

BONNIE SQUIRES: Penn's 50th reunion energizes Class of 1962

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By Bonnie Squires

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This past weekend was a triple threat: my 50th Reunion Weekend at Penn, my birthday and Mother's Day. A group of classmates and I had been planning this momentous celebration for more than two years now. And every five years ever since graduation I have been planning and chairing the Women's Luncheon for the Class of '62.

This year I asked the wonderful staff persons at Penn to provide me with six Penn gifts for special awards. They selected beautiful Penn pens with small leather-bound notebooks, all in a leather case. Since more than 50 women from our class showed up at the luncheon and some had not pre-registered, it was just fate that had four of the six winners all from our area.

So who were the winners? Lita Indzel Cohen, Esq., a longtime Lower Merion commissioner who went on to serve a number of terms in the state legislature, was the only elected official in the room. She won a prize for her service.

Who had the most degrees from our alma mater? Beverly Willis Emanuel, Ph.D., a world-renowned human-genome researcher at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, had earned her undergraduate degree, her graduate degree and an honorary doctorate as well, all at Penn. Another prize-winner.

Who had the most grandchildren? Barbara Hewitt Rennix, who grew up a block away from me in Wynnewood, was way out front in this department with 16 grandchildren. She and her late husband had also served as house parents for a number of teenage pregnant girls. Another prize-winner.

And using my discretion as chair of the luncheon I awarded **Joni Lahr Magee, M.D.**, a Courage award. Dr. Magee had missed our class Commencement in 1962 because a few days before the ceremony she had been hit by a car on campus and spent months in full casts on both her legs. The accident propelled her into medical school once she healed, even though becoming a physician had never been part of her initial plan. She participated in Monday's Commencement to make up for the one she had missed 50 years ago.

I always ask every single woman classmate to come to the microphone and tell us some of the most interesting accomplishments of their lives. One of our classmates who regularly shows up for reunions flies in from her home in Peru where she has had an outstanding career in public health as a nurse.

There were lawyers, NBC network executives, major publishing-house editors, social workers, teachers and varied business leaders in this amazing group of women. And even disabilities never stopped them: classmate Mary Ann Greenawalt runs a national food-distribution firm while using a wheelchair after an automobile accident decades ago. Her gross last year? Five million dollars!

Classmate Maury Povich and his wife, Connie Chung, joined us for Saturday's cocktails, dinner and show at the Annenberg Center. It was a joy to see Maury again and reminisce about his keynote address when I was inducted into the Philadelphia Public Relations Hall of Fame a few years ago. As classmate Steve Eisen said in his introduction, Maury is probably the most famous

person to come out of the Class of '62.

Maury and Connie interviewed on stage four of our outstanding classmates, including Chestnut Hill's Judge Jim Fitzgerald, who had the prescription for curing budget woes in our state: stop throwing money at prisons and invest in education instead! Judge Fitzgerald got two rounds of applause for his wise remarks.

Class president Howard Berkowitz, the managing partner of Black Rock, an international investment firm, expanded not only on his financial prowess but also on his volunteer experience as national president of the Anti-Defamation League. His ADL activities had taken him around the world to meet with top leaders in many countries, including Iran's Green Party opposition leaders.

The medical panel on Friday harnessed the talents of four more classmates including our Nobel Prize-winning research scientist, Michael Brown, M.D. Anything you ever wanted to know about cholesterol, human genomes, geriatric psychiatry or stem-cell research was covered by these incredibly talented Penn alumni men and women.

President Amy Gutmann was in her glory, especially welcoming us to the Reunion Leadership Reception where each of the reunion classes posed for photos with her and a giant check bearing the total donations from each class.

The Class of 1962 made history again by producing the first 50th Reunion Yearbook featuring photos, bios and essays, along with historic and through-the-years photos of our class's accomplishments. We dedicated the obelisk marking the entrance to our Ben on the Bench walkway, which had been our 25th-reunion gift to Penn.

The Saturday-night dinner had gold-colored wooden service plates at each table setting with hand-painted wise sayings from Benjamin Franklin, Penn's founder. And we each got to take one home as a souvenir of a memorable weekend.

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