

Diane M. Montgomery Memorial

From the Middlebury College Alumni Newsletter

Correspondent Susi Davis Patterson reports: Our class suddenly lost a favorite classmate. Dee Martin Montgomery, on June 19, 2015. Dee had had a stroke about 10 years ago, but with hard work, she had recovered completely, and few could even detect any language hesitation. She continued to be very active, both professionally and socially; in her two communities: Killington, Vt., and South Bristol, Maine, where Dee and husband Bob had built a beautiful second home overlooking the bay. So, it was a shock to her family and friends when Dee suddenly developed a very fast-progressing brain cancer and died at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Hospital. While I think everyone in our class knew Dee from her vivacious and social personality, she had maintained close ties with several of us, had hosted the women of '67 at her ocean-view home in Maine for a lobster dinner a few years ago, and was planning to attend our gathering this fall near her home in Vermont. Of all of us, probably Tiger Bethke stayed closest to Dee, with visits between the two couples in Vermont, Maine, and Florida. Tiger gave a very special talk at Dee's memorial service, also attend by Kathie Towle Hession, as well as "the other Martin from New Jersey," Helen Martin Whyte, and me. It is printed in full, here, and speaks so eloquently of Dee, and also of our time at Middlebury. Celebrating those classmates we have lost is important to all of us, and it will be a part of our 50th reunion in June 2017.

- Tiger's speech: "For a Christmas gift, in 1965, Dee Martin gave me a copy of *compete Poems of Robert Frost*. We were Middlebury College juniors, she a French major, me American Literature. We had been classmates in what everyone on campus knew was "Baby Am Lit" – the introductory survey course. If you had not read and studied some of Robert Frost poetry before, and were at Midd, you likely encountered it in this course. Dee seemed to connect with various Frost poems. In fact, I think a lot of us of that era did. "The Road Not Taken" might be familiar as one example. A week ago, upon learning of Dee's tragic decease, I pulled the book from my home office shelf. I have done that, periodically, over the years. And there, once again, was her inscription to me: "Tiger – 'We may take something like a star/ To stay our minds on and be staid.' Merry Christmas! Dee, 1965. He choice was familiarity and with the final two lines of Frost's "Take Something Like a Star," a poem that, in part at least, seems to be about searching for a "certain" (in various ways) place of perspective, wisdom and content. The afternoon of my first day at Middlebury College, I ventured out of Hepburn Hall to hit some tennis serves on the nearby courts. A solo thing, as I recall, maybe to relieve a little freshman angst already setting in. Already on a court, and about to depart, was this very attractive girl: Dee. That was a beginning. My next memory is when we met soon again at Hepburn Hall Zoo for a freshman class mixer dance. The recorded sounds included something call the British Invasion and a group strangely call the Beatles. Dee and I reconnected as she demonstrated her considerable dancing skills, especially the "slop" and the "twist." Through our years, we dated. Not exclusively, mine you; there was a lot of competition on sponsored activities. Dee was a "people person." But we became devoted ice hockey, football game and ski event attendees together; sharing friendships with many athletes. And we became regulars now and then within the Middlebury partying and social drinking scene. I joined Chi Psi fraternity, and all the Chi Psi brothers adored Dee. (Well, for that matter, many students, faculty and administrators at Middlebury highly admired Dee." She soon became regarded at Chi Psi, by general and informal consensus, as a "Little Sister." That was high tribute, and I believe she privately enjoyed the status. It included an informal bodyguard or two for her; discreet but ever ready; when she was mingling at crowded frat house parties on campus. More than once, usually, involving intoxicated strangers, fraternity brothers came to her aid. Dee reciprocated, as the ever-thoughtful and diligent Dee naturally would, by attempting to dissuade certain Chi Psi brothers

from some of their antics on and off campus. Truth be known, she always held herself to higher standards than some of us did. Senior year, Dee and I were especially busy with campus organization pursuits. We remained close friend while dating others. In fact, I married another Midd student in the spring of that year. Dee and I pretty much lost touch during the 1970's, but she and husband Bob Montgomery welcomed me for several brief visits in Vermont following my divorce in 1980, and prior to my remarriage. Dee and I found mutual joy in gourmet cooking together, red wine, and Midd reminiscence. The 25th class reunion in 1992 proved especially memorable: some of you will recall class members of the D-8 a cappella singing group serenading Dee with an over-the-top rendition of the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost that Lovin' Feelin'." Everyone thought that was an inspired choice, and tribute, to a special classmate, and so it was. In July 2003, I brought a Robert Frost collected verse book along on a visit, with my wife, to Bob and Dee's scenic retreat on the Main coast. I asked Dee for an updated inscription. She wrote, "Tig – It is such a pleasure to share our small piece of the Maine coast with you – as both hold a special place in my heart. How wonderful that our two roads continue to converge now and again! Dee." I could not have expressed it any better, now some 50 years after receipt of a cherished book.

– *Class Correspondents: Susan Davis Patterson; Alex Taylor*