Dear Diploma Alumna/us

Greetings from London. I hope all goes well with you.

Since I last wrote, there has been quite a lot to report concerning the Diploma in American Studies alumni. Personally, I find it particularly pleasing to hear stories of Diploma alumni reconnecting after many years or making new connections across the generations. Also, this past winter, as you will know from the various emails that we sent, your Committee made a determined effort to raise money for the Diploma Program as part of Smith’s Women for the World capital campaign, and I include a report on this tremendous initiative, to which many of you have generously contributed.

Keeping Connected and Alumni News

We now have two means of keeping in touch with each other and what is going on at the College.

1. Our LinkedIn group (Smith College Diploma in American Studies Alumni), which is a “closed” group just for our alumni, now has over 100 members. If you apply to join, you will be admitted automatically. As this group is just us, it is a good way of connecting with alumni of different generations and several younger graduates have used this to seek career advice from those well established in their professions. And do use the “Discussion” option to ask a question or to seek advice from the group or raise a subject of common interest.

2. A page on Facebook: Smith College Diploma in American Studies. Here we post news items to do with Smith and of interest to dipl alums.

For those of us in Europe, an opportunity to meet will take place next year. Every two years, the Smith alumnae living in Europe get together in a different European city for a weekend of events arranged by the Smith alumnae living in that city. Several dipl alumni attended the weekend in Amsterdam in June last year (and Caroline Straathof dipl ’85 was on the organizing committee). The next Smith-in-Europe weekend will take place in Berlin, October 9–13, 2014, and several dipl alumnae living in that city are helping to plan the event. The organizers hope to offer a range of accommodation so that the weekend will be affordable to everyone. We hope to see a good number of Diploma alumni there. [Note: Although intended for Smithies in Europe, the event is in fact open to anyone.]
And don’t forget our own Diploma alumni reunion planned for May 2017 at Smith.

If you want to connect with Smithies on a more regular basis in your own city or country, those of you in the US can join your local Smith clubs, and there are Smith alumnae groups in various foreign cities and countries outside the US. (See [http://alumnae.smith.edu/cms/?clubs=club-and-group-websites](http://alumnae.smith.edu/cms/?clubs=club-and-group-websites) for a list of clubs near you.) Or you could start one!

**Sylvie Castagné Haas** dipl ’82 has written about connecting with a group of Swiss alumnae, after she went to the Diploma anniversary celebration at Smith last year:

> I always knew I would go back to Smith sometime. And I am really happy I did. Last year’s reunion exceeded my expectations. Being on campus for the first time in 30 years brought back many happy memories and made me realize (again) how crucial this experience was for me.

> A couple of months after I returned home to Zurich, I received an email from an alumna in Geneva informing me that there were around 20 Smithies living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Enough to start a group. Which we did. Our third meeting is this summer. It is amazing how the group has developed, with the same spirit as was blowing through the campus in faraway Northampton. [If you live in Switzerland and wish to learn about Smith alumnae events there, please contact Anne Hornung-Soukup ’74: annehs@sunrise.ch]

In March, **Caroline Straathof** dipl ’85, **Kees Kleywegt** dipl ’94, **Evelyn Olabisi** dipl ’98 and **Dee van Leeuwen Boomkamp** dipl ’07 all met at a lunch in Amsterdam for Smithies living in the Netherlands. If you want to connect with this group, please contact netherlandsclub@alumnae.smith.edu

Also in March, I had dinner with three other Diploma alumni who live in London: **Prem Poddar** dipl ’89, **Mareike Schomerus** dipl ’95, and **Anne-Catherine Berrut-Maréchaud** dipl ’11. Prem has recently been appointed Professor in Cultural Encounters at Roskilde University, Copenhagen (Prem has a blog: [www.londonwallah.com](http://www.londonwallah.com) which he says is “directed at South Asia, but also at anyone interested in London and the UK. It covers politics, art, culture, and the everyday.”) In 2012, Mareike was awarded her Ph.D at the London School of Economics, where she is Consortium Director of the Justice and Security Research Programme; Anne-Catherine is studying for a Master’s in Performance (violin) at the Royal College of Music.

I have also had the opportunity to meet other Diploma alumnae who have passed through London since last September: **Jelena**
Hadziosmanovic dipl ’07, who obtained her Master’s in Photography and Urban Cultures from Goldsmiths College, London, in 2012; Tessa Luger dipl ’95, Senior Researcher, The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, who was in London for a conference; Simona Aniello and Saori Ono who were visiting their classmate Anne-Catherine Berrut-Maréchaud dipl ’11; Eva Amann-Brockhaus dipl ’69 who recently retired as a high school teacher in Germany; Deborah Bergamini dipl ’93 who was re-elected as an MP in the Italian Parliament in the February election; and Giulia Scarpa dipl ’81 (see note from her below). Please let me know if you are coming to London as I would be pleased to meet you.

Those of you who were at the reunion in 2012 will remember the film-maker Mariette Monpierre dipl ’85. Her first feature-length film, Elza, came out this year and was a New York Times Critics’ pick: http://movies.nytimes.com/2012/11/30/movies/elza-by-the-writer-and-director-mariette-monpierre.html?ref=movies&_r=3. The film opened the Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival at UMass in February and another film of hers was shown at Smith: Paris La Métisse. There is also good news from Mathilde Bielic-Le Menn dipl ’07 who was at the reunion with her husband. They announced the arrival of baby Alexandre this spring. And Mathilde’s classmate Dee van Leeuwen Boomkamp and Piebe Teeboom dipl ’00 (also both at the reunion) have announced their engagement – they will join the ranks of at least four other Diploma couples. Congratulations to all.

Alexandra Price dipl ’87, another reunion attendee, writes:

As a result of the reunion last year, I found out that my classmate Caterina Bertelli dipl ’87 is now living in Cardiff, Wales. After Smith, we had gone our separate ways and lost touch. She lived in Florence for many years, while I lived for a while in Germany and then moved back to the UK. When I heard the news, I practically fell off my chair, as Cardiff is only about 40 minutes’ drive away from where I now live in Abergavenny. Like me, Caterina had married a Welshman and she had moved to Cardiff from Florence three years earlier with her husband and daughter.

Last year, we arranged to meet for the first time in 25 years in a bookshop in Cardiff. We debated whether we should each wear something distinctive so that we would recognize each other, or carry a newspaper under our arms, as in the spy movies. But in the end, we recognized each other straight away – I think we both looked pretty much the same, but with a few wrinkles, of course! We went to a Thai restaurant for lunch, caught up on all our news and had a fantastic time. Since then, we have met regularly either in Cardiff or Abergavenny.

Last November, I visited Italy with some friends and we all came back fired up to learn Italian. Some of my friends were discussing where they could find a good Italian teacher. Caterina is a qualified teacher of Italian as a foreign language, so she was the perfect choice, and we
were thrilled when she agreed to come and teach us. She now teaches beginners’ Italian to a group of nine of us near Abergavenny. Her lessons are fantastic, giving us a thorough grounding in the language and plenty of conversation practice, as well as being well paced, entertaining and fun.

So the 50th anniversary reunion also brought about the reunion of two Diploma classmates. What an amazing coincidence that two people from different countries, who originally met in the US more than 25 years ago, should end up living so close to each other. Caterina has now become a good friend and I feel very blessed to have her back in my life.

A visit to Wales in May meant that I could see Alexandra again and meet Caterina for the first time – we had an enjoyable lunch together, following one of their Italian classes.

Other alumnae have also been finding each other: Brigitte Deschamps Shrivastava dipl. ’68 (in Montreal) and Teresa Colaco dipl. ’68 (in Goa) were reconnected this year when Teresa, who had been “lost” for some years, was “found,” thanks to help from Zarin Minocher-Homji Pinto and Eva Amann-Brockhaus, both dipl. ’69. Brigitte wrote about making contact with Teresa after so many years: This is one of those unexpected wonderful surprises that life brings you from time to time.

Elisabeth Muhlenberg dipl. ’66 could not attend the reunion but was a great help with the reunion book and has become a member of the Diploma Committee and manager of our LinkedIn group. She writes:

I had the great good fortune to spend the year 1965-66 at Smith in the American Studies Diploma Program. The rest of my life took over after that, with more academic degrees, work, marriage, children and finally also grandchildren. Smith vanished into the background, a long ago year of distant memory.

Suddenly, in 2012, the program’s 50th anniversary catapulted Smith back into the forefront of my life. I had not known until then that I was ready to reclaim my Smith history, memories and friendships, and also to begin a whole new phase of discovery: getting to know the adventurous and independent “Diplomats” who spent a formative year at Smith over the last fifty years.

When I invited members of the program’s LinkedIn group to visit me if they are ever in Chicago (I am here-with inviting any Diplomat!), I was not certain anyone would come. Happily, Skadi Loist Dipl. ’01 from Hamburg took me up on my invitation when she came to attend a conference in Chicago in March. We had never met, are a generation apart, yet we connected! Our conversations, mainly over lengthy breakfasts, ranged far and wide, covering intellectual and later also...
emotional topics. I learned more about today’s movies and life in East Germany prior to reunification than I had ever thought I wanted to know. My husband felt the same way. It was, for us, an extraordinary opportunity to expand intellectually and emotionally into areas of life we would not otherwise have connected with. What a gift Skadi gave us! It seems to me that Diplomats are special people, open to the world and to other human beings, able to connect deeply regardless of age difference or other characteristics that tend to keep people apart.

I am keen to support the Diploma Program, to connect with other graduates and to participate in the community of Diplomats worldwide. Having missed the 50th anniversary reunion, I am determined not to miss any other reunions! See you next year in Berlin for the Smith-in-Europe Reunion ... Oh, and please come visit us in Chicago!

Following Elisabeth’s generous initiative, other Diploma alumni posted on the LinkedIn site that they would like to host fellow alumni visiting their cities. I am happy to compile a list of those offering accommodation to other “Diplomats” if you want to send me your name and where you live. I’ll then circulate the list in the next newsletter. As Elisabeth’s note tells, these can be rewarding encounters.

In March, Eva Amann-Brockhaus DIPL ’69 (who lives in Germany) visited India. She writes of her Smith encounters on the trip:

In Bangalore I stayed with Yasmeen Chinoy Premji (MA ’69). Our old friendship started blossoming again after my visit to Bangalore in 2003, our first encounter since 1969, and we had last met six years ago when she stayed with me in Germany.

I think there is a litmus test for the quality of old relationships: No matter how long you have been apart the moment you meet again you seem to communicate as if you had been interrupted the day before. The openness, the common interests, the eagerness to hear what your friend has to say about a subject dear to your heart – all this is there and the old familiarity establishes itself immediately.

Needless to say that with Yasmeen this is what happened. In 2003, it took us exactly five minutes – the time to get from the gate at the airport to her car – to agree that President George W. Bush’s war against Saddam Hussein was a fraud and completely pointless.

This time we had other fish to fry: Last year Yasmeen had published her first novel (Days of Gold and Sepia) and so a lot of our talks centered around it. She had allowed me some insights into this amazing project while it was in the making and I was flattered that she valued my (irrelevant) opinion on the “finished product.” This was the first time that I saw her as a professional woman, not just as my dear friend of student days.

In the following two weeks I attended the two book readings that Smith had arranged for her and Sudha Malkani Shah ’78 (author of The King in Exile about the fall of the Burmese royal family), first in Mumbai, then in Delhi. The evening in Mumbai was particularly memorable as it offered me the opportunity to reunite with two Smith alumnae from India whom I had first met in 1968–69: my Diploma classmate Zarin Minocher-Homji Pinto DIPL ’69 (and MA ’70)
and Zakiya Kurrien (MA ’70). I had not met these two since we were at Smith – this was a reunion after 44 years! Needless to say, the three of us passed the litmus test as well! We spent the next day together and the three women from Mumbai showed me their “home town” with great enthusiasm.

On the occasion of these two readings I came into contact with other Smith alumnae who had been at the College either before or after my time, but the Smith experience we all shared created a bond between us that made conversation very easy.

**Erica Moretti** DIPL ’05 obtained her Ph.D from Brown University last year and has returned to the Pioneer Valley – she is now Lecturer in Italian at Mount Holyoke College and is finishing a book project on Maria Montessori’s writing about parental authority for children affected by catastrophes.

**Giulia Scarpa** DIPL ’81 writes from Italy of her latest project:

> I have been asked to co-produce a documentary, “The Good Giants,” which tells the story of the Buffalo Soldiers of World War II who broke through the Gothic line in Lucca and the surrounding area. It is based on the story by Ivan J. Houston (Black Warriors: The Buffalo Soldiers of World War II – Memories of the Only Negro Infantry Division to Fight in Europe), who served with the 92nd Infantry Division, then segregated, and the testimonies of many Tuscans who were freed by these young African Americans.

Ivan was in Lucca last year and will return for filming in September. Here’s the link to the trailer we made in February: [http://pacificfilmfoundation.org](http://pacificfilmfoundation.org)

We are trying to widen our group of supporters, particularly those who might be able to help us financially. On our website you can find a page to donate, and please remember all help is Good Help!

Please help us and get involved! You can also get back to me with suggestions at julyshoe@gmail.com

**News from Northampton**

In May, another batch of Diploma graduates joined our ranks and the 2013–14 group is beginning its year at Smith. Lane Hall-Witt, the current director of the program, has sent this report:

> Eight students graduated from the Diploma Program in May 2013: two from France, two from Germany, and one each from China, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland.

> The Diploma group took two extended field trips during the academic year: a three-day excursion to Newport, Rhode Island, and a four-day journey to Washington, D.C. The trip to Newport featured visits to the Breakers, the International Tennis Hall of Fame, and Fort Adams State Park. In Washington, the Diploma scholars took in many of the historical and cultural sites on and around the National Mall – including a spectacular nighttime visit to the Lincoln Memorial, the National World War II Memorial, and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial.

Rosalin Happe DIPL ’13 of Hamburg spent July co-teaching with me a unit on “American Culture” that is part of a Smith summer program for STEM (Science,
Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) students and faculty from the College of Sciences for Women at the University of Baghdad.

We anticipate that the Diploma Class of 2014 will have ten students, from the following countries: Afghanistan (1), England (1), France (2), Germany (2), Italy (1), Netherlands (1), Spain (1), and Switzerland (1). The student from Afghanistan is the same woman we admitted last year; she was denied a visa then, so we deferred her admission by a year and hope she will be able to secure all of the necessary paperwork this time around.

Professor Peter Rose, who so many of us remember with affection and gratitude because he ran the Diploma Program for over 30 years, has a memoir describing his academic life and some of his extracurricular excursions coming out this fall: Postmonitions of a Peripatetic Professor (Levellers Press). It is hard to believe that Peter will be 80 on September 5 and we send him many congratulations. Peter met the new president of Smith – Kathleen McCartney – earlier this summer and gave her a copy of our reunion book, Smith’s Foreign Legion, and reports that she was most interested in the Diploma Program. President McCartney plans to come to the Berlin gathering in October next year – another reason to put the date in your diary!

Fundraising Campaign

The Diploma Committee and I would like to thank all of you who contributed so generously to our fundraising campaign this year. By the end of Smith’s financial year (June 30), we had raised $10,235 for the Peter & Hedy Rose Diploma in American Studies Scholarship Fund – which helps to fund Diploma students – and over 60 Diploma alumni contributed to this magnificent amount. This is the first time we have had a concerted fundraising campaign for the Diploma Program and the majority of the alumni who donated had never given to Smith before. We hope that we can build on this excellent effort next year – that those who contributed will consider making a regular donation and that others will begin to contribute, however small the amount.

One of the intentions of the Diploma Alumni Group is to support the Program in every possible way and our financial backing sends a very clear message to the College about how important the Diploma Program is considered by its alumni. That is why the number who contribute to the Rose Fund is important. Think of a yearly donation as giving a “birthday present” to Smith, or like casting a vote in an annual election. Just in the way that every vote counts in an election, so does each dollar given to the College. We are part of a continuum: most of us went to Smith on scholarships – money that came from previous generations of Smithies. Now we have the chance to help the next generation. Our donations are counted as part of Smith’s Women for the World capital campaign and it is good to hear that this has now passed the half way point to its goal of $450 million.

Lost Alumni

There are over 70 (out of a total of about 470 Diploma alumni) alumni who are still designated as “lost” by the Alumnae Association, or from whom
nothing has been heard, despite our efforts (more than 60 have been found in the last 18 months). In each newsletter I'll include a national group or two, in the hope that some of you might be in touch with these alumni or know their whereabouts, and this time I send those from Italy and Poland (with the city of their last known address). Please let me know if you can help us locate these alumni or ask them to contact me.

Italian alumni:
Paola Rambaldi dipl ’83 (Milan)
Enrica Maggiani dipl ’91 (La Spezia)
Stefano Matteucci dipl ’95 (Macerata)
Duccio Viani dipl ’01 (Florence)
Lorenzo Anania dipl ’03 (Citta di Castello PG)
Chiara Martini dipl ’03 (Sansepolcro)

Polish alumni:
Krystyna Przybylska dipl ’65 (Warsaw)
Elisabeth Sieniawska dipl ’67 (Warsaw)
Zofia Lisinska dipl ’82 (Warsaw)
Malgorzata Hofman dipl ’87 (Gliwice)
Dagmara A. Sotowicz dipl ’96 (Radom)

And please remember to keep alumnaerecords@smith.edu informed of changes to your email and postal address. We do not want to “lose” you!

While mentioning keeping in touch, I am sending this Newsletter in part because we do not have our own column in the Smith Alumnae Quarterly (in the Class Notes section); the College says this is in part because space is limited. Instead, the College encourages us all to write to the class secretary of the Smith class with which we graduated and tell them our news (the secretaries’ email addresses are at the end of the column of each respective year in the Class Notes section of the magazine) so that it can be included with the class news. Dee van Leeuwen Boomkamp dipl ’07 recently did this and her entry is in the Class of 2007 column of the Summer 2013 edition of the Quarterly (p.69). The Diploma Alumni Committee urges you to write to your class secretary – by having our news in the Quarterly it helps to bring the program to the attention of other alumnae and shows our commitment to and involvement with the College.

Nonetheless, please do send me your professional and personal news, stories of encounters with fellow Diploma graduates/Smithies, and so forth, as we will continue to use the Newsletter as the means of gathering all the Diploma news in one place.

On behalf of the Diploma Alumni Group Committee,

Good wishes

Julia MacKenzie dipl ’79
President, Diploma Alumni Group
email: jcgmackenzie@yahoo.co.uk