A while ago we invited members of Transfiguration’s “Little Family” (i.e., all the couples who were married here) to share some of their life experiences with us. We were thrilled to receive so many responses, especially from couples married here in the 1940s and 1950s, but also from other decades, even the new century. We quickly realized that we would have to devote more than one newsletter to our “alumni.” We hope you enjoy this latest installment!

**June 24, 1945  Frances Anne and Richard H. Tracey III**

Frances Anne Rutenbeck met Richard H. Tracey III at the Stonywald Sanitarium near Saranac Lake, New York, where both Frances and Richard were tuberculosis patients. The only cure for tuberculosis at that time was bedrest, fresh air, good food, and time. Frances says the sanitarium was “like a private hotel resort,” where patients had x-rays taken every six weeks. She was a patient from December 1942 until the spring of 1944. Richard, who was discharged one month after Frances, had been a patient for four years.

When Richard presented Frances with an engagement ring, he talked about his wish to have a farm in upstate New York, where he grew up. Frances, who was a city girl, wasn't so sure about that kind of life for herself. She spoke to her mother, whose wise counsel was "If you love him, go with him.”

When deciding where to have their wedding, Frances thought it was only fitting that she should be married at Little Church by the Rev. J.H. Randolph Ray. Her parents, Georgiana Heckman and Harry Rutenbeck, were married at Little Church on July 20, 1923, and Frances was baptized by Rev. Ray on March 22, 1925.

The couple began their married life living with Frances's parents in Jamaica, New York. Richard worked as a practical nurse at Jamaica Hospital. He soon heard of an adventurous opportunity in Kingman, Arizona, from one of the staff nurses. He and Frances drove west to Mohave General Hospital, where a job and a furnished apartment (at $29 per month!) were waiting. Frances worked in the payroll department of Kingman Army Airbase, where 5,000 retired World War II planes were stripped and dismantled and the steel fuselages sliced and melted into steel ingots, which were then transported for re-use.

In early 1949, when Frances became pregnant, it was time to return to New York and Richard's dream of the farm. When their son, Richard H. Tracey, IV, was born, the family flew to New York City to have Rev. Ray baptize him. "It's special to me that my history comes within the exact boundaries of Rev. Ray's services to 'The Little Church','” Frances notes.

Richard passed away on June 23, 2000. As Frances poignantly notes: ". . .when Rev. Ray pronounced us man and wife, he noticed me crying and said something to the effect I shouldn't cry because this was the first day of a long and happy marriage. And it was – my beloved husband died at home with me at his side on the eve of our beautiful 55 year marriage. And I miss him every single day.”

Their son, Richard IV, is a decorated Vietnam veteran and the father of their only grandchild, Julia.

**April 11, 1947  Jean and Walter Haupt**

Jean, a life-long resident of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, had the opportunity to visit Little Church as a young girl of nine or ten years of age when her baptismal sponsors, J. Raymond and Emma Keiper, relocated to the Bronx and invited her to visit New York City. She was interested in history, and the story of the Little Church Around the Corner remained with her as she grew into a young woman.

In 1939, Jean met Walter at an American Legion Auxiliary picnic. She was a recent high school graduate
and he was in the Army. They agreed to keep in touch; however, their correspondence got off to a rocky start. As Jean tells the story, "Walter wrote two letters to me; the first I never received and the second explained that he would not write again if I didn't respond." After receiving this second letter, Jean and Walter wrote to each other for the next six years.

Walter was stationed in Pearl Harbor and survived the attack of December 7, 1941. He was then posted to Christmas Island for the remainder of World War II where he was a carpenter assigned to build housing for the soldiers. After Walter was discharged in June 1945, he returned to Nazareth and he and Jean had their first date.

Jean wanted to have a traditional wedding in the Moravian church in Nazareth, but the newly-installed minister would not allow the recently-retired minister, to whom she was close, to assist in the ceremony. Remembering her affection for Little Church, she called to ask whether the marriage could be performed there. "They were so obliging. We only had pleasant memories of the ceremony." Of course her baptismal sponsors, Mr. and Mrs. Keiper, attended.

After they were married, Walter worked as a carpenter for local contractors, doing both restoration and new construction. After a severe leg injury in 1955, he started his own carpentry business. His shop was located in the garage portion of the 150-year-old house the couple had purchased.

Jean and Walter celebrated 55 years of marriage together. He died on October 23, 2002 at the age of 81, nine days before Jean's 80th birthday. They have two children: Kathleen May Haupt Bretz and Richard Kern Haupt. Jean has two grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

**December 17, 1983 Reade Johnson and Robert Carter**

Reade Johnson and Robert Carter both worked in the book publishing industry when they met at a conference. Their friendship blossomed and three years later they were married at the Little Church on a chilly December day. They chose Transfiguration for their wedding because of its theater ties: Robert was a member of the Episcopal Actors’ Guild, which is headquartered at Transfiguration. In addition, Fr. Norman Cattr, who was the rector of the Little Church, had been kind to Robert when he had been hospitalized earlier in the year for heart surgery.

Reade and Robert had both been married before and their children, all in their early twenties, participated in the wedding. Reade's daughter Robin was the maid of honor and Robert's two sons, Jonathan and Randy, served as ushers. The ceremony went smoothly with a few minor hitches: there was a brief delay when the best man realized he had forgotten the rings in his hotel room. The limousine driver also forgot to return to the church to pick up the bridal couple after first dropping off a few elderly relatives and friends at the reception, which was held at The Players on Gramercy Park. (He eventually returned after Robert called the Club.)

One funny note about the music selection Reade remembers well is that the choir master was adamant about not playing the “so-called wedding marches of Mendelssohn and Wagner.” They were permitted to have the Pachelbel Canon, however.

Reade and Robert now make their home in Richmond Virginia, and belong to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Reade works full time as a fundraiser for ChildFund International. When not walking his rescue dog Rolfe, Robert continues his work as a writer, loves reading and works crossword puzzles. He also continues to be an active member of the Episcopal Actor’s Guild. They both greatly enjoy dining out with friends.

Over the years Reade and Robert have continued to enjoy coming to services at Transfiguration whenever visiting the city. They both take great pride in telling friends they were married at the Little Church Around the Corner.