

spring gala



Alumni marked the start of Hunter College's second century with a Spring Gala. The luncheon event, attended by loyal and devoted alumni and friends, was held at the Americana Hotel in New York City on Sunday, April 25.

The Spring Gala, which replaced the Birthday Luncheon this year on the alumni calendar, drew a crowd of 550 people. The highlights included, in addition to milestone class gatherings and prize drawings, an announcement by Hunter College President Jacqueline Wexler that the Alumni Association will become part of the College structure in the near future and that, consequently, all alumni will be members of the Association (and dues no longer will be required for membership).

Alumni from many classes were in attendance. They ranged from Jessica Eagleson, 1899, and Ida Toplon Bernstein and Clarisse Bloom Hellman of the class of 1901 to Ida Kartzwell Shur, 1970. For the classes of 1921 and 1946, it was an especially notable event, marking their 50th and 25th anniversaries, respectively.

Presiding at the affair was Hertha Dreher Winsch, Alumni Association President. The featured speaker was Hunter College President Wexler.

The luncheon was preceded by milestone class receptions from noon to 2:00 p.m. For many it was a day filled with reminiscence and a chance to renew friendships.

Fanny K. Casher, chairman of the Gala, welcomed the guests. Frances Hennessy delivered the golden anniversary class message. Mildred Rayack Plotnick spoke on behalf of the silver anniversary class.

President Wexler in her speech remarked on the proud history of Hunter College, and what it has meant both to students over the years and New York

City itself. She noted the present budget crisis as it affects public colleges and the excitement and potentiality of the open admissions program. She called upon alumni and friends of Hunter College to help meet the challenges facing higher education in the 1970's. (An edited version of her speech follows on this page.)

Jessica Eagleson, our link with the 19th century, assisted Terry Drucker in the prize drawing. Among the prizes awarded were a weekend at the Americana Hotel for two, a Judith Lieber handbag, tickets to the Philharmonic and subscriptions to *New York Magazine*.

The good cheer of the Spring Gala must be attributed to the dedication of many alumni. This would include in addition to Mrs. Casher, Isabelle Freund Weill '26, Reservations Chairman; Hadassah Winer Gold, '46, Gala Treasurer; Terry Drucker '54, Membership Drive Chairman; Estelle Sommers Opstbaum '43, Hospitality Chairman. They also had the help of many able and hard-working committee members. The members of the Reservations Committee were: Isabel McLaughlin '15, Theresa Molloy '21, Sarah Cohen Neumark '31, Martha Korn Weidberg '31, Virginia Zuckerman '55. Serving on the Membership Drive Committee were: Phyllis LeKashman Glantz '54, Barbara Brotman Janes '52, Joan Gellinoff Masket '53, Lucy Babsky Perry '27, Meta Aronson Schechter '12.

Neither to be forgotten are the representatives of milestone classes who helped insure the success of the day: Ruth Lewinson '16, Lillian Goldman Schwartz '21, Isabelle Freund Weill '26, Fanny Kaufman Casher '31, Annabelle Thurman German '36, Charlotte Schattner Dutka '41, Mildred Cohen Davison '41, Mildred Rayack Plotnick '46, Natalie Levy Vernon '51, Mort Berkowitz '61, and Mary Irene Burke '66.

President Wexler

“ I come to you this afternoon at this lovely

Spring Gala in a symbolic kind of time for us to rejoice. We should rejoice even though we live in very troublesome times, though we live scarred—literally, figuratively and symbolically—because we may well live in the most important decade that this century has ever known, a decade which must be one of social reconstruction, a decade which must be one which will heal the wounds, the gaping wounds, that were left in the fifties in all parts of our sector.

I think we have to be extraordinarily realistic about how tough is the charge that is before us for the rest of this decade. You need only to read the headlines of newspaper after newspaper, day after day in this city; all tried and true New Yorkers, from my much revered predecessor President Gambrell on, have been more used than I to the “wolf-wolf” call of the budget year after year in the City University. But “wolf-wolf” calls have often lulled people to sleep and have made people believe that the wolf will never really be at the door. I think it is incumbent upon me this afternoon, even in this most extraordinary loving and laughing good time, to be sure that we soberly reflect on the critical budget situation in New York City, in New York State, in every one of its agencies, and certainly in the City University of New York. You are the beneficiaries of one of the finest →

educational systems that this country has known; you are the beneficiaries of a free education of quality at Hunter College, which, as I said at the Centennial Celebration some fifteen months ago, was the benefit of New York citizens who, way ahead of their time, could see the importance of first-class free education for women; you represent more than I can represent that legacy; and you stand as the proud products of what that kind of investment by a New York citizenry over a century ago meant to this city, to this state and to this nation. It is crucial that you join with me, with every one of us on this dais this afternoon, and with the legions of other people in this city to meet the seriousness of what this budget crisis can mean for the City University and for New York in general. I keep saying 'for the City University and for New York' because I think it is politically unwise and, in my own judgment, unethical to talk about one big piece of a pie and not the complete pie. I believe it is incumbent upon us to recognize the extraordinary seriousness of the whole problem in New York City: the welfare problem is acute beyond measure; the hospital problem is acute beyond measure; the problem of opportunities—perhaps to be stultified opportunities—in the arts is serious beyond measure. And so we must join at this time in recognizing the importance of doing everything we can about solving the problems that have been thrust upon the city by the budgetary cuts in Albany and by the kind of laissez-faire attitude about the tax bundle proposed by the city.

I do not wish to take a position about particular parts of the tax bundle. I will say straightforwardly that I, as a citizen of this country and as a citizen of this universe, am aghast, personally, at the sales tax. I believe that it is regressive; I would want to spend a great deal of my life and any kind of effort I have convincing the citizenry that, in a long term way, the sales tax is regressive and taxes the poor, and that a graduated income tax, properly administered, is really the only fair tax this country has ever set up. However, having taken that position and pledging my own life and professional career to standing behind that position, I would still plea, as one of the responsible presidents of a major city agency, that, if we are to attack the tax package this time on discrete and particular aspects of that tax package, then we are in danger of hurting the major institutions beyond recall.

We have just been through a year at Hunter College, a year of great adventure, a year of some trouble, but a year, I think, of extraordinary rational growth. We have begun to meet the challenge of open admissions; and I think that everyone on this dais would support me in saying that we have met

that challenge well and that, given half a chance, in five years we will have the most dramatically successful educational experiment that higher education in the United States has ever seen; and I say that with great hope. We will be circulating to you, during the summer and fall months, some of the beginning hard data that we have on open admissions students, some of the beginning hard data that will hearten you as indeed it has begun to hearten us, data on what we have been able to do in areas where we could create the supportive services—the backup—that gave the students the beginning chance we wanted to give them. It is a beginning and that is all, but the trend at Hunter, I think, is unmistakably positive. The attitude of the general faculty has, I believe, become more positive during the operating months of open admissions than it was at the beginning of the year.

At the same time that we meet these challenges, we go on developing a broad-based set of programs at Hunter that I'm sure may surprise some of you even in its being. As I enjoyed the lovely fleeting meetings with you at the various receptions upstairs, I was surprised whenever one of you would ask, "Do we really have a Nursing School?" "Is there really an Institute of Health Sciences?" In one sense, you are now on Hunter College's campus because Hunter College's campus is all over New York City; we have just allowed a number of Wall Street corporations, hotels, hospitals and business enterprises to sit among our own installations. Not only do we have the installation at 695 Park Avenue, but we also have the high school, now at 466 Lexington Ave. The College has taken over the former high school building on 68th Street; and, within the next week, we hope to announce the transfer of the elementary school to beautiful new quarters near Lincoln Center. The present elementary school will also be used for the college in the future. In addition, we have developed, at the Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing, the biggest and one of the finest collegiate nursing schools in the city, and I think, in the country—over 1400 nurses at Hunter-Bellevue. We have developed the Institute for Health Sciences, a large and growing new school at 105th St.; a magnificent School of Social Work, given to us through philanthropic funds and supported in a growing way by other people's insightful generosity. That building at 79th St.—the creature of your revered teacher and administrator Dean Weintraub—and the other installations have begun to move Hunter all over the city, and I give you only a beginning list. We carry on the development of graduate programs, we carry on the frontier movement that quality needs for this city and for this state and for this nation, even as we spend many of our waking hours on and

on into the night, trying to meet the challenge of open admissions.

However, if after this first year of adventure, investment, toil and frustration, the budget is severely critical to us, the price that we will pay at Hunter College, and the price that you will pay as Hunter graduates and as citizens of New York is a price that is incalculable. This nation, has, I believe made a great error in the last decade or decade-and-a-half by raising the expectations of many groups, perhaps unwisely raising them beyond any point of fulfilling them. If this time we raise the investment in emotional and psychic power of the disadvantaged, and then stamp it to the ground by insufficient funds for the next year, the price, I believe, will be one of the greatest social prices that has ever been paid in New York.

I beg you today to believe the seriousness of the budget crisis. I do not believe that it is another "wolf-wolf" call of the same variety that has been heard spring after spring. The Mayor has outlined his own options—Option 1, Option 2, Option 3 and now Option 4. I cannot go over them for you in great detail but Option 3 is the basic kind of option which we must have if we are going to carry on the tradition of Hunter College and the tradition of the City University, and carry them on without robbing the other important agencies of this city. Option 3 requires the restoration of full state support on a matching one to one basis. This was promised by the state for a number of years and was recalled by the Senate bill this spring. Option 3 also requires the practice of at least a major part of the Mayor's tax package, and it is required that Albany allow that package to go through. I solicit your support for that as Hunter alumni; I solicit your support for that kind of movement as citizens of this city and of this state and I solicit it in this very strong feminine crowd; I think I won't solicit it as a mother of a human family. Many of you are mothers of individual families, but all of us are mothers of the human family. The city of New York and this state and this nation have got to get the concept of supporting the human family. Everyone of us in this audience in some way believes in some form of social welfare state. We believe in some form of social welfare state if by that social welfare state we mean a family, a family called MacDonald or Weinberg or Wexler or McGillicuddy or Wolinsky. Everyone of us in this room supports our own children; we support them from the time they are small with the best kind of housing we can get them; we support them from the time that they come to us with the best kind of food and medical care we can get them; and if we have any resources at all we create trust funds to be sure that our children and our children's children will have the kind of benefits that they need, and the

endowment funds to go to the colleges of their own choice. I think that no matter where one stands in the political spectrum one understands that kind of feeling. We believe that we must invest in young people in order to give them the head start, the chance for the initiative that will put them forward in human society as the investors in the next generation. When we talk about the City of New York, when we talk about the City University of New York, we're talking about a human family on a deeper scale. The children of the City of New York are the children of welfare mothers and the children of Wall Street bankers. The greatness of the City University of New York and, indeed, the greatness of Hunter College was that it did not make a distinction between one and the other. And so there are those of us in this audience, I'm sure there are those of you, who came from already wealthy, well-endowed families. There are also those of us in this audience, and I include myself in this one, who came from families that were indeed trying to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps at the same time that they were trying to educate us. And the greatness of Hunter was that it made no distinction. The even greater greatness of Hunter, at this time, is that it has begun to lessen those distinctions more and more; our ethnic distribution is greater; our sociological distribution is greater; Hunter, like CCNY, is truly an open admissions school. If you were to come into our foyer today you would see the crowds waiting for the elevator; you might be a little afraid that it was a rerun of last spring. Rather, it is simply the terrific overcrowding, the terrific press for those elevators by the numbers of students that have been thrust upon us—the numbers that we welcome because we believe to do so is in the Hunter tradition of being an open school that does not make its distinctions on sociological or economic grounds. I tell you that this is your heritage. You must be, this day, for open admissions if you understand what it is about because you are the creatures of open admissions; you are the creatures of an open admissions system that started in 1870, that allowed everyone in this city to go to school. True, at that point we had what were called admission standards, and you probably stand for those admission standards. But behind you and me and our ability to meet those standards were a mother and father, were a school system, were all kinds of other tutorial backups that were not of our own making—backups that were our statistical luck because we happened to be born into a particular piece of society. We are asking for that statistical luck to be spread out, to be spread out to children and young people all over this city. We accept the challenge of trying to provide the tutorial services that are necessary; but we must have the financial backing. We beg you to join in a massive thrust of pressure on Albany, in the coming two weeks, so that the

City's Option 3 is reached, and so the City University may operate and may develop in this great adventure on which it is now launched. In addition to that, I ask you to consider your own roles, your own critical importance, in meeting the philanthropic private call that is upon all alumni today. Less and less is there any real distinction between the public and the private sector. Certainly, I respect and I support this terrible fight of Columbia University and New York University, to pick the two classic examples in this city; I continue to support the private institution which I headed myself; I serve as a trustee at another private institution, the University of Pennsylvania; I would do anything in my power to help sustain those institutions too. But the private institutions must be supported by more and more public funds, as they are indeed beginning to be supported; and the public institution must be supported by more and more private funds as well. Real academic freedom comes from a



President Wexler

multiple support base. You are the beneficiaries of the total scholarship program which was the free education at Hunter College; you are both the daughters of that alma mater and, in another way, as I suggested to you a year and a half ago, you are the parents of that institution. The institution depends on you; the institution must have more support from you, even more support than has come from such a devoted group of alumni. Many of you in this room were forward-thinking enough to establish the Centennial Fund, were forward-thinking enough even before that, to establish and sustain the Scholarship and Welfare Fund, and a few of you were able to solicit important specific grants for Hunter College. As I said to you before, the School of Social Work—the

entire building—is a private grant to Hunter College, a private gift. It was sustained later by scholarship support from a magnificent lady, Mrs. Dorothy Burke Bernard, whose loving sister and her husband have recently given us a second gift of \$100,000 to support that scholarship fund. It is only a beginning. If the Hunter School of Social Work is to fulfill the mission that is its own, we must establish, within the next two or three years, a two or three million dollar endowment scholarship for that school, if we are to draw to it and sustain in it the kind of students that this city needs to have developed there. I could give you one example after another. The students sitting at either end of this dais are aware that we have no lounge space at Hunter College. They are on the verge of giving up their locker space for lounge space. Yet, if they make that decision, I must call upon you and upon other philanthropic private enterprises to help us develop some kind of liveable space for our students other than a now-overpacked cafeteria in which one grabs a seat and holds on because there will not be another seat for the rest of the day. We have, in every way at Hunter, the best of times and the worst of times.

I believe you are devoted alumni. I believe you are sincere alumni. Indeed, I believed that about our faculty when I came and I believe it even more at this time. I told Mrs. Wunsch and her officers, after much discussion with them, that I am ready to support them in doing away with formal dues for membership and in gambling on the much greater and long range investment in you, the Hunter alumni, to support your alma mater in the general case. We are not a club; we are not a clubby place; we are, rather, an extraordinary example of the human family. We have many distinctive programs and emphases; certainly, the Hunter alumni are one of the most distinctive emphatic points that we shall ever have. But we want to welcome every Hunter alumnus, whether or not they are on those rolls; we want to welcome them back to Hunter and ask them to share with us in this adventure of the next half decade or decade. I pledge myself to that. Unless I am ousted, which, of course, is possible in this university, I am here to invest the important last years of energy in my life in one place, Hunter College, because I think that there is no place in the world that is more important at this time. I ask you to share with me in that task. ”