

HOW WE REMEMBER RAY CARTER

Compiled by Bob Keidel

Last October, three days after the Princeton-Harvard game, Ray suffered his third heart attack and died, while he and Nancy were visiting Ray's daughter Susan in New Canaan. Ray had enjoyed watching the Princeton team beat Harvard after which at a dinner party given by the Hewsons he led the group in singing Princeton songs, a role he loved. They were on their way back to Rockport, Maine, when Ray had his attack. When our time comes, let us hope that it comes as quickly, and on the heels of such a happy time.

Ray touched so many of us and, in his quiet way, did so much for the Class and for Princeton, that we thought it fitting for his to be the cover story of this summer's letter. The major milestones in his life are well covered in the obit written by Frank Townend for the Alumni Weekly, and we quote from it here so these facts can become a part of this account:

He prepared at St. Albans School. At Princeton, he was on the lacrosse team, the University orchestra, the St. Paul's Society, and was president of Court Club. He roomed with Bill Galliher and Hank Thompson.

He worked for one year after graduation for the War Department in Washington, and then until retirement for the plastics products division of DuPont.

From 1971-88, he served as our class agent for annual giving and most of us remember his personal letters. During that time he raised \$2.5 million, including a record amount at our 50th. His father was in the class of 1899. His son, Beau, was in the class of 1965, and his grandson, John, is in the Class of '96. He married Katherine Gribbel, who died in 1977. They had four children: Sally Crawford, Betsy Bannerman, Susan Avanzino, and Raymond H. Carter II (Beau). After Kitty's death, he married Nancy Harwood, who survives him.

Nancy has sent us some wonderful reminiscences about Ray. To those of us who knew him only in his later, more settled years, Ray seemed to be a quiet, well-behaved and lovable fellow. Not so, apparently, in his youth. History records that he was a first class prankster. Nancy remembers hearing, at drink times on their porch in Rockport looking out over Penobscot Bay, about how he rode around town

hanging on the back of the iceman's truck clutching the ice tongs, coming back, to the dismay of his mother, covered with sawdust; about how, as an early camper at Camp Chiwonki, being confined to the camp for some earlier infractions, he prevented the rest of the camp from going to the movies by pouring water in the gas tank of the camp's truck; how he and a friend lowered the



Ray at the Grad College in 1993 - our 60th. Photographer Marsh in the background.

yacht club burgee one dark night, hoisting in its place someone's dinghy. But the lovable nature must have shone through because instead of being banished for life from Camp Chiwonki, he came back for a total of 16 summers ending as head counselor.

He loved to make poems when the spirit moved him, which Nancy says was often, thus recording many memorable events. He loved singing songs, Princeton songs and fascinating old ballads; following the football team both home and away. Basketball likewise - Pete Carrill was his hero. A six-pack of beer was enough to start a party.

The Class of 1933 was introduced to Nancy in 1978 at the Sonoma Hotel in Cambridge when she came with Ray to the Harvard-Princeton game. They were to be married the next year. They had been close friends and neighbors in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts when Ray was working there for DuPont. Nancy's husband became a victim of Alzheimer's Disease about the time Ray's first wife Kitty died and they had many griefs to share. Fortunately, they had many other things in common, especially a love of Maine, where they both had houses.

A controlling factor in both their lives was the care and nurturing of nine children, four of his and five of hers, and the seemingly myriad in-laws and grandchildren. At

Princeton and in Maine, their houses were always welcome refuges for the gang. In Maine, they would shuttle between Ray's Rockport house and Nancy's "compound" on North Haven Island, about an hour's commute in Topaz, Nancy's speedy "yellow peril" (the editor's words), or over two hours by ferry from Rockland. There were numerous cookouts, swimming parties, tennis matches. Nancy was a consummate boatman (boatwoman?), knowing how to thread her way through the islands and ledges in the Maine fogs and tidal currents, sometimes causing Ray's grey hair to turn a little greyer.

Some of the above came to us in a memo from Barbara Hewson. She and Bill were lifelong friends of the Carters, sharing many happy times and trips with Ray and Nancy. In Barbara's words:

From sailing the Maine waters with Justine and Bob Keidel, boating down the Danube, sailing up the Adriatic to Venice, renting an ancient house in the Dordogne, and an even more venerable one in Tuscany, they were the best of companions, easy-going, enthusiastic, coping. Hardly a sidewalk cafe in France, Italy, Istanbul, wherever, was spared Ray and Bill's harmonic rendition of Old Nassau over a beer.

"Kaleidoscopic memories about Ray: his deep love for Princeton, his passionate rooting for the football team, basketball, lacrosse, hockey, swimming, women's field hockey (the leader of the Bonnie Hewson '73 Fan and Shouting Club).

"I think of Ray as always beaming, appreciating amusing events and people - - a happy man, wonderful husband, great friend."

Others have expressed to us the warmest of feelings about Ray. A note from Dave Ludlum recalls the close companionship between the Carters and the Ludlums for the more than 35 years they both lived in Princeton. In Dave's words:

"Particularly memorable were the fall football games and especially the gatherings at the away-games - Harvard, Dartmouth, Cornell - Ray leading the cheering and the singing, Ray playing on his waste basket. On one memorable occasion when everyone else had retired for the night, we were part of a foursome led by Ray that went door-to-door serenading the sleepy heads in the inn we'd taken over for the weekend. More recently at

Dartmouth weekends there were gala parties in Orford. Then the last Dartmouth football game, 1993, the second half played in a wild snowstorm that Ray sat through to the end.

"There were trips to Ireland and to Scotland, Ray, Nancy, Rita and I. Ray was with a cane on the last trip but also with smiling determination to keep up with the action whatever it was."

From Josh Billings, who never stayed anywhere else in Princeton (he had a permanent room at the Carter Hotel):

"Ray was a quiet gentle man who was warmly friendly. He was conscientious and well organized, and carried the responsibilities of Class Agent persistently, tenaciously and relentlessly resulting in high records for 1933 year after year. At our 50th and 55th he set new reunion records for a Princeton Class. At one point we kidded each other that the Billingses might buy half of the Carter house on Prospect St. and we'd retire there.

"Ray was so lucky that he and Nancy found each other. They were a perfect fit. They guarded each other and supported each other. Nancy watched over Ray's health without nagging and Ray, knowingly, like a little boy, twinkled and cheated. He was surrounded, enlivened, and sometimes confused, by his and Nancy's children, all of whom turned to them for advice and guidance.

"I for one will never feel that Princeton is the same without Ray!"

Hugh Wise '32 was a boyhood chum. They were close friends from the earliest days at St. Albans School beginning in 1926, and in Princeton where they belonged to the same church and saw a lot of each other. Hugh writes:

"He was a gentleman in every way - not only in the way he acted, but in his every thought; sincerely considerate of other people; his beliefs, religious and secular, firmly held and unshakeable, but he did not seek to impose them on others. He had great common sense, but was not reluctant to join in something which seemed like a good thing at the time. He was always a good companion and a staunch friend in good times and difficult times. In short, he was an admirable person and a true friend."

Finally, some wonderful memories from Don Johnson, a

fellow DuPonter from the early years:

"About Ray Carter, especially in the years right after graduation when jobs were very hard to find, he, a chemistry major, and I did a lot of looking. I remember Ray's telling me about an interview he had with someone in the military in Washington. He was quite nervous about it. As he got to the office of the interviewer he suddenly panicked because he couldn't remember whether the officer was a major or a colonel. He took a deep breath, was admitted to the great 'presence', held out his hand and blurted 'Good morning Mineral.' I never found out how the interview went, but Ray never forgot that introduction.

Ray and I both finally got jobs with the Plastics Division of the DuPont Company in Arlington, N. J., a factory town. We both commuted from Montclair. Ray was there to get laboratory and manufacturing experience and I was assigned to the Personnel Group which included the Medical Group, Safety and Fire Protection (there was much hazardous material involved). Mostly we saw each other after hours at home in Montclair.

"Ray was truly a party animal. There was nothing he loved more than to get a group of friends together, all of us being young-marrieds, for a sing-fest aided and abetted by Ray's own special favorite, the mint julep. His formula was a simple one. Take a tall tumbler, fill it with cracked ice, add whisky up to the top and stick a sprig of fresh garden mint in it. By the time we had finished one we were into 'Oh, we'll whoop it up for thirty-three, Wow, Wow, Wow, hear the Tiger roar,' etc., and after two, which was about all the average husband or wife could handle, we honored our associates with 'Lord Geoffrey Amherst', 'Come fill your glasses up for Williams', plus Yale, Brown, Dartmouth, Cornell and even Harvard songs.

"But best of all Ray, who loosened up pretty quickly, used to uncork some very funny and very ribald ballads. He could get away with songs, even when ladies were present, that nobody else could. We all would urge him on. 'A Gathering of the Clan' was one that used to bring the house down every time.

"Eventually Ray was transferred to Plastic Sales and moved to Williamstown, Mass. He lived in an old house in the area which was big, airy and had no central heat. Heat came up through the open areas from a great furnace and took its time getting to the upper floors. One weekend a bunch of us were invited to stay with the Carters and attend the football game between the ancient rivals, Amherst and Williams. It was early December and cold! Gad, it was cold at the game and even colder it seemed, at Ray's house afterward. We all had plenty of warming refreshment. Dinner was sort of a thing. You either found some food and ate it or you had another drink. The next morning, well—

"When war production began to heat up, things changed a lot for us, as for everyone else. Most of our group were in 'exempt' jobs but the rationing of gasoline, cigarettes, liquor, travel, etc. affected our lives. Ray was transferred to the New York office of Plastics, and Lill and I were required to move into Arlington, N. J. near the plant site, because I was on 24 hour call for emergencies. However, one evening the group all came to our house in Arlington for a sort of who-knows-when-we'll-get-together-again party. They came by Public Service buses, which ran fairly regularly. Well, as usual the party got going and the singing was loud (good close harmony stuff). Suddenly, about midnight, somebody wisely suggested they'd better catch the last bus home (a long block from our house). They caught it, but it was the last bus to Newark, a city about five miles away and no nearer to Montclair than our house was. The result was that some of the couples didn't get home until nearly sun-up.

"Those were really the good old days, but the war took its toll on some of our best friends. In later years a few of us occasionally got together at Ray's lovely house at Rockport, Maine, or on Cape Cod, or elsewhere. Ray was still the spark plug though, and we all loved him for his wonderful spirit. He was PRINCETON to the very end."

There is a remarkably consistent thread to these testimonials from old friends, and of course that is not a coincidence. Ray was a quiet, wise, considerate, dedicated, lovable person. He reached out to people, he wanted to help, he cared. Yet,

he was a blithe spirit, full of fun, always with a song in his heart and a humorous side. No wonder friends found him fun to be with, a great traveling companion, a wonderful host. He was president of our class from 1983-1988, and still continued as Class Agent during those years. He worked like a beaver at both jobs, orchestrating a wonderful Class dinner

for our 55th reunion at Constitution Hill in Princeton. When I succeeded him in 1988, he was outreaching with his help, advice and support, and I relied on him heavily. As Josh has so aptly pointed out, "Going Back" will not be the same without Ray.



We were all glad to see Bill Powell from Asheville at our recent mini-reunion.



Prexy Townend (in disguise) and Lenchen on the observation deck of the "Miss Anne" cruising down the Rappanock River from the Tides Inn in April 1995.