Weathering Heights

“Your wooden arm you hold outstretched to shake with passers-by.”

John Harvard Mall may not be on physical heights exactly, but it is on a part of Charlestown, Massachusetts, called Town Hill, a metaphoric eminence. Here, the Reverend Mr. Harvard lived, preached, and may be buried, among other early settlers. In 1943 a donor gave land on the hill to the University along with funds to build a public park to be given to Boston. A plaque in the mall refers to Town Hill as “this low mound of earth,” but notes that the hill is “the memorial of a mighty nation.”

“There is a flagpole on top of a 17-ton granite block,” Primus is reminded by Rosemary Kverek, who lives near the mall and is a past president of the Charlestown Preservation Society, “and on the block is the history of John Harvard. We have many tourists and residents who come to the park and try to read Harvard’s history and end up frustrated because of the condition of the lettering and the condition of the park itself.” Primus visited and can attest to the mall’s shabbiness. But, as Kverek says, “It could be nice.”

“The park is in dire need of major renovations and repairs, and the City of Boston considers it as just one of their many parks, and so it gets renovations only on a rotating schedule,” Kverek continues. “I am very concerned that history is being lost for future generations. If you wrote a story for Harvard Magazine, we might create interest in helping to preserve and maintain this park and to also enhance the knowledge of John Harvard and the University.”

Linguistic Polymath. The following are excerpts from the Memorial Minute on the life and services of the late William Lambert Moran, Mellon professor of the humanities emeritus, read earlier this year at a meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences by John Huehnergard, professor of Semitic philology:

“In 1958, having completed his theological training, Moran was appointed Professor of Old Testament Exegesis at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, where for the next eight years he lectured on biblical Hebrew and on Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah—all in Latin, as was the rule at the time. This was not a great burden for him; during the several years of his theological training in Rome, all conversation, except for one hour a day, had been conducted in Latin. One year, for the remaining hour each day, Moran characteristically organized a conversational classical Greek table...

“In 1966 Moran accepted appointment at Harvard as Professor of Assyriology. He taught all levels of Akkadian language and texts, mostly to graduate students, but occasionally to an intrepid undergraduate or two. He was also an enthralling lecturer, and taught a popular undergraduate course on ancient Mesopotamian history and culture. He was an inspiring teacher. In first-year Akkadian, to be sure, what he mostly inspired was anxiety, as he would stand behind students, Jesuit-high-school-teacher-style, as they nervously read their cuneiform signs.”

Lovable Harvardian. ABC aired this spring a “reality” TV series called The Bachelor. A tall, dark, handsome, young management consultant from San Francisco, called only Alex, began with 25 gorgeous women to date. Fifteen went on to live in a Ladies’ Villa in Malibu, where the audience got to watch them primp. Alex visited his seraglio and chose girls to wine, dine, smooch with, lavish presents on, all on camera. The “bachelorettes,” matrimonially inclined, tried to please.

At the end of each show, Alex rejected girls. (Rhonda was so distraught that an ambulance came to deal with her anxiety attack.) On April 25 he picked the lucky lady: Amanda, 5 feet 10, blonde, from Kansas. He chose a ring and showed but didn’t offer it, saying the time was too soon to propose. Amanda smiled bravely. The semi-catch of the season: Alexander Michel ‘92, once of Lowell House.

~Primus V