

A LONELY VIRTUE



No matter what anyone says, it's the wives who run this town. I suspect this is true of most college towns, but it's definitely the lay of the land in Hancock. I should know. I'm the Dean's wife.

When we first came to Hancock in 1958, Herb was fresh out of Michigan with a PhD in classics and I was his bride. Twenty years later, he was pulled from the ranks to become Dean of Arts and Sciences. So I've been the Dean's wife for going on twelve years now. Herb is going to step down next year, return to teaching classics, and the town is buzzing as to who will replace him, as if anybody could. If I had my way, my husband would remain the Dean until he retired, but Herb misses teaching and writing, so what can I do?

Herb is a wonderful scholar and no one works harder than he does. When he was a faculty member, he served on every committee, attended every meeting, got his grades in early. He edited an important collection of papers on Herodotus (his introductory essay is widely cited), and had a hoard of student advisees. There's only one thing wrong with Herb, and that's Herb himself. He's a bit on the stiff side, not exactly a people person.

That's where I come in. I tease my husband that for all the entertaining I've done during the last twelve years, I should be a paid employee of the college. Who welcomes the new faculty members every year with a barbecue? Who plans a monthly faculty dinner with a rotating guest list everyone's dying to be on? Who greets people in the receiving line at homecoming, making enough chit chat to fill an ocean so no one notices Herb's silence? It's me, but that's not all I do. Not by a long shot.

Every speech Herb gives to the faculty is reviewed (and improved) by me. Well, I am a Radcliffe graduate with a degree in English. My writing skills are more honed than those of the composition professors, I assure you.