



The 95th Birthday Luncheon

Rubie Saunders '50

Cries of "You haven't changed a bit," echoed through the ballrooms of the Americana Hotel on February 6, when thirteen hundred Alumni gathered to celebrate the ninety-fifth birthday of the College at the gala luncheon party.

Before the luncheon began, this year's Milestone Classes—1905, '10, '15, '20, '25, '30, '35, '39-'40, '45, '50, '55, '60—had met in private reception rooms in the Hotel, beginning at eleven. At noon, there was a general reception.

Remembering old ties, exchanging good news, the hundreds who thronged into the main ballroom at one o'clock continued to compare notes—to recall the past, to chatter of children and grandchildren, of tours and travels, of work and careers. It was a noisy, happy crowd.

First Vice-President Meta Schechter opened the luncheon with warm words of welcome. The singing of the national anthem by Deborah Kieffer followed. Then Monsignor John Paul Haverty, Secretary of Education, Archdiocese of New York, delivered the invocation.

With the dessert course of the luncheon came the presentation of the Birthday Cake by the children from

Lenox Hill—the neighborhood Settlement House founded seventy years ago by Hunter Alumnae. Mrs. Leslie Graff, chairman for many decades of our Lenox Hill Committee, expressed a brief greeting and a plea for continued support of the Settlement. To see her and hear her speak, as she stood surrounded by the group of children, was a moving experience.

The president of the Alumni Association, Anna Trinsley, presided during the afternoon. She greeted the Alumni for the Board of Directors and said that the officers are gratified that the membership has grown so greatly. She urged all graduates present to become "active" members.

The principal speakers, Mayor Wagner and President Meng, were presented by the President. The Mayor drew loud applause when he spoke of his commitment to free tuition. (The addresses by the Mayor and President Meng follow.)

Bess Myerson Grant, Chairman of the Centennial Fund Committee, announced that almost \$65,000 had been contributed since October, in this first year's drive, for the million dollar Alumni gift for Hunter in 1970.

Bess said that we all have a responsibility to future generations to meet this goal, and that there is a great deal of work still to be done.

After the musical interlude, selections presented by Deborah Kieffer of the Hunter College Opera Workshop, came the roll call of the Milestone Classes. Anna Trinsey asked all the class groups to rise and the climax of the roll call came when more than three hundred members rose of the silver anniversary class.

For the golden anniversary classes two representatives

spoke, Elizabeth Vera Loeb Stern, January '15, and E. Adelaide Hahn, June '15. For the silver class, 1940, Ada M. Epstein brought greetings. The birthday gifts of '15 and '40 were announced and recollections of college experiences in the days of '15 and '40 were touched on by all three class officers.

The luncheon closed with the singing of the *Ivy Leaf*—another memorable College Birthday celebration concluded.

Mayor Wagner Brings City's Greetings

Happy Birthday . . . on the ninety-fifth birthday of Hunter College!

To the faculty, administration, alumni and students of Hunter College—and the guests here today—I say, for the City of New York, welcome to this birthday party.

In February 1870, ninety-five years ago, the first classes opened at what was then called the Female Normal and High School. It was an extraordinary school then, as it is today. It was created by an extraordinary man, a poor Irish immigrant who was years ahead of his time in his fight for academic freedom and for the full emancipation of women.

In those days there were colleges that had English Departments, History Departments and Science Departments. Some colleges had what they called "Female Departments"—which was considered rather daring at the time. But a public college just for females was almost

revolutionary.

Hunter is still pioneering today, but primarily in its venturesome scholarship. Ninety-five years ago, however, Hunter was a fighting cause.

It has been said that when you educate a man, you educate an individual; but when you educate a woman, you educate a whole family. The founder of this school, Thomas Hunter, believed that to educate a woman in teaching was to educate not just a family but a whole classroom of children and even an entire community.

In developing this college, Dr. Hunter encountered stiff opposition. Those were the days of Boss Tweed, who was not exactly a liberal in his social doctrines; Dr. Hunter was almost defeated in the Board of Education for the Presidency of the college which was his dream and brainchild.

But he prevailed and against tremendous odds he built

The Mayor autographs Luncheon programs



this school step-by-step. Through Hunter's influence, the cause of higher education for women was accelerated and extended far beyond the boundaries of New York City.

Hunter became the nation's largest women's college. Today Hunter is one of the nation's largest coeducational colleges. It is not only one of the largest but also one of the finest. We are proud of it.

Hunter is today—and always was—a school with a primary emphasis on scholarship. Today that tradition continues to be maintained, with a special feature, I am told, which is the personal attention which faculty members devote to individual students.

Those traditions were the hallmark of President Shuster's administration. They have been carried on by President Meng.

Hunter College, like the other colleges of the City University, exists for the students, and not vice versa. This is as it should be. Yet Hunter College also has a record of efficiency and precision.

Last year we started "Operation Shoehorn," whose purpose was to make place for more students than had ever previously been enrolled—to stretch the facilities of the City University—to give opportunity to additional numbers of young New Yorkers to be schooled and to fulfill their potentials at our City colleges. At the request of the Board of Higher Education, I was able to persuade the Board of Estimate and the City Council to authorize the additional money required for Operation Shoehorn.

In the first year, the target of Operation Shoehorn was 1600 more freshmen. Of this total, the quota assigned to Hunter was 550. Under the direction of President Meng, Hunter College opened its doors a little wider and increased its admissions not by 548 or 549 or 551, but by exactly 550. An electric computer could not have done better.

Operation Shoehorn is proving to be a success. Success, however, is not to be measured just by meeting a quota. Success is to be measured in terms of the opportunity given to 1600 more young people—550 here at Hunter—who will be able to play a vastly more useful role in their community, in society and in their families.

Individual lives will be enriched. The City will be enriched.

This is the motive and purpose behind our community college system in New York City. It is the very theme of our basic policy in the field of higher education. We must expand the horizons of opportunity for more and more New Yorkers—and especially for those from families of lower income levels.

This is the reason to cling to and defend our fundamental policy and program of free tuition in all the col-

leges of our City University. As long as I am Mayor, that policy will be maintained.

Moreover, it is my belief and feeling that the resistance we have offered in the past to the threatened abolition of our free tuition system has greatly discouraged the attacks against it. There is even a good prospect that our efforts to restore the legislative mandate for free tuition to its traditional place on our statute books will be successful. You may be sure that I will do everything I can in behalf of such a move.

Hunter College is one of our prime exhibits and demonstrations that a free tuition system is compatible with and even promotes high standards of scholarship and academic excellence.

I know that the City's confidence in Hunter College is fully shared by private donors. In the past, Hunter alumni have been staunch supporters of the college. Financial assistance to needy students, in addition to free tuition, has kept open the doors of opportunity to uncounted numbers who could not otherwise have had the benefit of a college education, not to speak of a Hunter College education.

Now you are responding to an historic alumni cause—a development fund for Hunter's Centennial Anniversary. Today we learn of the good start made toward that goal. But there is a long way to go.

Only last September it was my pleasure to announce the generous donation by the Silberman Foundation of the new building for the Hunter College School of Social Work. That gift will enable our City's only public institution of professional social work to triple the number of trained social workers it graduates.

This was an outstanding act of generosity not only to the college, but to the community at large.

Fortunately there have been many individuals, as well as foundations, which have recognized the superlative qualities of Hunter. Certainly no one is in a better position to appreciate the lasting value of a Hunter education than you who are gathered here today.

I know of no more crucial unfinished business in our democracy than to advance the guarantee of equal access to education. The future of Hunter is interwoven with that cause.

Today in this City there are hundreds and thousands of talented young boys and girls who have ahead of them a whole life to find or to lose. They may never know your names. But you will know the joy of giving them a chance for fulfillment.

Robert P. Tristram Coffin said it best when he read his ode to Hunter at the dedication of the new Park Avenue building a quarter of a century ago:

The seeds of dawn are waiting here upcurled
In young unwearied minds, untouched by sorrow
Who will go forth to plow and sow tomorrow . . .