THE HARVARD 1926-1931 REUNION
(As recorded by VWH)

The 25th Reunion was simply GRAND! No Harvard man (or his family) should miss his 25th! - of that we are convinced.

Here is our trip to and from Boston for that big event: We left home about noon on Friday, June 15th, after much activity in leaving my mother well stocked with cooked food, etc., and the house ready for Aunt Sallie and Uncle Charlie to take over for their use while we were away and they visiting from Florida. The weather was perfect and the car was packed with garments, etc., for any kind of weather, as June in New England can produce just any kind of weather.

First stop was Laurel, Maryland, to phone Aunt Sallie that I had turned the refrigerator off to defrost and it was still off! She had already made that discovery, however. Then lunch in Baltimore - sandwiches and big malted milks. Then on to Newcastle Ferry. The two hour wait there in heat and dust and insects made us decide to drive through Philadelphia on the return trip. Hot dogs on the ferry was supper or "tea"! Phoned New York and asked the hotel to hold our room as we were going to arrive late. Stopped in Belleville, New Jersey, to see Marian and Charles and baby Lynne Morris. I fed her her ten o'clock bottle. The one day in the year, Charles would be at some big social function of his office! However, Lynne was the main attraction and she smiled and cooed and John declared that she talked (five weeks old)! Marian was one proud mother and just beamed over her precious baby girl.

We finally arrived at Standish Hall Hotel at 45 W. 81st Street in New York. We were delighted with the nice suite of rooms, even an electric refrigerator, they had reserved for us when I wrote for a twin bedroom. Some Government engineers had stayed there and told John about the place. Mentioning this fact our rates were reduced $1 by the hotel clerk. But the big surprise was that instead of what we imagined would be a $15 rate, we found the regular price of the suite was $8 and thus only $7 to us! Result - we immediately reserved same for our return trip!

12:30, midnight, found us eating hamburgers and french fries at a little place near the hotel - supper! Saturday morning we had breakfast at the same place and then took subway to Macy's:!! The Macy-price-war being the current talk of the country, we just had to see the allowing crowds. Bought some hose, lunch at a Horn & Hardart automat and then off for Boston.

The Merritt super-highway was a dream, NOT A BILL BOARD to mar the lovely landscape. Just perfect road, much of it divided-dual, with turn-offs to all the little towns which the road completely by-passed. Five hours from New York we arrived at the Kenmore Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Our reservation turned out to be an $11 room but we decided to enjoy it (after phoning all around and finding nothing else). Dinner was more hamburgers and french fries. This time at a nearby-by Howard Johnson's where we learned that a Chocolate Milk Shake ($5c) was a glass of chocolate milk. I insisted ice cream "made" a "" " but that concoction proved to be 35c and called a Frappe!!

Sunday morning we left our car parked and took a taxi to The Mother Church. Lovely service, of course, such a privilege to attend. The Readers were Harry Mo Reynolds and Helen Appleton, both former lecturers. (Miss Appleton was the first lecturer John introduced while he was 1st Reader.) After service the first person we recognized was Mrs. Stedman from 4th Church, Washington, D.C.!! Florence and Corin Dick were there and took us back to the Kenmore in their car in the pouring rain.
Virginia Wheeler Harrold scrapbook, 1951. HUM 171, Harvard University Archives.

We then got our car and drove out to Harvard to register. The Harvard Union was gay with crimson geraniums and flowers everywhere. The Ladies were at the door and a reception committee saw to it that we got our "provisions", namely; both received a white duck hat with crimson numbers "26" on the front and printed name tags to pin on. The men's Class tie was a lovely crimson silk with the special design of H - 26 woven at intervals all over it. The ladies' over-shoulder bags of red and white plastic literally were "carry-alls" and proved quite indispensable.

We learned that the town of Cambridge "belongs" to the 25th Reunion Class each year. Signs everywhere said "Reserved parking for Class of 1926" and any car bearing the class sticker could even violate any local traffic rules. Traffic stopped anywhere to allow a "26er", easily recognized by class hats, etc., to cross the street. Cambridge owes much of its business success to Harvard and I guess it shows its appreciation in this way to the old "Grads".

We had been assigned to Adams' F-2 (see list p. 53 in Reunion Guide). We ate dinner in the Adams' dining room - turkey dinner for only $1.10. Fun to eat on plastic trays, divided sections for various courses. We ate with the "boys" from school and that was interesting to me to see their dining room, etc. This was not a part of the Reunion program but the hostess willingly consented to let us eat dinner there.

Back to the Kenmore we checked out and moved over to Adams House. Perhaps it would be better to omit our first impressions of our dormitory quarters. It was grand to have a suite of rooms to ourselves and a private bath (those housed in the Yard had no private bath). BUT, all the furniture in the living room was piled up in disorder and inches of dirt had been swept into one corner. The "springs" of two easy chairs consisted of wire coat hangers stretched from side to side to hold the cushions! There was a supply of beer in cans on the book shelf and I promptly removed the whiskey bottles decorating the mantel. After setting our house in order we dressed and went to the Hasty Pudding Club a few blocks away for the "Warm-up party"... [1.65 each] where a cold ham, beans, etc., supper was eaten stand-up style, elbow to elbow. We ate with Florence and Corwin in the crowd there. Enjoyed the new "March of Time" movie about Harvard and returned to Adams House to press our clothes and get ready for the busy schedule ahead.

Monday morning we ate in Cambridge and I went dime store shopping. Lunch at the same cafeteria. Visited the Reading Room and found Ben Fray had left that Saturday as Librarian there and was starting that day as Librarian at The Mother Church Reading Room on Milk Street in Boston. The Librarian on duty had once been a member of 4th Church, DC (a Ruth Hall) so we chatted a few minutes about mutual friends. She and B McDevitt are good friends.

We took the "Science and Research" University Tour from Sever Hall to the Nuclear Lab and heard and saw amazing things about atomic energy.

4:40 PM found us at Harvard Memorial Church in the Yard. The Memorial Service was simple and well attended. The Class findings showed that 15% of the men attend church every week; 16% pretty regularly; 50% few times a year or less often; 21% never go...but I remarked to John, that was one day most all of them attended church!

At six o'clock we boarded busses at the Harvard Union and left for Symphony Hall. The couple of dozen busses, bearing signs "CLASS OF 1926", whirled into Boston with Police escort as people along the streets stared at the motorized cavalcade.
The reception for President and Mrs. Conant at Symphony Hall, cocktail party, was just a mob of '26 era all over the corridors and stairways, glasses in hand, and the din of chatter was simply terrific. At 7:30 we went into the Hall where the whole lower floor was filled with tables set for 16 and dinner was served. The scene was quite attractive - stage at one end with the musicians, and the tables with red candle, red "Pops" programs, etc., and wide crimson satin ribbon across the center, each humming with Reunion conversation. The meat course will remain a topic of comment as we were served the most delicious roasted fillets of beef I ever tasted...THREE platters full for our ten persons. And the boys saw to it that not one piece was left! We enjoyed the food and the music. The concert was broadcast over a nation wide network from 10 PM. All left immediately after the concert as the busses were waiting to take us back to Harvard.

Tuesday, June 15th, (I) breakfasted at the Harvard Union. Should say a word about the breakfast menu. Each morning it was about the same: choice of bacon and eggs any style (order one and you got two anyway), cod fish cakes, etc., orange juice, prune, figs, cantaloupe, toast, muffins, beverage. As much as you could eat, cereals too, if wanted. Served at long tables in the Union on cleverly designed paper place mats with a Boston-Harvard '26 motif designed by one of the class. Come to think of it, I believe John ate at the Union too, that morning, but he usually slept late...as did many of the husbands...while we wives exercised pop and energy and met for breakfast!

This was the big cutting day and we piled in busses for Essex Country Club with wraps and tennis stuff. The couple of dozen busses filled up quickly and only seats we found were in a bus of teen-agers who were certainly well behaved. We zoomed along the highways about 30 miles north of Boston to our destination.

John donned his tennis togs and was joined with three other men for some LAWN tennis, yes, grass courts. His partner proved to be Mr. Cooke whom we later found to be quite a man of experience, having been behind the "Iron Curtain". The Stoners and Piquets and couple others joined for lunch which was eaten on the lawn. The delicious food deserves comment because of its superior quality and interesting setting. The buffet was served on pale blue glass dishes under a huge white marquee. There was lots to eat...the chicken pie, chicken salad, hot consomme and date and nut bread were especially good, macaroons and ice cream roll for dessert. The day was bright and sunny but cool enough to make a wrap desirable. We loitered in chairs on the lawn and watched the more ambitious indulge in square dancing on the green. There was golf on what appeared a beautiful course. Baseball could be played or watched, we watched. Four professional minstrels, as a group, wandered amongst the crowd all day, playing continuously. It was a very pleasant day for us all...I should also mention the "ever-present" cocktail bar. It was very well stocked and looked as though it could supply anything one might wish. The bars ALWAYS had non-alcoholic beverages for those who wished them and there was no hesitancy in asking for plain ginger ale, or orange juice, or soda pop. (I never drank so much ginger ale as I did at the Reunion: And the cooler of fresh-squeezed orange juice at the Harvard Union was an unbelievable continuous treat.)

Floyd and Amos Stoner and John and I took a shuttle bus to Manchester Yacht Club and enjoyed a boat ride about the harbor. Back at Essex Club we later left for the clambake at Singing Beach.

The little group that sat at the same table Monday night at the Pops Concert seemed to more or less look for each other at the other events, so we were seen all together sitting on the sandy beach (on pieces of carton Floyd found), each with a huge plate of steamed clams in his lap, dunking the funny looking things in melted butter and wondering whether or not we really liked them. "First time" for some of us - John and Floyd were a pair: Both ate them, however. Then hot dogs, lobsters,
and soda pop with harlequin slices of ice cream for dessert. We had a gay time figuring out "which part" to eat and taking lobster-eating-lessons from the more experienced. As a matter of shameful record I ate 2 plates of clams, 2 hot dogs, 2 lobsters, 2 bottles of pop, and 2 ice creams - but some of them ate MORE than I! There was music from a Harvard band and a snake dance in which we all joined. We "snaked" in and out over the sandy beach. We took the first bus to Harvard, but an hour later we were still driving around North Beverley, half way to Boston! Seems that the bus drivers joined in our clam bake fun and many of them found the bar. We were grateful that our driver drove carefully but he surely was the LOSTEST bus driver I ever saw to ride with! Two in our bus knew a little of that part of the countryside and eventually got us back to civilization. As we walked back to our dormitory we stopped and bought a Harney bar and two mouse traps. That night we caught the "visitor" that had scared me the night before.

Wednesday I had breakfast at the Union with the Stomers. Their tale of the ride back the night before was one zip-slip-hurry driving. We went to the New Lecture Hall for the "Private Lives" program and Pres. Conant made an interesting speech. He told that the present housing plan had its inception twenty-five years ago as an idea of some members of that Class of 1926. Bill Nichols (Editor of the weekly magazine section of many newspapers "This Week") was a peppy Master of Ceremonies. He interviewed a number of '26 ers who gave very interesting (prepared) talks on their experiences and careers, varied from pre-fab housing to under-ocean research.

At noon the Classmates assembled on the steps of Widener Library for the Class picture. Then we all went to Lowell House where lunch was served in the Quadrangle. Another delicious meal, remembered for its superb salmon concoction, chicken salad, sandwiches, etc., and strawberries on ice cream. Our little group ate on a terrace covered by a canopy. The buffet was under a marquee and the Quadrangle full of '26 ers seated at red-checkered tables, very colorful sight.

The Classmates and sons left and marched as a class to Soldiers Field in the long procession of Reunions. There was a reserved section at the Stadium for all Classmates and families of the '26 ers. It was interesting to watch the procession come across the Field...1926 came first, then on till finally I spied John and got busy trying to get a good picture. The classes had comic skits in the parade and many laughs and jokes. Weather was bright and sunny with a stiff breeze. We left early and saw the Felkers (St. Louis and now DC) who were there for his 40th. The less said about the numerous pitchers and the game the better! Score:

We took a taxi back to the dormitory and dressed for church. Drove to Boston where Mrs. Elizabeth McEwen Thomson was waiting for us in her lovely office on 8th floor of the Christian Science Publishing Society. We walked the few blocks to the Colonial Tea Room and enjoyed a little visit with her as her guests for dinner. Back to the Mother Church we went up in the elevator (new to us) and into the main auditorium to her usual seat. Miss Ker Seymer, former lecturer, and the present soloist and his wife were in the pew in front of us. (No one lead the singing on Wednesday night). Mr. Knight (former Reader at 4th Church, St. Louis) gave a testimony. He was back for one of the Harvard Reunions too. Mrs. Thomson introduced us to several people and then we drove her back to her apartment and we returned to Harvard to dress for the formal dance. Arrived at the Copley-Plaza Hotel at 10:30. We had expected to miss the Wives' and Classmates' dinners but were surprised to find the men still in session. It was a hot night so we stood outside of the hotel cooling off while the wives fumed and fussed and sat all over the lobby waiting for the men and the orchids (donated and flown in from Hawaii but delayed by Pan-Amer. strike) and the dancing. The baby orchids finally arrived. About 11 PM, or so, we heard a shout and decided the men's dinner had finally ended, but actually they might have kept on indefinitely had not the wives "ganged up" and started shouting. This
broke up the stag session. The bar was popular for a cold drink as the men were almost melted when they emerged. Dancing began a little before midnight after clearing the ballroom of the men's dinner. The music was 1926 vintage and there was a gay 'Charleston' skit on the stage by some of the wives dressed in 1926 gowns who proved they had lost none of their 1926 vim and vigor. The dance was really fun though late starting and many did not stay for it. We left a little after one.

Thursday, June 21st: Somehow the wives ate alone the morning after the big dance. Florence Dick and I sat on the steps of Widener Library and watched the 1951 Commencement Exercises. At noon there was a delicious buffet at the Union (sliced turkey, etc.) while the "Class Spread" for classmates only was held over by Matthews Hall. John attended a meeting of the Harvard Engineering Society in Harvard Hall and I was to meet him there at 1:30. I learned (from a policeman) that Harvard Hall was across the Yard and that the space intervening was roped off and guarded and FULL of men there for the "traditional" Alumni gatherings. NO WOMEN - ever dare to enter! So the policeman informed me. I had innocently said that I was to meet my husband at 1:30 at Harvard Hall where he was waiting for me...and how does one get to Harvard Hall? Mr. Policeman gathered himself up to his fullest stature and glared at me and said, "Now don't start talking BECAUSE Women don't dare to go through there and you CAN'T go to Harvard Hall now...no matter who is waiting for you!" Then he unlocked the gate and said, "Walk right through there and that is Harvard Hall." I gasped and walked as fast as I could past hundreds of men...praying that no flashphoto man would spy me and produce a picture captioned "HOW did SHE get in here?" I met John and when he suggested we walk back across the Yard I quickly informed him that once was quite enough of that, so another guard let us out another gate on to the streets of Cambridge.

We viewed the Alumni Parade in Tercentenary Theatre but didn't stay for the speeches. Walked back to the Union and ordered some pictures, then to Adams House and packed the car and bade farewell to Harvard!

After such a strenuous program a good night's rest loomed desirable so we stopped at Worcester's Sherraton Hotel. Finding no cafeteria we ate in the hotel coffee shop. Had a delicious New England boiled dinner $5 and surprisingly ate it all. (Had so much food at Reunion thought never to eat again.) After dinner we discovered a grand cafeteria right in the hotel! Had breakfast there and found the Vancools from DC there too. Shopped and got John a bathing suit, etc., ate lunch in the cafeteria and then headed for New York.

Decided to stop by Scarsdale and see the Gordons. Grand to see them in their lovely home at 6 School Lane. They insisted we eat dinner with them. Told Bernice how her lovely solos had been missed at our church. Filled ourselves away and arrived at Hotel Stansish Hall about 9:30. Phoned Mary Hornaday but no answer. Put in a call for Charles Morris but before we get it through he called us - and Mary was over there so we visited by phone. Then took subway to Times Square and rubbenecked with the other thousands on Broadway til midnight...having hot dogs and various fruit drinks all along the way.

Saturday morning - rain. Late breakfast and headed home via Philadelphia, Dinner en route. Milk shake-supper in Baltimore. Home about 1:30 P.M. It had been a full schedule and lots of fun! We had hesitated and considered a long time before finally deciding to attend "The 25th"...but it was a "must" all right and something to always remember!
John Harvard — with one of his “sons” and wife class of 1926