

Revisiting & Reflecting

JUDY LAWRENCE '69 REMINISCES ABOUT HER TIME ON THE CIRCLE DURING THE SIXTIES – AND HER PATH SINCE

When Judy Lawrence '69 returned to Castilleja this fall for Reunion Weekend—her second time back on campus since her graduation day 50 years ago—she was greeted by hugs, memories flooding back as she chatted with classmates. What made her come back after all these years? Judy laughs and says, “Fifty years and free dinner! It had always been on the list, but this is a milestone year.”



Judy noted some changes on campus as she walked around the Circle, including the presence of male teachers, more athletic facilities and sports, and sadly, no boarding students. Judy remembers how pivotal being a boarder was for her, and how, as she said, “the camaraderie was there. As a boarder, the influences from other states and other countries was phenomenal.” There was also the influence of Palo Alto: during study hall in the dorms, the girls would secretly lower baskets out their windows, then, she explains, “we would get



Judy Lawrence '69 with classmates Cathy Brooks Fennelly and Claudia Paige at Reunion Weekend

locals to get us treats in town, put them in the baskets, and pull them back up into our rooms!”

In the late 1960's, Judy was a student at Castilleja during a tumultuous time in U.S. history. “There was a song we sang a lot—it could have been part of the country or just being seniors—we gotta get out of this place. If it's the last thing we ever do!” We were a little rowdy,” she says with a laugh. As Castilleja’s first African American graduate, Judy was making history herself, too. She recalls, “When I cut my hair in a natural cut, I was called into Ms. Espinosa’s office. She thought I had become a radical, which I hadn’t....But that was the only incident, and I never felt ‘other’ from any of the students. I never felt any prejudice. We were all in it together.”

Judy came to Castilleja after growing up in San Jose when it was still “the country” and fondly remembers showing cattle and horses in 4H when she was young. Education was the family business, and her mom was a professor of nursing at San Jose State University. When Judy’s local high school didn’t offer the challenging college-prep curriculum she wanted, she transferred to Castilleja. She majored in Biology at New Mexico Mining and Technology, having discovered the school while reading *The Underground Guide to the Campus of Your Choice*. “The ratio of men to women was 10:1. That was the deciding factor! I had a wonderful time.”

Over the past five decades, Judy has forged a dynamic and fulfilling career in agriculture and education. She wrote grants and organized state-wide conferences to bring vocational teachers together, and many of her curriculum projects are currently used nationally. Judy hosted conferences throughout California to empower students of color in various career fields and was a strong advocate for the importance of careers in agriculture, because according to Judy, “a day without ‘ag’ leaves you hungry and naked.” She also spent several years as a disaster services volunteer with the American Red Cross, is an accomplished gourd artist, and teaches art at her local community college.

A new decade brings new adventures, and Judy is looking forward to attending the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Nevada. “Last time I went was in 1988, and I was the only Black person there. This year, the topic is *The Black Cowboy*. I decided to go back!” It has been a year of revisiting the past.

Reflecting on her Castilleja reunion, Judy encourages all alumnae to consider making a trip back to the Circle, saying, “I enjoyed it. Come back and take a stroll—it would be worth it. Take a day of reflection and hang out.”