Yesterday's News
From the pages of the Harvard Alumni Bulletin and Harvard Magazine

1922 “The Reds in America,” an article published in the Boston Transcript, charges that the University is a “hot-bed” of radicalism, that “no institution of learning in the country has been so thoroughly saturated with the ‘liberal’ activity as Harvard,” and intimates that members of the faculty “are not all unswervingly faithful to the status quo....”

1937 Through its employment agency, the College dean’s office has helped more than 200 part-time-job applicants, recruiting “for every sort of position from chauffeur to chess teacher,” including, it’s said, a student who can teach “jiu-jitsu.” Prompted by President Conant’s suggestion that every college graduate should have a knowledge of the cultural history of the country in the broadest sense of the term, enabling them to face the future “united and unafraid,” a voluntary examination in American history for all undergraduates who haven’t taken a course in that field will be held on November 15.

1947 The New York Times reports that the basic cost of a Harvard education has risen only 3 percent above the pre-war cost, versus 39 percent for other private colleges and 47 percent for public colleges.

1952 Eight Allston Burr senior tutors have been appointed as part of a new effort to enlarge the Houses’ role in undergraduate life through the establishment of intra-House group-tutorial systems.

1972 The new Harvard Center for Research in Children’s Television, funded by the Markle Foundation with administrative support from the University and Children’s Television Workshop, will explore the effects of visual media on children.

1982 Sharon Beckman ’80, her late-August attempt partly supported by a $1,000 grant from Radcliffe College, becomes the first New England woman to swim the English Channel (covering almost 21 miles in nine hours and six minutes). She celebrates that victory two weeks later by winning the 10-mile Boston Light swim in Boston Harbor.

1997 In accord with Harvard’s non-discrimination policy, Memorial Church begins holding same-sex commitment ceremonies.

Building Bridges in Allston
As ironworkers assembled the frame of the University’s science and engineering complex in the summer heat (see page 14), bridge-building of an academic kind proceeded, too, as Harvard’s Business and Engineering and Applied Sciences schools (HBS and SEAS) anticipate their physical proximity, scheduled for 2020, by launching a joint degree program now. The two-year master’s degree in engineering, management, and design skills aims to equip students to drive innovation in new or established technology companies. Nitin Nohria and Francis Doyle III, the schools’ deans, unveiled the program in June; students will enroll in August 2018. The schools’ faculties have been meeting

Illustration by Mark Steele
Illustrations by Rebecca Clarke

I'm starting to feel like I've already squandered my prime friend-making years. An older acquaintance was recently telling me that it gets harder after college. There just won't be this many people your age around ever again, she said, and smiled grimly. Or, if there are, they'll all have full-time jobs and apartments far away from yours and plenty of friends already. At college everyone has so much time; everyone lives so close together; everyone has so much in common. I'm still close with my college friends, she added.

My Harvard social experience has consisted of a handful of very close friendships amid a truckload of dead-end acquaintanceships where neither of us was invested enough to make time for each other. Maybe we each felt a little guilty, but given all of our commitments, how were we supposed to fit each other in? In the face of the post-collegiate social void, I should probably be reaching out to as many people as possible to consolidate tenuous connections into durable relationships, but it's not just me. It seems like everyone around here is guilty of repeatedly postponing plans until the acquaintanceship dies on the vine.

I don't know if it's my fault or Harvard's, but I know this is true for many of us: at some point, maybe early sophomore year, our lives started to congeal around a routine. Whoever fit into that routine—whoever worked in the places you worked or ate meals at the times and in the places you did or lived in the same suite as you—got to be a part of your life. It was easier to let the other people go.

I met my best friend in January of my freshman year, when the two of us were newly in charge of putting on events for the College's oldest literary magazine, The Harvard Advocate. This meant emailing a handful of fairly unknown poets, carrying chairs, purchasing snacks and (importantly) boxed wine, and doing the dishes after. This was how I got to know him—I would wash and he would dry, or vice versa. We learned to stretch our fingers deep enough into the tall glasses to get at the congealed red wine at the bottom with soapy sponges. We sang along to Fiona Apple and talked about our respective love-interests. The chromatin of the wine would leave a small stain on the yellow of the sponge. By March the sponge was uniformly pink and we were good friends.

When I met him, I was still new to campus. I was still figuring out where I liked to do my school work and where I liked to hang out after it was done. The rhythms of my daily life were still malleable; they molded easily around my new friend's habits, and his (firmly established over his three previous semesters) adjusted a bit to accommodate my preferences. During the subsequent two and a half years, our personal routines changed in tandem with one another: when we got sick of Café Gato Rojo, the preferred work venue of my freshman spring, we started to spend afternoons at the Darwin's Ltd. on Mount Auburn Street instead, and by my friend's senior spring (my junior spring), we were logging dozens of hours a week at Petsi Pies on Putnam Ave.

Sometimes our routines got out of sync—he would spend a week working in Widener while I was hard at work on an installation in the Carpenter Center—but they always gravitated back together.

Rather than a particular café or a dining hall, his friendship became my home at school. I don't think there was a single day between that March and this May, when he graduated, that we were both on campus and didn't see each other. I always wound up inadvertently learning his course schedule, and people tended to assume we were secretly dating (though our affection for each other has always been strictly platonic). His presence—even after all the getting-to-know each other was gone, even after we'd talked our way through all possible topics of conversation into well-worn silence—was a comfort. I could always take shelter from solitude in that silence.

When, several weeks before my friend's graduation, I learned I'd be spending this summer in Manhattan, I...