

# Connecting Our Past and Present

No one can ask Jane Armat how her education at the Young Ladies' Seminary affected her life or how she felt about the unusual compassion with which her sister was treated there. We have only the accidental clues left in letters and in the mementos she cherished. But the later history of Moravian College for Women in the years before it merged with the men's institution is not being left to chance.

The year is 2050. Guided by an interviewer, you are asked to remember what your days at Moravian College were like during the early 21st century. How did you see yourself in the context of your environment in and out of school? What was the tone of the relationships between students and faculty members? What impact did your undergraduate education have on your future endeavors? What would your answers be 50, 60, or even 70 years after your graduation from Moravian College? A project initiated by a group of Moravian alumni is seeking the answers to similar questions from the women who graduated from the Moravian College for Women in the late 1920s through the early 1950s.

Moravian College, as we know it today, traces its roots back to several institutions, including the earliest, the Moravian Seminary for Young Ladies founded in 1742. The Seminary had a long and distinguished record of offering educational opportunities to female students. The institution survived and flourished where many other schools failed. By the turn of the 20th century, the Seminary offered college-level courses; and in 1913 an amendment to the charter renamed the school the Moravian Seminary and College for Women. The women's college educated women until its merger with Moravian College and Theological Seminary in 1954.

While the Moravian community cherishes its long tradition of educating women, we still have the opportunity to add to the historical record by collecting oral history interviews from graduates of the women's college. In preserving our past, we enhance our future. By videotaping oral histories from alumnae, we can expand our understanding of what it was like to be a young woman seeking higher education at a time when only a small percentage of women earned a college degree.

BY ELIZABETH TYLER BUGAIGHIS '87  
AND JEANNE TACCARINO GUARALDO '69

One of the many stories that have been shared with us already is that of an alumna who secretly applied to Moravian. She was accepted

but faced the dilemma of telling her parents, who had but a fifth-grade education. Much to her delight, her father, sensing the opportunity, encouraged her to attend. With much sacrifice on the part of her family, she received her degree. Another alumna, who took over teaching her senior biology class when the professor fell ill, went on to become a renowned scientist. Many women entered into careers, while others used the institution to further their formal education before following the more traditional path of marriage and motherhood.

A preview of the type of material that we have been collecting through the oral history interviews will be the subject of the presentation entitled *Preserving Our Past: Oral Histories from the Moravian College for Women*, at this year's Founder's Day presentation over Alumni Weekend in May 2002.

The Moravian College for Women History Project includes two other endeavors. We will mail a detailed survey to all alumnae of the women's college to gather additional information, and we are collecting archival material—photos, letters, memorabilia—to add to the holdings related to this period in the College's history.

One of the hidden pleasures of being involved in this all-volunteer

project is the opportunity to reconnect with Moravian College and its alumni from all generations.

Daniel R. Gilbert Sr., professor emeritus and College archivist, has guided Jeanne Taccarino Guaraldo '69, Garry Earles '70, and Elizabeth Tyler Bugaighis '87 with expert advice. Professor Gilbert's unflagging enthusiasm for preserving the history of the College inspired the creation of this project, aimed at deepening our historical understanding of education for women.

If you are interested to learn more about this project, to volunteer as an interviewer, or if you have items to donate to the archives, please reach the project leaders via phone or e-mail: Jeanne Guaraldo 302 655-3373, [jtacgua@mindspring.com](mailto:jtacgua@mindspring.com), Garry Earles 610 435-1187, [g.le@verizon.net](mailto:g.le@verizon.net), and Elizabeth Bugaighis 610 868-9367, [etbug148@fast.net](mailto:etbug148@fast.net).



Two-year class officers, 1949: Elsie Yelenics, president; Betsy Tait, vice president; Dolores Johns, secretary; Elsie Schultz, treasurer. Photo: Courtesy of the Moravian College Archives.