

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

A Life Dedicated to the Quest for Justice

PAT HYNES '65

BY BRENDA LANGE

She loved the Sisters of Saint Joseph who taught her in grade school. She loved the Chestnut Hill community and the College campus, where she felt secure and at home — and she loved that it wasn't far from her real home in Wilmington, Del.

Pat Hynes '65 realizes now that there weren't as many options available for college-bound young women in 1961, so it was fortunate that those qualities that drew her to Chestnut Hill College made the choice easy for her.

"I remember that I was attracted to a women's college, where women students assume leadership and scholarship positions and women professors are intellectual role models," she says. "I didn't think that through at that time, or articulate it, but I know it now. In the scope of life at CHC, everything and anything was possible, and I could excel at whatever I wanted."

And excel she did. As a math major in an era when few women pursued math as a profession, she thought she would be a teacher, one of the acceptable roles she could fill as a female. After earning her bachelor's degree with the guidance of Sister Edward Leo (who later changed her name to Sister Dorothy Hennessy), Hynes went on to earn her master's degree in environmental engineering from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

"Sister Edward Leo was a superb teacher with a discerning and caring heart," remembers Hynes. "That combination was wonderful and everyone at my 50th reunion who had majored in mathematics mentioned her as an inspiration."

Prior to attending U. Mass, Hynes tried her hand at various ways of earning a living. She taught for a bit and then started a feminist restaurant with another woman, Gill Gane, in Cambridge, Mass. They named it Bread and Roses, from the slogan of female millworkers who went on strike in Lowell, Mass., in 1912. As the millworkers protested for higher wages, they claimed the right to fair pay as well as dignified working conditions.

"Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the mid-1970s was a center of the women's movement and we promoted women artists, musicians, plays and speakers, all in our gourmet vegetarian restaurant," she says.

After earning her M.S., Hynes went on to become one of a handful of women engineers working for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the New England region. She sported a hard hat and work boots alongside the men as they inspected Superfund sites. She also oversaw studies and design for cleanup of these toxic dumps around the Northeast, eventually becoming a section chief.

While with the EPA, she began writing her first book, "The Recurring Silent Spring," about Rachel Carson and her book, "Silent Spring," the catalyst for the emerging environmental movement that helped launch the EPA and many significant environmental regulations. Hynes's book took a close look at the EPA, its mandate and the temptation for all agencies to become bureaucracies. At this time, scientists were just beginning to research, develop and promote genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and Hynes applied Carson's critique of industrial agriculture reliant on toxic pesticides to those GMOs.

Hynes's career took a turn after its publication and she was invited to teach environmental policy in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and then in the School of Public Health at Boston University. As a professor of environmental health there, she worked on multi-racial and low-income issues of the urban environment — including lead contamination, asthma, poor housing conditions, community gardens on vacant lots — and feminism.

LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT

In her retirement, Hynes — who recently celebrated 42 years with her partner, Janice Raymond, Ph.D., retired professor of women's studies and medical ethics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst — turned her attention back to social justice issues. The women are outspoken advocates for peace and justice. Raymond was the director of the International Coalition Against Trafficking in



Pat Hynes '65 relaxes with some of the children at TuDu Hospital Peace Village, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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— Pat Hynes '65

Women, based in New York City, and Hynes (after serving briefly on the board) is now the Director of the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice in Greenfield, Mass. www.traprock.org.

The 30-year-old organization was founded during the 1980s to counter the buildup of nuclear weapons. Today, it also focuses on youth peace education and fostering work that fellow board members are passionate about.

“I am committed to helping build an educational center in peacemaking and peace leadership for activists, educators and students,” says Hynes, who publishes and speaks on the health effects of war and militarism on society and on women

as well as climate justice, renewable energy and the hazards of nuclear power. “All of these issues are, at their core, issues of sustainability for life on earth.”

Her current project with the center is a PowerPoint presentation titled “Renewables are Ready,” about the potential for renewables and efficiency to meet energy needs by 2050 and the political obstacles and examples of proactive climate justice activism. She also is launching a project on girl soldiers and the sexual exploitation of girls in civil wars.

“I have an abhorrence for war and a personal commitment to ending it,” she says.

Her strong beliefs led Hynes to travel to Vietnam three years ago where she visited Peace Villages for children who have been disabled, mentally, physically or both, as a result of the herbicides, chiefly Agent Orange, sprayed by Americans during the Vietnam War. Her presentations around New England have raised funds for scholarships for some of these children.

“My projects bring together a number of issues I’m committed to,” she says. “One is that war is simply not feasible, not moral and never has been. The Vietnam War, in particular, was the turning point for this country’s consciousness and the way we engage with the world.”

When she graduated in 1965, college students were just gaining an awareness of outside social issues such as civil rights, the anti-war movement, the women’s movement and the environmental movement.

“Just a few years later, in my mid-20s, I woke up and discovered the world,” she says.

Returning last year for her 50th reunion, Hynes was surprised at the familiar ease she felt both with the campus and her former classmates. “All these women I remembered ... how recognizable would they be after 50 years? But there was a short bridge to reconnection, and it must be something about the small college, where we have many common experiences.

“I love the adherence to mission, the strength and mentorship of the SSJs in the life of the mind, whose mission was not just to teach, but also to care ... the personal touch and intimacy of a small women’s college.” 