



**CLASS OF 1963 – ALUMNI NOTES MAY - JUNE, 2016**

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**John Davison** reports: “Several years ago I grew restless during my retirement from a long career in broadcasting. Selling, buying, and renting real estate in New York City has turned out to be very gratifying. The Yale connection has resulted in several clients and referrals. To keep the momentum going, I have just joined Douglas Elliman, New York’s largest real estate company. Apartment hunting in New York, anyone?”

On February 11, 2016, the National Geographic had an all-day program celebrating **Tom Lovejoy’s** 50 years of work on biodiversity and Amazon conservation, culminating in a public interview in the National Geographic Auditorium by Jim Lehrer. Tom has agreed to serve as a Science Envoy for 2016 for the Department of State.

**Lanny Lutz** relates: “Recently I taped the role of a rip-roarin’ revivalist preacher on ‘Unshackled’, complete with abundant audience ‘amens’ in the background. Don’t know if Grandpa (who was a well-established evangelist in PA, WVA, and MD) did it like that (he left the planet long before I was born), but in over 25 years playing all kinds of characters on the show, that was the most fun I ever had on ‘Unshackled’. Airing on all USA Christian broadcasting stations the week of April 24-30, 2016.”

**Ron Sampson** reports: “Early in my annual three-month hibernation from the northern winter this year, I had a wonderful dinner in Adelaide with **Norm**

**Etherington** and his wife Peggy, who have retired there. Norm is having three books published in roughly a 12-month period, and in addition is constructing a new home over the next couple of years, architected by one of their sons. No doubt the new palazzo is a wonderful affirmation of life, but I did feel obliged to suggest to Norm that his profusion of new books might give ‘retirement’ a bad (or at least unusual) name. On her part, Peggy is editing and writing chapters for a volume on the Aboriginal history of the State of South Australia. On leaving Adelaide I went on to Melbourne for the Australian Open tennis championships, which I’ve attended now for 22 years, and thence to Noosa Heads, Queensland for six weeks, accompanied by 20 books in hard copy which I’d brought all the way from home. So, not just a wastrel but a Luddite.”

**Thomas F. Christie, Jr.** passed away peacefully at Stamford Hospital, Stamford, CT, on February 3, 2016. He was born on December 28, 1939 in Mount Vernon, NY. He graduated from Yale University in 1963 and served as a Naval officer and aviator for five years before starting a long career as a banker. He is survived by his wife, Gail Hashagen Christie, his sons, Thomas Christie (wife Monica) and Peter Christie (wife Melanie), three grandsons, his sister Martha Christie Nash (husband James), his brother-in-law, John Hashagen (wife Huntly), and three loving nieces. Tom’s wife Gail wrote: “My husband, Tom, left us shortly after midnight. I had to say goodbye to the man I’ve been married to my whole adult life. My guitar-playing, Naval aviator, international banker, computer geek husband. My first love and father to our two wonderful sons. He was released from the progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP) he suffered in the past few years, and was guided through the transition to a new life with healing energy from my many fellow Reiki friends.”

**Geordie du Pont** writes: “Tom Christie’s loss is shocking. His low key, wry, ironic humor and his ballad guitar style were paced for the long run. He had a killing sense of humor which was greatly appreciated. Tom loved discussing politics, artificial intelligence, and climate. His family was the joy of his life.”

**Paul Field** recalls Tom as follows: “We first met, sopping wet, as lifeguards and swimming instructors at the New Haven YMCA in 1962. Wet or dry, our friendship was close, and has endured over five plus decades and long distances. Tom was multi-talented and brilliant. In college he held a national merit scholarship, played football, soccer, and baseball, and was on the freshman swimming team. He played the guitar and sang in the Freshman Chorus, Apollo Glee Club, and the Augmented Seven. I was a witness to love at first sight – of Tom being hit by a gigantic lightning bolt. His singing group had performed at a freshman mixer at Smith. He saw a stunning 17-year-old, two weeks into her freshman year. He was transfixed. He contrived to leave his guitar behind so as to have an excuse to see her again. They started dating and Tom was overwhelmed by her. So by 19 Gail found herself not a college sophomore or junior but a Navy wife. Tom came home from Vietnam with a chestful of medals, and he and his beloved Smith freshman built a wonderful life together. As the years went by, he saw his Gail as the extraordinary, confident, complete, caring, connected core of the family and their lives.”

**Richard Magnus Hopper** died of brain cancer on January 2, 2016. Dick was born in Oneonta, NY in 1941, and spent his childhood in Hudson, NY. He attended the Berkshire School in Sheffield, MA (1959), Yale University (1963), and the University of Colorado Law School (1966). Dick decided after attending law school in Colorado that the West would be his home. He worked briefly for the IRS, then as a trust officer

at Wells Fargo, and ended his legal career with the law firm of Lentz, Evans & King (now Robinson, Diss & Clowdus), where he practiced from 1980 to 2010. He was involved in estate planning, probate administration, and related fields. In 1982 he married Barbara Ann Lasko. His wife Barbara writes: “We were married for almost 34 years, together for 40. We enjoyed yearly visits to the family condo on Maui, and spent time in Panama, where we currently own two properties in partnership with his Yale classmate, Michael Preston Green. Dick was a wonderful man, funny and quick and kind. During his illness he was fortunate to keep all his mental faculties, memory, and wonderful sense of humor. He enjoyed many visits from friends and family and also his evening cocktail. He was a blessing in our lives and died at home surrounded by love.”

**Marc Lavietes** remembers: “Dick and I were two of a very heterogeneous group of five people (Mike Green, Bill Stirlen, and Lee Weisberg were the others) who moved together from Calhoun to Stiles in our Senior year. We shared many dinners together and as Senior year progressed spent more and more time over bridge games and social events. Dick was the most congenial among us and thus often brokered our disagreements over bridge games, current events, and the like. My path has crossed many times with Dick and Barbara over the years. I am grateful that we got to spend a delightful day together in Denver last spring while on my way to San Francisco!

**Wick Murray** recalls: “I first met Dick in my junior year at Berkshire – and from that first meeting, I quickly came to value his wonderful, dry sense of humor, his fund of sharp, amusing witticisms, and his love of conversation. Boredom was simply not in his vocabulary. I shall deeply miss his friendship and the possibility of future times with him.”

**Frank Scott Letcher** passed away in the presence of his family on December 17, 2015. He was an accomplished physician; a loving husband and parent; a passionate supporter of the arts, with a lifelong interest in Russian music, literature, and culture. He touched many lives, and he will be missed deeply. Frank was a cum laude graduate of Yale University, majoring in Russian language. During college he met Irina Koslova, and they married in 1963. After graduating from Washington University Medical School in St. Louis in 1967, he went on to serve as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserve in Philadelphia and two years as Director of the Head Injury Research Laboratory at the Naval Medical Research Institute in Bethesda, MD. He completed his medical training as a resident at Washington University and was certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery. He practiced neurosurgery for 30 years in Tulsa, OK, until his retirement in 2005. Frank Letcher had an enormous range of interests. He was fluent in Russian, and taught neurosurgical techniques in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. In 1991, he founded the first private practice of neurological surgery in Russia with Dr. G. S. Tigliev, which still exists today in St. Petersburg. Frank was passionate about music. After his retirement in 2005, he became the founder, President, and CEO of the Tulsa Symphony Orchestra, which is now flourishing in its tenth year. The center of Frank Letcher's life was always his family, and in particular, his wife Irene. In our 50th Reunion Class Book, he wrote: "I will never be able adequately to express either the depth of my love for my wife or how much I owe her. I have known true love for 53 years. I am enjoying life and I am at peace for which I am so very grateful." He is survived by his brothers, Scott, John, and Bill Letcher, and their families; his wife Irene; his daughters, Elizabeth Letcher and her husband Steve Doberstein, and Katherine Martin Groseclose and her husband Chris

Groseclose, two granddaughters, and two grandsons.

**Jim Courtright** recalls: “From Frank's early Yale years, he developed a deep appreciation of the richness of Russian culture and shared that appreciation with us. He attended as many reunions as I can remember and, as my memory allows, always with his wife Irene. He will certainly be remembered for moving our conversations to a higher level, with humor, insight, and wit. Frank remained committed to and engaged in efforts for the betterment of others. I recall his strong support, encouragement, and commitment to the Class Support Network, as well as the recent discussions of sports-related brain trauma. For this and much more, he will be remembered as one who cared deeply for Yale and his classmates.”

**Val Dusek** remembers Frank Letcher as follows: “Our first night as roommates at Yale Frank, Carlton Chickering, and I argued until 3 AM about Baron Korzybski's interpretation of special relativity. I thought that is what college should be like. The original stimulus may not have been of the highest quality, but the argument was. He was very argumentative when young (If you said it was raining, he would argue, ingeniously, that it was not). This sometimes drove me up the wall. But as he and I mellowed with age we got along very well. His interest in Russian and Russia, greatly enabled by his marrying Irene, led him to practice medicine in Russia for some years until the post-Yeltsin deterioration and corruption drove him out. He also sponsored contemporary Russian art and facilitated the publication of ‘The Metaphysical Head’, combining his aesthetic interests with his medical ones. He became a brain surgeon and, after retiring, almost single-handedly revived the Tulsa Symphony Orchestra. He had an excellent but somewhat perverse sense of humor and once typed in a demo typewriter at the Yale Coop, ‘This typewriter has a lascivious carriage.’ He made

Russian-Latin puns which none of us could understand, and then laugh uproariously.”

**Guy Struve** writes: “Frank Letcher was one of the unsung heroes of our 50th Reunion. He telephoned scores of classmates to urge them to come to the Reunion. Because of his warm and outgoing nature, he was often successful. His friends will remember his passionate engagement with Russia and the arts. Frank was a man who cared deeply, and who changed many lives for the better.”

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