



Late 1945 My Junior Year

Junior Year 1945

For whatever reason, Dad's youngest sister of two, my godmother, the Roman Catholic who couldn't practice her religion because she married a divorced Catholic who had at least one daughter by the first marriage, gave me some Evening in Paris perfume in a teeny little vial for my 15th birthday. (She had never before given me a birthday present.) It didn't matter about her religious problems because we were Episcopalian and could have the godmother of our choice. Though sometimes I wonder if it all wasn't a bit odd. Still, we knew only what the grown-ups chose to tell us.

I wasn't very striking in my blue wool sweater that my mother bought for me, certainly not another Lana Turner on the rise. So, to make myself a bit more sophisticated, I emptied some drops from the vial onto my sweater near the neckline and it immediately made a hole! As it was my one and only sweater (until I earned money later on and bought another) I had to wear it with the hole in it. Also, as I was so proud of my one and only baby blue sweater sparking my baby brown eyes, I wore it almost everyday. I used all sorts of pins to cover the hole and I tried to glue it together. No one ever said a word about the girl who wore the same sweater every day for a year. I suppose my mother must have washed it now and then, but I was very immature and so never had to concern myself with BO.

Now that was an expression we learned early on as we were all farmers but we connected it to working in the barn. And we girls never did that! And, as I have mentioned, we had Dr. Lyons to keep our mouths from halitosis. Strange that we learned such interesting words without ever really understanding them. We just knew that nice girls didn't have either. And we were nice girls!

MHS had a system of curricula that made sense then. First year, Algebra I and then Plane Geometry. And in my third year, I was to learn Solid Geometry and Trigonometry. To this day, I understand very little of either and certainly never learned the purpose of it. I was in college prep and that was it.

In the Fall of 1945, because I could not fathom solid geometry, my wonderful math teacher, whose name escapes me now, kept me after school everyday for what we would now call private tutoring. My Dad still worked at Pratt and Whitney though what he did, I never knew. The war was over and we were supposed to make things for civilians like new cars. No cars had been produced since 1941 that I remember.

In any case, it meant that I could wait for him for a ride home. Learning solid geometry meant memorizing and that I did. Somewhere in that fall, there was an epidemic of Scarlet Fever, a dreaded disease with no particular cure. I developed a headache so bad that I stayed home for 6 weeks lying on the downstairs couch with Dr Higgins visiting often and saying over and over that he had no answer. I had no other symptoms of the Fever, but I was miserable. Mother kept all the kids quiet, not an easy feat, and none of the 4 caught IT, whatever IT was.

Naturally, I fell far behind in my schoolwork. When I finally returned to high school, it was decided that I would remain after school every day with each teacher until I caught up. It was either that or repeat the first semester. My mother and father weren't having any of that!

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Birthplace of Nathan Hale

Again, my belief, finally, that I was smart enough to do this helped me enormously. What really turned the trick was that every teacher believed in me and each helped in every way. My memory was an invaluable asset for the subjects like math and history dates, but I did a lot of studying and made it into the next half of Junior year.

Respectfully submitted, Jean Thibault Castagno

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