

Jane O'Brien Argento

After a meniscectomy in June and a few weeks of physical therapy to strengthen my knee, Phil and I headed to Europe in late August for a few days in Dublin reuniting with old friends, two weeks in northern Spain and Rome on a wonderful Ignatian pilgrimage, and eight days with our son, Crispin, and his family at their home in Amsterdam and in Antwerp where the five of us spent a long weekend. We have also enjoyed being with our three daughters and their families at their homes in Portland and at ours in Pasadena. Here, in Pasadena, we have been, at times, overwhelmed by the political turmoil that has left neighbors and friends in constant fear and distress. Through our own parish and the efforts of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, we have been active in support and advocacy on behalf of those who need us the most during these difficult times.

Ann Stephens Gries and her husband Michael travel quite a bit. She wrote from Florida where they were spending 8 weeks to avoid Indiana's cold weather. They have eight grandchildren and enjoy going to their activities in baseball, soccer, diving, concerts and plays. Michael plays in the church band, and Ann is on the prayer team. They continue to host a Bible study in their condo in the summer and one in the winter in Florida. "We have been blessed."

Ellen Morley Matthews continues to serve on the Sisters of Providence Mission Advisory Board. Ellen's sister **Mary Morley, SP, '60**, is "back home" living in what was previously known as Owens Hall and is now St. Mary's Senior Living. Mary and her beloved dog Mickey share a two-bedroom apartment in the building where Mary lived when she was a postulant in 1961. 😊 Being at The Woods for MAB meetings is a blessing as is spending time with big sister Mary and seeing other SP's from our years at SMWC and beyond. Sister Mary has taken on as her personal ministry beautifying the sacred spaces on the SP campus. The results are noteworthy and inspiring! Managing the commercial property owned by Ellen and husband David, as well as providing financial and personal management support to a retired business owner, keeps Ellen busy. It is always great to connect with friends, electronically or otherwise. Ellen wishes the women of **The Great Class of 1968** peaceful happiness, blessings and an abundance of good health as we celebrate our 2026 Milestone Life Anniversaries.

Sharon Dickman sent greetings from snowy Rochester, New York.

Sheila Van Uum Campbell admits that she has lost touch with many of her Woods buddies, "but it's surprising how frequently they come to mind." All is well on the Campbell homefront, although, sadly, Sheila has lost two sisters, **Nancy Van Uum Langworthy '63** and **Susan Van Uum Perozek '65**. She feels fortunate to still have two

sisters with whom they find fun together, adding that “Bridge and Mahjong keep me amused.” She and husband Terry were headed to Barbados with two daughters and their husbands. “There will be surfing,” she quips, “but I’ll be doing the watching. We are so grateful to still be saying ‘life is good.’” Sheila sent me an article to read from *The New York Times*. This article, “In a Typewriter Repair Shop, a Reporter Finds a Familiar Hum,” was in response to the funny story (in my request for news) about my grandkids discovering the novelty of the typewriter versus computers. Francis currently has taken my “Smith Corona” to IU, where a group of aficionados may try to fix its paper-feed issues—for fun! I found a *Times* follow-up story, “How to Fix a Typewriter and Your Life,” now finding redistribution among said group.

When Marilyn questioned if typewriter ribbons could still be readily found, especially the correction ribbons that were used in the fancy models (1980s?), **Kateri LaFontain DeMargel** noted that “I don't think we even had correction tape. I remember typing my thesis, using carbon paper for my own copy, and just having to be so extremely careful not to make a typo.” Kateri shared good news about her moving into a nice two-bedroom apartment in March of 2025 and feeling very comfortable there, so happy not to have the worries of owning a house or condo. She has met a group of women her age who are enjoying each other’s company. “I feel very fortunate to have this new life after a couple of really hard years.”

Jo Ann Reitz keeps in touch with **Midge Maroni**, who was able to come into Evansville last fall, and they managed a visit with each other for a couple of hours when Midge came to town for the funeral of her nephew Jack, formerly a teacher at Mount Vernon High School. Jo Ann’s sister, Martha Steckler, passed away on September 28, 2025. Martha was 69. She had fought a courageous battle with ovarian cancer! She is greatly missed by her sisters, nieces and nephews, and by her second family that included Allen Steckler (whom she married at age 57), five stepchildren, and eventually 17 grandchildren, and many in-laws.

As **Christine “Chris” Roenitz** was writing her annual newsletter, her January 2025 trip to West Africa was still on her mind. Before meeting her “Overseas Adventure Travel” group in Benin, Chris was determined to visit Nigeria. and had a friend of the Nigerian priest in Sheboygan meet her in the capital city, Abuja. This was fortunate, as much of Chris’s original plans fell apart. Traveling was difficult, even for this seasoned traveler, who had to figure out several of her own arrangements. She made it to Lagos and the slave port of Badagry. “But the highlight of Nigeria,” Chris declared, “was attending Mass.” In Benin, after joining up with her tour group, Chris happened to suggest to a pregnant woman that she name her child “Christine”. About 10 days later, Surprise! Their guide received a picture of the new Baby Christine! During the long bus ride across Togo land to Accra, the tour included lectures on Gold Coast history, e.g. the former British colony becoming Ghana, independent in 1957 under Kwame Nkrumah as president. Chris recognized this story from her grade school current events studies, during which time Nkrumah was internationally known as a social revolutionary and leader of colonial emancipation. A day after arriving in

Accra, the tour group visited the memorial to Nkrumah, discovering how strongly he is remembered there. After Ghana, Chris took a cruise from Dakar, Senegal, around the western coast of Africa to Morocco and on to the Canary Islands, where the cliff houses and Teide National Park impressed her. Due to unexpected high seas, their cruise ended prematurely on the island of Lanzarote. But she was happy to have an extra day in Lanzarote and enjoy Cesar Manrique's art. Flying north to Portugal, Chris finally reached Madeira, where she had planned a one-night splurge staying at the Reid Hotel, a nostalgic visit because her grandmother had vacationed there long ago. In February 2025, Chris's sister, **Katherine "Katie" Roenitz Chesebro '65**, lost her 30-year battle with Multiple Myeloma. Aware that she had MM sub clinically for years, Chris started chemo for it. Then, after experiencing trouble playing golf, Chris was hospitalized and found out she had blood clots in both legs and lungs. During all these medical trials, her friend Barbara had been a big support while she herself was dying of cancer. "Two life supports lost." Chris took a Mediterranean cruise in the fall but found it more difficult than most trips. It seems that her clots had not all dissolved. "The six days in Malta, however, were wonderful."

Cheryl Van Zetten wrote about 2025. concentrating on the positive. Despite health challenges "like everyone turning 80," Cheryl is happy to be able to stay active with lots of walking and yoga for mind healing. She spent the winter of 2025 in Scottsdale as usual. Her fall trip to Puglia, Italy, was "charming, though not as exciting as past trips." A more exciting trip in November was her two-week tour of Saudi Arabia, seeing women's life appear more free--working, driving, shopping. She observed some hijabs and abayas, but other women wore headscarves instead, with very stylish clothes, and some stylish women wore no head cover. As everyone spoke English, Cheryl found it fascinating to talk to them (asking where they found those fabulous-looking sunglasses). She reported seeing a young population, friendly and accommodating. Having Saudi Arabia open to tourism is recent, and she considered them working hard to attract it, especially in the major cosmopolitan cities of Riyadh and Jeddah. During this difficult cycle of life, Cheryl was thankful for **Ellen Morley Matthews** keeping her up to date on classmates who are ill, helping us keep everyone in our thoughts and prayers. Cheryl noted how good it is to hear that *The Woods* is going strong. Keep in touch and stay well. We will meet at our next Reunion... in two years, right?

Mary McCarthy Manthei and Jim went to Iceland for New Years Eve. The year prior found them in London, which was great even though the weather was awful. This past year, they were luckier: Iceland had its warmest December in recorded history. Staying in Reykjavik, they took a Road Scholar tour to see the country. New Years Eve was spent at a revolving restaurant giving a spectacular view of the city's massive fireworks that went on for hours. She and Jim keep busy transporting their grandsons (ages 11 and 13) who are active in hockey, stylish basketball, football and track, which Mary and Jim love watching. Since their daughter and her husband live not far away, they enjoy seeing them often.

Virginia "Gia" Poppleton Phelps and husband Jim moved to Prospect, Kentucky in 2021 after 42 years in Lexington. Son Jeffery and daughter Teresa and her family live in Louisville. Gia

reports that it was a wonderful move. Unfortunately, Jim, whom Gia met at the end of our sophomore year, passed away unexpectedly this past June. Gia and Jim had 57 amazing and adventurous years together.

I (**Marilyn Beckman Ward**) can admit that I found the ending weeks of 2025 very stressful. The knowledge that I had to replace my aged computer had hung over me all year. So, I finally purchased a new computer with Windows 11 and nothing went smoothly. Week #1, the new one crashed. I got tech support to help with the replacement, but the printer wouldn't cooperate. I'm still learning Win 11 while I work on our taxes and edit your wonderful, interesting letters. My thanks to everyone who answered my request for news! May God bless you all!