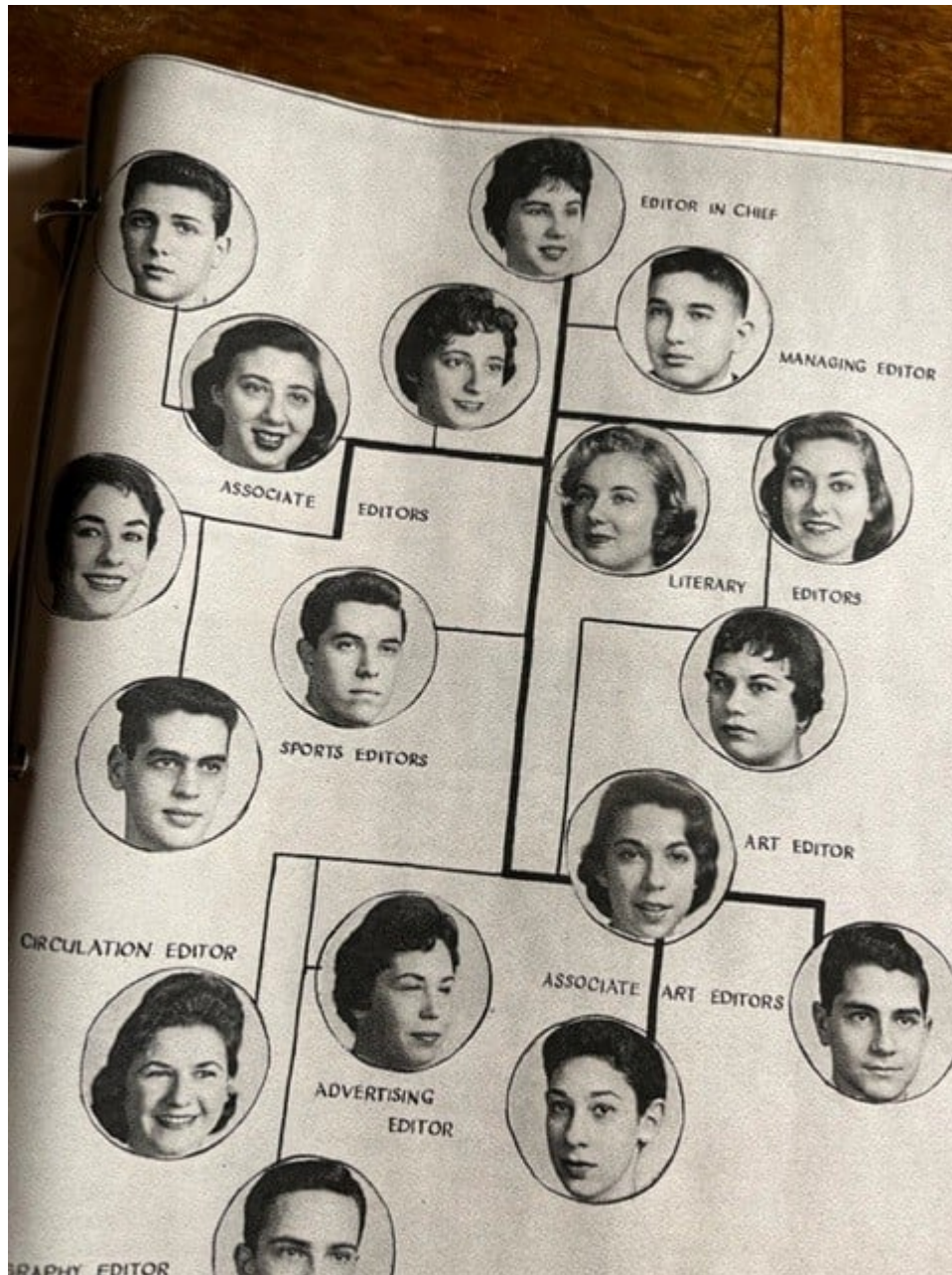


Where are the Snows of Yesteryear...



by Phyllis Chesler

As poet Francois Villon famously asked: "Mais, ou sont les neiges d'antan'?"

But, where are the snows of yesteryear...where are the great and beautiful women of years gone by, in what lands do they now reside—the Roman Flora and Thais, the Christian Heloise, Queen

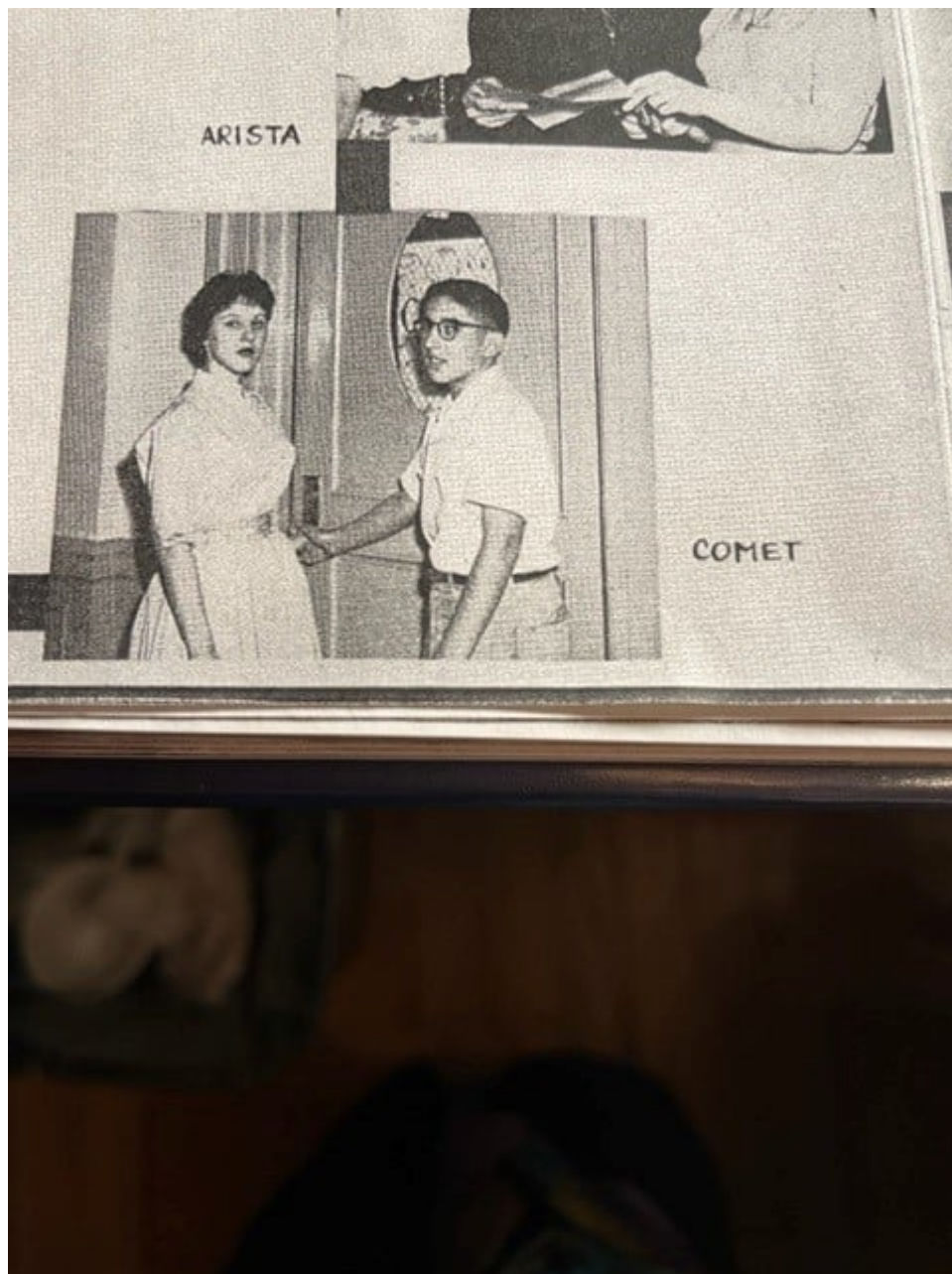
Blanche, and Joan of Arc:

“Jeanne La bonne Lorraine
Qu’Anglais brulerent a Rouen”

Villon’s answer: These beauties are gone, just as yesterday’s pure snow has vanished.

These words came to mind as yesterday I looked at my 1958 New Utrecht High School year book: “The Comet,” which my very kind classmate, Sheila Levinsky, xeroxed for me. (I cannot find my own original copy). And here are my photos as the Editor in Chief of “The Comet” and of “The Spiral,” our literary magazine—and I haven’t changed a bit, not in 64 years! And those whom I remember on the staff, Phyllis Bartel, Roslyn Feig, Anita Friedman, Carolyn Samochile—I’d recognize them anywhere even today.

But what has happened to all my other classmates? Did the girls realize their stated goals of getting married, having children, becoming a private secretary, an executive secretary, a stenographer, a bookkeeper, a medical assistant, going to college, becoming an elementary school teacher, an English teacher, majoring in chemistry, biology, psychology, doing missionary work.



How about the boys? Did they become television repair men, a linotypist, a C.P.A., a draftsman, an electronic technician, a basketball coach, an IBM employee; did they enter the military, "get a good job," become a professor of history, attend Harvard, major in civil engineering, become surgeons, lawyers, and "become a millionaire"?

I'll stop for now but it seems clear: The girls mostly envisioned traditional lives and lower-income jobs. Some of the boys also did—but many boys planned to attend college and envisioned prestigious and higher-paying careers in law, science, medicine, and business.

Where are they all now, these pure, young souls? Are they alive? Retired? In good or in ill health?

Over the years, I've met some classmates courtesy of Sheila Levinsky's untiring efforts to gather us together in reunions every decade. When we dance, we dance in the same old 1950's Brooklyn ways and I love it. However, fewer and fewer of us attend for the usual reasons—we've moved too far away, are burdened in some way, are no longer above ground.

Oh, how did I ever get out? The price for doing so is high, it means losing touch with everyone and with a part of yourself. I was on a scholarship at an out of town "rich kid's" college; I had to wait tables in the school cafeteria as part of my financial package; I was utterly on my own, shot out of a cannon, on the way to myself.

Perhaps I got out because some very special teachers at New Utrecht had faith in me.

My very belated and boundless gratitude to Mrs. Rosencrantz, a Literature teacher, who wrote me wonderful letters of recommendation; to Miss Gelber, who once took me to the Coffee Mill on West 56th Street in Manhattan to engage in grown-up conversation; to Mr. Horowitz, who taught literature wondrously; and especially to Mr. Rubell, my music teacher with whom I studied privately. I sang blues and show tunes, French chansons, a bit of jazz and he was so kind, so skilled on the keyboards.

Where are they all now, where are these once vibrant people?