

Door Opens to a New Life

Excerpts from a letter written by a freshman at Smith who received a scholarship reveal how much it means to the writer to be a Smith girl. The letter was written to the donor of the scholarship. Neither party is acquainted with the other.

At First I didn't want to let myself hope for the Smith because a disappointment would have been hard. But more and more I became aware of how much fuller my life would be if I were to be able to live away from home. There would be a beginning of independence, and then the stimulation of living with a group of girls my own age. After weeks of waiting and indecision, I heard from Smith that I was being awarded a scholarship...so I went about the house for days in a sort of trance and not quite believing myself when I heard my voice saying: "Yes, I'm going to Smith."

And here I am! There are times when I find myself just letting the sights and impressions pour into me until the joy is so sharp that it almost hurts. I think it will always be this way. There is so much here, and it is up to me to find myself and make the person I will be. I still remember the first evening when we had our freshman meeting. I was separated from the girls I knew in my house, and as I stood bewildered on the steps of Scott Gum, watching 600 strange faces surge at me and pass by like a flood, I felt that I was drowning in a sea of personalities, each one as eager to be a whole individual as I was. I wondered then if I could ever get behind the faces and know what they were thinking, dreaming, and planning deep inside. I wondered if I would ever feel that I was more than a name typewritten on a card.

But even now I smile at myself. For with the studying and with the ability to isolate and differentiate one person from another, and with the increasing sense of belonging, I find myself at the beginning of the most challenging experience I've ever had.

As for my courses, I have never felt such a sharp sense of stimulation and competition. I am especially fortunate in my instructors – all of whom are vital and alive with enthusiasm for their particular subjects. In art we sketch the same trees that we analyze in botany. In French we follow the ideas of men who were influenced by the events and times we read about in history. And in English-which has always been my favorite subject- we read and do critical essays. ...As you can see, my courses fit together like a picture puzzle, and life has suddenly taken on deeper perspective and meaning.

I don't just see trees when I bike across the campus. I see shape and color outwardly, and then the cells and the microscope mechanisms always working inside. No doubt all this sounds a bit incoherent, but it's just that excitement which comes when you are increasingly aware of the infinite suggestions and possibilities of the world you live in.

The people here are also another source of amazement and new discovery. I don't think I've ever been so conscious of the dignity and capacity of women. Why, even in my house there is a startling collection of intelligent, perceptive girls-each one fascinating in her own way. I enjoy knowing people well and learning about their thoughts and backgrounds. Although I have never been able to travel outside the New England states, I feel that the nation –and a good part of the world-is at my fingertips. My acquaintances come from all sorts of homes, all sorts of localities, and as I get to know them better, I learn about all varieties of past personal history...

I wonder...if I have revealed even a small part of my love for Smith. There are so many little details that are so wonderful –the lights of the houses against the night sky, the chapel bells on Sunday afternoon, the glimpse of Paradise from my window. All this and so much more...I just want you to understand that you are responsible, in a sense, for the formation of an individual, and I am fortunate enough to be that person.

Courtesy of the Smith Alumnae Quarterly, February 1951