

LifeStyles

SECTION C • THE DILLSBURG BANNER • MARCH 8, 2012

Northern High School Alumni

Where Are They Now?



By Steven M. Nesbit
Feature Writer/Dillsburg Banner

Jane M. Alexander, Esq. - 'The Hat Lady'

What an enjoyable Thursday afternoon I spent talking with Jane Alexander at her law office on S. Baltimore Street. She welcomed me as if we had known each other for decades. I graduated with her oldest son, Nixon, in 1969, but I never had the pleasure of meeting his mother until last week.

As I waited in the vestibule, I had an opportunity to read about a few of her achievements and accomplishments from the display of awards and framed documents adorning the room. After a few minutes, her phone call ended and I heard her say, "Hello, I know somebody's out there. Come on in." I replied, "Hello, I'll follow the arrows." They led me into what appeared to be a reception area, and as I turned to my right, in the adjoining room, there she sat eating an apple. She welcomed me to join her at her desk as she "finished her lunch."

What I first noticed about Jane was her smile. She wore a smile probably more often than she wore a hat, and if you know anything about Mrs. Alexander, you know about her affinity for hats. She finished her apple as I thanked her for her time and her willingness to grant me an interview. Then, our discussion began.

Jane's father was working construction on Route 6 across northern Pennsylvania when he met a lady while renting a room from the next-door neighbor. This lady would later become Jane's mother. He left the construction work and came back to Dillsburg because his family had been here since they received a land grant from William Penn for acreage near the Barren's valley.

"Dad grew up on a farm down around Franklinton," said Jane, "and he told me a story about Indian Peg, who lived along Whiskey Springs

Road. She would come down to the farm to sell things like herbs and potions. Grandpa would give her two buckets filled with milk, and if she could swing them over her head without spilling the milk, Grandpa gave her sugar and flour for free. Dad said she could do it."

Her father went to Shippensburg College and was just three months away from graduation when Jane's grandfather found out he wasn't studying to become a teacher; he was studying to be an engineer. Grandpa refused to pay for his last session, and Jane's dad didn't graduate.

"He wouldn't budge and Grandpa didn't budge. Dad never did get his diploma. Talk about being hard-headed," Jane said, laughing. Instead of finishing his education, her father opened a garage and the family moved back to the area. After her grandmother died, her grandfather wanted the family to move into his house. Later, after some remodeling, the family moved in.

Grandpa Lehmer became the Justice of the Peace, and his office was in the house. On the front lawn there was a big locust tree and an old wooden bench underneath. One day, 5-year-old Jane was outside playing with her German shepherd when Grandpa and Dr. Baker, who was in charge of the school, were sitting on the bench. Grandpa called Jane over to where they were sitting.

"He said, 'Skeezix, stand in front of Dr. Baker.' So, you always did what my grandfather told you to do. 'Dr Baker wants to feel your head,' and he did as they talked back and forth. Grandpa said, 'OK, it's settled. Skeezix, you're going to be a lawyer.' Well, that night at dinner, Grandpa announced to father, mother, little brother and grandfather Fisher, 'Skeezix is going to be a lawyer. I know there's one problem,



Playing 20 Questions with Jane Alexander - Class of '47 Dillsburg High School

- 1. What is your proudest accomplishment?** Making sure all four of my children got to college and graduated
- 2. What's your idea of relaxation?** Reading Time, Newsweek and The Economist. I don't watch TV and I don't use computers.
- 3. What talent would you like to have?** Singing. Dad used to say I could change the key of any song more than anybody he knew.
- 4. Name your No. 1 pet peeve.** People who are rude. We've lost politeness.
- 5. Name something people will be surprised to know about you.** I love to cook and try new recipes.
- 6. The best way to get on my good side?** Just listen to what I have to say. So many people don't really know how to listen.
- 7. What are you good at?** Talking
- 8. What are you not good at?** Swimming
- 9. Who are your heroes?** George Leader, a good governor with a genuine concern for older citizens; FDR, I just admired his savoir faire, and his handicap didn't stop him from anything; Margaret Thatcher, She's done a great job; and Genevieve Blatt, my dear friend.
- 10. What's your favorite comfort food?** Cream of potato soup with lots of onions on a cold winter's night
- 11. Fish, beef, chicken or pork?** Beef
- 12. What's your favorite dessert?** Ice cream, butter pecan
- 13. What is the nicest thing anyone ever said to you?** A heartfelt thank you
- 14. Coffee, tea, soda or water?** - Regular coffee
- 15. Three adjectives to describe you?** - Ambitious, socially active, considerate
- 16. Italian, Mexican, French or American?** - It depends where you're eating it. Italian
- 17. What makes you cry?** Losing good friends
- 18. What makes you seriously annoyed?** Incompetence, knowing the rules and not following them
- 19. What makes you laugh?** - A good, funny joke
- 20. What's the best advice you every received?** Dr. Martha Bailey in Dillsburg told me if you're going to be a lawyer, never learn to type and always wear a hat.

you're a girl, but we're going to work around that. You're going to be a lawyer."

After Jane's future had been decided, whenever she was around when Grandpa was trying a case, he'd call her into the office, and she had to sit, watch and listen to the case. Afterward, he would explain it to her. She watched Grandpa's cases. "When he married people, as a special treat, I was allowed to watch the ceremony," said Jane. "At the end of the day, he would say to me, 'Skeezix, you were a very good girl today.' Jane was only 5 years old!

Soon after that chat with Dr. Baker, Grandpa Lehmer decided Jane should start school immediately. Dr. Baker agreed and Jane entered first grade. The teacher said to the class, "Today, we're going to learn to write our name." Jane already learned how to write her name. The teacher then asked her if she could count. Jane replied, "How far do you want me to go?" The teacher didn't know what to do with her. After talking with Dr. Baker, the teacher sat Jane away from the class and allowed her to do all of the first-grade work and then she started on the second-grade work. She was told that she could bring in newspapers to read in class. Jane said, "That's how it went through my elementary years."

She got in trouble in fifth grade. "Guns Along the Mohawk" had just been released in 1936. Jane put it on her Christmas list, but was told it was not an appropriate book for her age. But that's what she wanted and that's what she got. In fact, she got more than she asked for.

"Well, there was a short passage about a couple who went into a room and undressed," said Jane. "There was nothing risqué about it, but I thought it was cool. So, I took the book to school and showed it to my classmates.

Boy, did I get nailed on that one."

Another childhood experience that Jane remembers was when her father decided it was a good time to take the family to Florida. They planned to go during the Christmas vacation and invited Mr. and Mrs. Myers to go along, too. Jane reminded her dad, "If I go to Florida, I need to get a souvenir." Her father said she could get whatever she wanted as long as it fit in the car. "So, I brought back my very own pet alligator," she said.

When Jane was in eighth grade it was time to learn about responsibility and money. There were two paper routes in Dillsburg. "One was in town and the other went down Gettysburg Street and out Mountain Road ... all the way out to Laukemann's green house and then over to the Boy Scouts camp and back into town. It was seven miles," said Jane. Her parents decided that her brother should have the in-town route and she should have the seven-mile route.

"My grandfather Fisher was a schoolteacher and lived with us," said Jane. "When I came home on Saturdays with my earnings, he would

Continued on 4C.
See Where Are They Now.



Marsh publishes book of great-great-grandfather's adventures

Carla Maddox
Staff Reporter/Dillsburg Banner

Every generation lives "in the moment." Such was the case of John Howard

Redfield (1815-1895) as he takes us west on an adventure across the United States in 1872, visiting the natural wonders of Colorado and California. A self-educated,

inquisitive man and respected botanist, his journal brings a two-month, transcontinental railroad journey to life with details of his travels, friends and strangers he met along the way, places he visited, thoughts on various life issues, a perspective of everyday life on the western trail that only a traveler at that time can convey. He was also the great-great-grandfather of local Dillsburg resident John Marsh.

John and his wife, Julia, moved to Central Pennsylvania from New England about 36 years ago to work for Bethlehem Steel. An antique car enthusiast, he was more likely to read auto magazines than books. However, a trip back to a New England in 2010 connected him with an uncle and his family's literary treasures, including the first 50 pages of Redfield's diary. Realizing that most family history is lost as generations pass, John quickly snatched those few pages, returned home and proceeded to digitize the fading script. With only half of an adventure in hand, he found the remaining pages that described Redfield's

"John Howard Redfield, Recollections of Colorado & California in 1872, Transcribed & Edited by John Marsh"

return East in a Philadelphia historical society. He spent months researching names, people's activities, towns, lodgings, churches, the country's natural beauty and even reading additional period books until he was able to "fill in the gaps" and bring a realistic picture to daily scenes of another man's life in another time.

Writing takes a dedication that goes beyond the normal workday. It's not like going to work, completing so many hours on the job and returning home. John said his mind was constantly connected to the main character, attempting to access the most subtle meanings of each moment of his life, often waking in the middle of the night, writing a thought on a bedside notepad only to face disappointment the next morning when not quite sure what he had written down. For all the trials and tribulations encountered along the way, the final product brought a level of educa-

tion and personal satisfaction he would never have gained outside this passage. "This type of experience enables us as human beings to realize where we came from, good or bad, and hopefully enables us to strive to be better individuals, because at the end of the day, our name is on everything," he said.

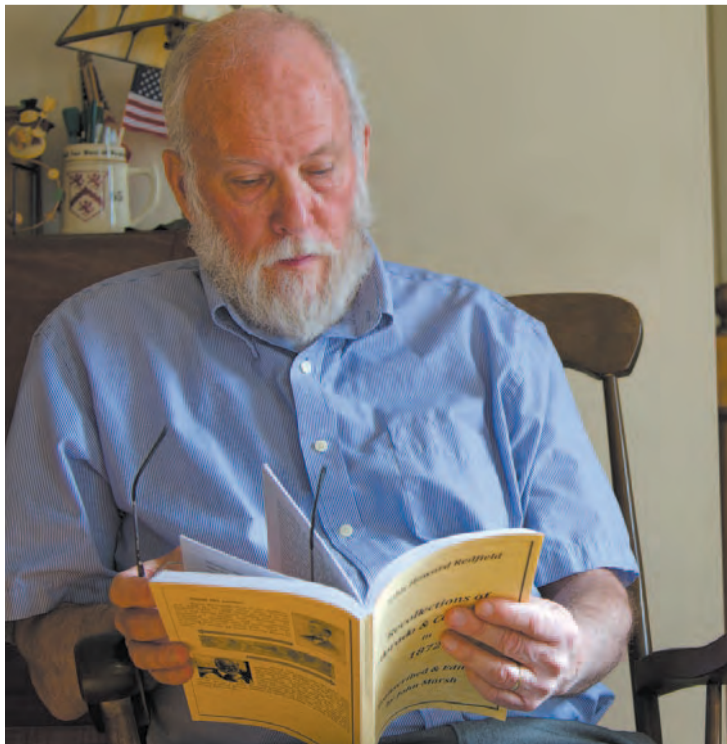
John's father once said, "I don't want my boss to ever read about you in the paper." Not fully understanding that assertion at the time, it not only kept his father employed, but it kept John out of trouble. Documenting Redfield's life brought new meaning to his father's profound statement because of John's newly found "sense of roots." Although Redfield's journey started on Thursday, July 11, 1872, it reached through five generations and hasn't stopped yet. Currently, his next book, "In Search of Shortia, with Asa Gray in NC 1879," is at the publishers.

Readers can obtain a copy

Recollections of Colorado and California in 1872



of "John Howard Redfield, Recollections of Colorado & California in 1872" for \$15 (\$19.95 via mail) by calling John at 432-2192, emailing him at jmarsh9@verison.net (type "Book" in subject line) or for a limited time, pick up a copy at Zeek's Coffeehouse. John is also available for lectures at civic clubs, historical societies, garden clubs, etc., and is scheduled as the main speaker at the upcoming June NYCHAPS meeting.



Carla Maddox/Dillsburg Banner

John Marsh reads over the book he published of his great-great-grandfather's adventures: 'John Howard Redfield, Recollections of Colorado & California in 1872'.

Where are they now?

Continued from page 1C.

buy savings bonds for me." Jane was getting older as her high school years approached.

There were not many sports at Dillsburg high school for girls in the 1940s, but there was a girls' soccer team. "Betty Nelson and I were the score keepers, and my mother took us to all of the games," she said. Perhaps, her best athletic accomplishment occurred while playing on the girls' volleyball team. "I once scored 13 straight points while serving." That's quite a feat at any level! Last, but certainly not least, Jane was the only girl on the rifle team. "Of course now, they don't allow any rifle teams," she said. "But I had always hunted with my dad, so I was probably the best shot on the rifle team."

When Jane was a junior, along with two of her friends who were seniors, the trio went on strike against the Administration. She doesn't remember what issues precipitated the strike, but Jane does remember "there was a picture in the paper of us walking with our picket signs."

Jane graduated from Dillsburg High School in 1947. She immediately enrolled at Dickinson College in Carlisle, majoring in political science with a minor in psychology. "I entered the college in '47 and

it was a class eligible for the GI Bill," she recalled. "Most of my classmates were guys who were 24 or 25 years old, and there I was, 17."

When her junior year arrived, she was dating Nelson, the captain of the paratroopers, who jumped on D-Day. Jane agreed to marry Nelson and suggested they get married between her junior and senior year. She realized otherwise they wouldn't have any time together. He was in law school and Jane was finishing her undergraduate classes of her junior year.

By nature of her gender, Jane had another interesting academic year. Her senior year was the last year the college allowed students to elect law at the undergraduate level. According to Jane, the college did that for the veterans. When she went to schedule curriculum for her senior year, she told them she wanted to take law. In Jane's words, "I figured if it was good enough for our veterans, it was good enough for me." She was told she'd have to get permission from the dean. Why? Because she was a woman.

She took the application to the dean's office and the secretary said, "Yes, you need his permission, but he can't see you now." Jane left. She filled out the application and came back later. Again, the secretary said, "He's busy and can't see you now." This went on for awhile. Then she was told that she'd have to get her application turned in by Friday afternoon. Jane said, "I knew the dean always went to the bank on Fridays. On a wet, rainy afternoon, he

was shuffling along with his umbrella and I walked right up and stopped him and asked, 'Can I go to law school?' He mumbled. I asked a second time ... the third time I waved my application in front of his face and he gave a big nod of approval." Jane thanked him and she ran back to the scheduling office to tell the secretary that he said yes. When he arrived, the secretary went into his office, and said, "I understand you said Jane Lehmer can go to law school. Here's her application." He signed it without saying a word and Jane said he never spoke a word to her.

The next year was quite memorable. She completed her senior year of college and Nelson finished law school. Plus, they became husband and wife. They were newly-weds.

Dickinson College held a combined graduation that year with the college and the law school. The diplomas were handed out alphabetically. That meant Nelson Alexander was called first and Jane Alexander was called second.

"Every time I saw Justice Clark after that graduation, he would say to me that he'll never forget watching me walk up there eight months pregnant to get my diploma," said Jane.

Less than three years later, Jane was in a predicament again. She was finishing her final semester of law school and pregnant with her second child. The baby wouldn't wait. Her second son, Marstin, was born on a Tuesday. She was in the hospital after giving birth and

missed two final exams. Those two professors allowed her to take the exams in their office after she was discharged from the hospital; however, the dean's trust exam was the following Monday.

"I knew if I would not have taken that exam on Monday, he would have flunked me," she said. "You should have seen the look on the dean's face when I showed up for the exam. I passed the exam. When I graduated from Dickinson School of Law I had my degree and I had two little boys."

Following her illustrious career of more than 50 years as a civic leader, an elected public servant, a pioneer for women in the workplace, a consumer advocate and a devoted wife and mother, Jane M. Alexander currently serves as the vice president of Mesco, Inc., the owner and President of J&J Agri-Products & Services, Inc. in Dillsburg, PA, and she is still burning the midnight oil at her private law practice in downtown Dillsburg.

She left me with these words as we concluded our chat. "I feel very lucky to have lived this long and to have known the people and to do the things I did coming from Dillsburg. I hope we get to the point where it isn't first woman this and first woman that. It would be much better to just hear so-and-so did this or that. I was just 'one of the boys' and it really has been a lot of fun. I feel very fortunate that I had so many opportunities."

Honors and Achievements Jane Alexander

2004 Member of the advisory board of the Frank Davidson Center for Macro Engineering and Diplomacy, Roger Williams University, Rhode Island.

2003 Recipient of the Sylvia Rambo Award for her distinguished career in the legal profession

2001 York County Bar Association established the Jane Alexander Annual Award to honor outstanding women working in the law profession

1987 Recipient of the General Alumni Association of the Dickinson School of Law Career Achievement Award

1974 Recipient of the Dickinson School of Law General Alumni Association Outstanding Alumni Award

1977 Consultant: Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C.

1972-77 Deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (First woman in United States named Deputy Secretary)

1967-78 Parliamentarian for Pennsylvania Federation of Democratic Women

1965-69 Member of Pennsylvania House of Representatives, representing the 92nd District of York County, Pa.

1959-65 Member of the Northern Joint School Board, Dillsburg

1955-59 Member and president of Dillsburg Borough Council (First woman president of a borough council in Pennsylvania)



Spring Home & Garden



Easy Projects to Help You Get a Jump on Spring

Get Your Garden off to a Healthy Start

If you're anxious to put on your gardening gloves and get out in the yard, you don't have to wait for the official arrival of spring. You can start with this checklist as soon as weather permits.

1. Start Cleaning Up

Get debris out of the way by picking up dead leaves, sticks, and branches that have fallen, and rocks that have been heaved to the surface by frost.

2. Have Your Soil Tested

To see if your soil needs additional nutrients or minerals, or an adjustment in acidity or alkalinity, send a sample to your local county extension service.

3. Eliminate Weeds

When weeds begin growing in the flower garden, spray them with Roundup® Extended Control Ready-To-Use Weed & Grass Killer Plus Weed Preventer Pump 'N Go® Sprayer, which will kill existing weeds and prevent new ones from growing for up to 4 months. Be careful not to spray any desirable plants. The more weeds you eliminate now, the less competition your garden plants will have for sunlight, nutrients, and moisture.

4. Check if the Soil is Workable

Pick up a handful of soil and squeeze it. If it crumbles easily, you can start garden and flowerbed preparation. If it sticks together in a clump, it's still too wet to work in.

5. Prepare Soil for Planting

If the soil is workable, begin preparing beds for flowers and vegetables. Remove dead plants, and then work in a premixed amendment such as Miracle-Gro® Garden Soil For Flowers and Vegetables, a blend of rich, organic ingredients plus continuous-release plant food. If you prefer to mix your own, you can

use organic matter from compost, sphagnum peat moss, and other soil amendments.

6. Edge Your Beds

Cut a clean edge where planting beds meet the lawn. Use a flat-bladed spade or rent an EZ Trench lawn edger made for this purpose, cutting deeply enough to sever grass roots growing into the bed.

7. Prevent New Weeds

Apply a pre-emergent weed preventer in early spring to keep new weeds from sprouting in the garden or rent a weed torch.

8. Begin pruning deciduous trees while they are still dormant. For an easy and effective way to

trim your trees, check out our 12' or 14' pole saws or our 34' tow behind lift to make that trimming a quick and easy job.

9. Fix Up Your Patio Furniture

Get outdoor furniture ready by repairing and cleaning it - maybe even give it a fresh coat of paint with one of our paint sprayers or some new cushions.

Get an Early Start and Have More Leisure Time Later

If you can get these things done in the coming weeks, you'll be well on your way to enjoying spring when it gets into full swing

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