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England redux

Amy Buttell Crane '83

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England redux

It isn't too often that you get to spend a weekend with the very same people that you went on the trip of a lifetime with 20 years ago. Thanks to the efforts of a few veterans of the Furman Fall Term in England trip of 1981, 15 out of an original group of close to 50 got together in early November.

Originally planned as a sentimental journey back to old haunts in London, the reunion instead evolved into an English-themed weekend in Atlanta, Ga. Housed in an English-style bed and breakfast, we hung out at a local pub and attended an Oglethorpe University performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

I was the first to arrive, leaving Erie, Pa., on Friday at a time — 6 a.m. — when just about everyone else wasn't even awake yet. After landing in Atlanta, I took the cheap route, catching the MARTA downtown to find the Ansley Inn, our weekend hideaway.

Throughout the afternoon, I ventured into the inn's parlor, only to retreat in frustration after seeing not one person from the trip. After the eighth or ninth trip out of my room, I finally found Renee Corbin Morrell '83, one of the organizers of the reunion. Renee was the first of many in the group that I immediately recognized.

In fact, one of my most vivid impressions from the weekend is of how little everyone had changed. Charged with bringing memorabilia from the trip, many of us stuffed our luggage with photo albums, journals and souvenirs from London, Stratford and Brussels. The faces in the photos weren't that different from the faces surrounding me in the inn's parlor, dining room, and on the streets of Atlanta.

Beautiful weather provided a fitting framework for our get-together and was quite a contrast to the snowstorm that we experienced 20 years ago on leaving England. That blizzard turned what is

normally a drive of a couple of hours from Stratford to London into a seven-hour endurance test — and also delayed our return to our respective homes. It made for a disorienting homecoming.

Not so this gathering. For most of us, there weren't enough hours in each day. We stayed up late and got up early, eager to share our memories and accounts of our recent lives.

Although I hadn't seen many of the group in 20 years, we slipped easily back into the grooves of well-worn friendships, extending those relationships to the many spouses that tagged along.

On Saturday afternoon, a group of us broke away for a visit to the High Museum of Art. As we companionably strolled through a Monet exhibit, I was reminded of the pleasure I took in visiting so many art galleries in England, and of how long it had been since I had actually visited one.

Plans are already in the works for a 25-year reunion, this time actually in London. We hope to spend a week together with our families, reacquainting ourselves with London — and with each other.

— Amy Buttell Crane '83

The author, a former editor of The Paladin, is a freelance writer who lives in Erie, Pa., with her husband and two children. She is the mutual fund columnist for Better Investing magazine and is at work on her first book.



Top photo, from left, Laura Lewis Owens '82, Amy Buttell Crane, Mike Harley '82 and Renee Corbin Morrell share memories, as do (bottom) Chet Rabon '84, Kay Thomas Packett '82 and David Layne '82. (Photos courtesy Chet Rabon)