencies automatically went to men.” Now retired after 50 years of practice, Dr. Reid serves as a consultant in gynecology at the Beekman Downtown Hospital.

For a school that was initially created to educate only teachers, the career accomplishments of Hunter graduates make a heady list. Hunter produced the first woman, Soia Mentschikoff Llewellyn, appointed to the faculty of Harvard Law School; Miss America, Bess Myerson, who gracefully moved from a career in show business to the world of politics, where she became New York City’s Commissioner of Consumer Affairs; the dancer, Pearl Primus, whose work and life link Africa to the United States; a Congresswoman, Bella Abzug, who fought for civil rights long before it was fashionable and has become a symbol of the women’s liberation movement; a journalist, Judith Crist, whose criticism makes her one of the country’s major authorities on films; a vice president of Bonwit Teller, Helen Galland Loewus; a syndicated columnist specializing in finance, Sylvia Porter; as well as one of the top female educators in the United States, Mina Rees, who retired last June as head of the Graduate Division of CUNY.

In 1940, at the dedication of Hunter’s Park Avenue building, the poet Robert P. Tristam Coffin composed an ode called “The Palace of Park Avenue.” Two lines from that poem sum up Hunter’s role in yesterday and today’s world:

“Here in a college for a sex set free
Sits the hope of our humanity...”

HELEN LUCKEY SIMIS

We note with sadness the passing of Helen Luckey Simis, president of the Alumni Association from 1938 to 1944. Her death came shortly before the association’s Birthday Luncheon at which she was to be honored as a member of the Hunter Hall of Fame, in recognition of her years of service to the association.