

f o r u m

September 1961

I N M E M O R I A M

H E L E N H I E T T W A L L E R

Mrs. Helen Hiett Waller, forty-seven, director of the New York Herald Tribune Forum, died on August 22, 1961 of an embolism at the Chamonix Mt. Blanc Hospital in the French Alps. She had suffered internal injuries while mountain climbing in late July.

She and her husband, Theodore Waller, vice-president of Grolier, Inc., New York and president of its subsidiary Teaching Material Corp., were climbing on Mt. Perseverance near Chamonix, when she was struck by a falling rock which caused internal injuries. She was operated on a few days later and was thought to be well on the way to recovery.



Mrs. Waller, a native of Pekin, Illinois, and a 1934 graduate of the University of Chicago, had an extensive foreign background for her work as Herald Tribune Forum director. She toured the world arranging the annual visits of hundreds of national leaders and high school students to the Forum in New York.

A resident of Europe from 1934 to 1941, she worked first with the League of Nations, editing a monthly review of international affairs. To study the Nazi method of indoctrinating youth, she lived for a time in 1937 in a German girls' labor camp. When World War II began, she was in London, working for her Ph.D. at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Immediately, she joined the Paris staff of the National Broadcasting Co., reporting from Paris until France fell, then from Madrid. Later, for her "exclusive radio reporting" of the 1940 bombing of Gibraltar, she became the first woman to win a National Headliners' Award.

Eased out of Spain by the Franco government, she returned to the United States in 1941. For a year and a half she gave lectures and broadcast a daily fifteen-minute news program over NBC. Then she returned to Europe as a war correspondent and finished out the war there.

Upon joining the Herald Tribune's Forum department in 1945, Mrs. Waller was initially concerned with directing the annual Forum, founded in 1930 and discontinued in 1955, which brought to New York each autumn leaders in government and other fields from many parts of the world.

Fluent in French, Italian, Spanish and German, she arranged the Forum visits and frequently took part in introductions and questionings at the sessions held at the Waldorf-Astoria. Beginning in 1946 she also directed the Herald Tribune Forum for High Schools which has brought 444 students from seventy-four countries to the United States for Forum participation and three months' residence in the homes of American students in the metropolitan area. In 1955, after the Forum program presented by students in the United Nations General Assembly Hall, she took the group on a world tour, appearing before student audiences in London, Paris, Cairo, Beirut, Karachi and New Delhi.

Beginning in 1953 she was moderator of the annual television series, "The World We Want" which was distributed nation wide, and for the last three years moderated the CBS-TV Forum-based "Young Worlds" program. She received a number of awards and was author of "No Matter Where," 1944, based on her European experience. She contributed to "Deadline Delayed," 1946, written by members of the Overseas Press Club.

Surviving, in addition to her husband, who also is vice-president and director of the library and educational division for Americana Corp., are two sons, Jonathan and Mark Waller; a daughter, Miss Margaret Ann Waller; her mother, Mrs. Stella Hiett; and a sister, Mrs. Margaret Whiteside.

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At a New York Herald Tribune Executive Board meeting, Mr. John Hay Whitney, Editor In Chief and Publisher, offered the following, which was unanimously approved as expressing the feelings of the Board:

By her extraordinary combination of qualities and talents, Helen Hiett Waller was especially qualified as the Herald Tribune Forum Director during the past fifteen years.

It was said of Mrs. Waller editorially "Helen Waller was a keen and understanding observer of international problems, and she found joy and satisfaction in helping the young to a better awareness of the world around them ... It may be no exaggeration to say that she influenced many lives in many countries and contributed perhaps as much as one person can to friendship among peoples."

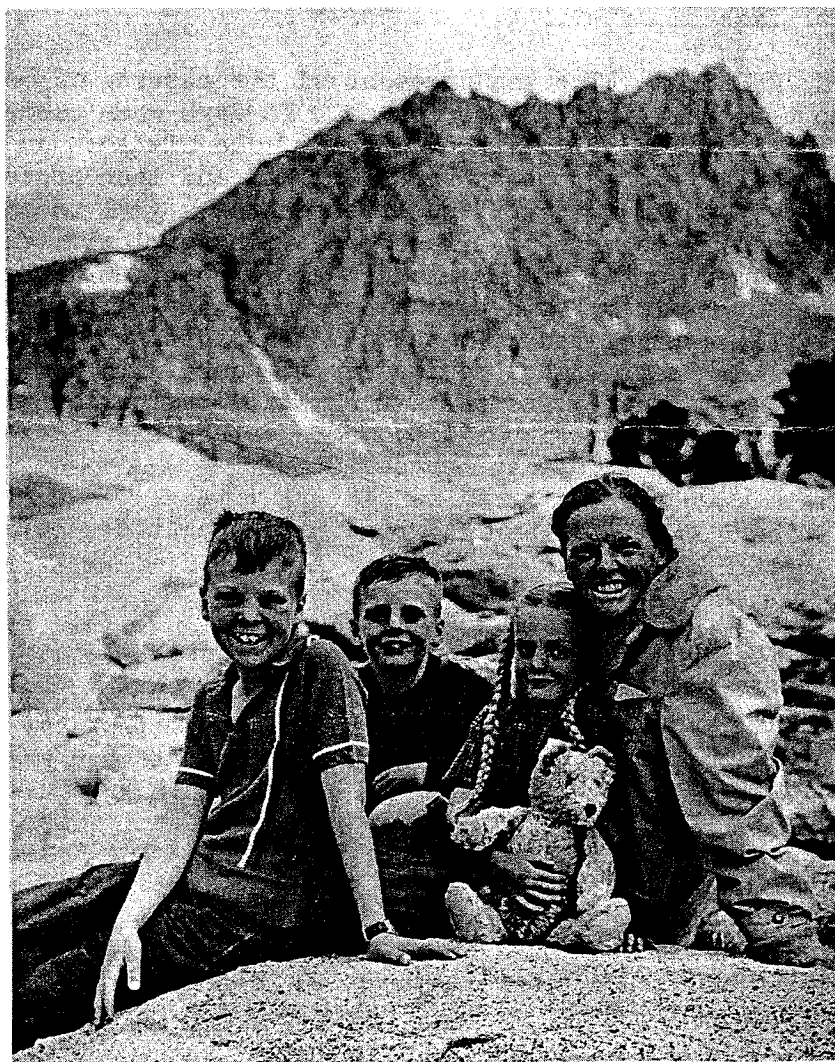
The directors of the New York Herald Tribune accordingly resolved that there should be entered into the minutes of the corporation their expression of gratitude for her devotion and contribution to the organization and administration of the Herald Tribune Forum.

The Forum has been a large, vital and privately important thing in the lives of each member of our family.

Each of us feels that we have true and dear friends in virtually every country of the world. The messages from Forum alumni have strengthened and comforted me and the children beyond all measure. Margaret Ann, Mark, and Jay join me in sending you, each one of you, our heartfelt thanks.

We will hope to see many of you on your home ground. We hope you will all know and really believe that you will always be welcome in our home.

Theodore Waller



On August 23, 1961 Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana), Senator Ernest Gruening (D., Alaska) and Senator Everett M. Dirksen (R., Illinois) paid tribute to Helen Hiatt Waller in the United States Senate.

SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD: "In this morning's issue of the New York Herald Tribune is a notice to the effect that an old friend of many years, Mrs. Helen Hiatt Waller, director of the New York Herald Tribune Forum, has passed on to her reward. It was my privilege to know Mrs. Waller for many years. She was a woman of great ability, outstanding intelligence, and sterling integrity. Those of us who had the opportunity to know her will miss her because of the many contributions which she made to the welfare of our country. I ask unanimous consent that a news story published in the New York Herald Tribune be printed at this point in the RECORD." (See page 1)

SENATOR ERNEST GRUENING: "I should like to associate myself with the tribute paid by our majority leader to Helen Hiatt Waller. I, too, knew her and greatly admired her. She was in charge of the New York Herald Tribune Forum some 14 years ago when Mrs. Rogers, the publisher of the Herald Tribune, invited a discussion of the merits of statehood for Alaska and Hawaii. I presented the case for Alaska. The beloved delegate from Hawaii, Joe Farrington, presented the case for Hawaii. The forum was a great help to our then struggling causes. During that period Helen Hiatt, who subsequently became Mrs. Waller, was a great help to us. We shall all miss her. She was a woman of fine and sterling character."

SENATOR EVERETT M. DIRKSEN: "The announcement of the passing of Helen Hiatt Waller has a rather deep personal significance for me. In days when there were not school buses and we had to go to school a rather considerable distance on shoe leather, I used to peddle the milk from four cows that I milked and then proceed to school. On those occasions, in the mornings, I would encounter a girl in pigtails who was also en route to school -- a very open-faced, charming girl with expansive blue eyes. I expect from that moment on we became the closest of personal friends. She was born and lived for a time in my home town before she went to larger pastures, where her talents were fully appreciated. That was Helen Hiatt, who later became Helen Hiatt Waller. Over the years I managed to keep in touch with her. She did a great deal of work abroad and at home, and was a truly talented person who constantly sought to make an objective contribution to human values and human welfare. So I feel a deep sense of personal loss at her passing."

The Herald Tribune obituary was also read into the August 24 RECORD by Representative Robert H. Michel (R., Illinois)

TO FORUM ALUMNI

You Forum Alumni have the picture, never to be forgotten, for you are in the middle of it; or, rather, Helen Waller is in the middle and you are all sitting cross-legged on the floor gathered around her. The sounds are those of courteous discourse and laughter; the feelings those of security, admiration, and affection. You of all people need no reminder of the qualities that made Helen Waller the leader, friend, and international benefactor she was. Many of us at SCHOLASTIC have shared your good fortune in being one of the Forum family on occasions at Kober House and in Washington to bask in the sunshine of this miracle worker in communication. Helen would say, when suddenly an idea came through after a struggle, "NOW we're communicating!" Carry on for the friend and mentor who so beautifully mirrored your devotion.

Jack Lippert
Executive Editor
Scholastic Magazines



1961 FORUM DELEGATES MEET
PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY
AT WHITE HOUSE



HELEN WALLER AS MODERATOR



1960 FORUM TRIP TO GHANA



1950 FORUM



DOWN TO SERIOUS BUSINESS
WITH 1960 FORUM DELEGATES



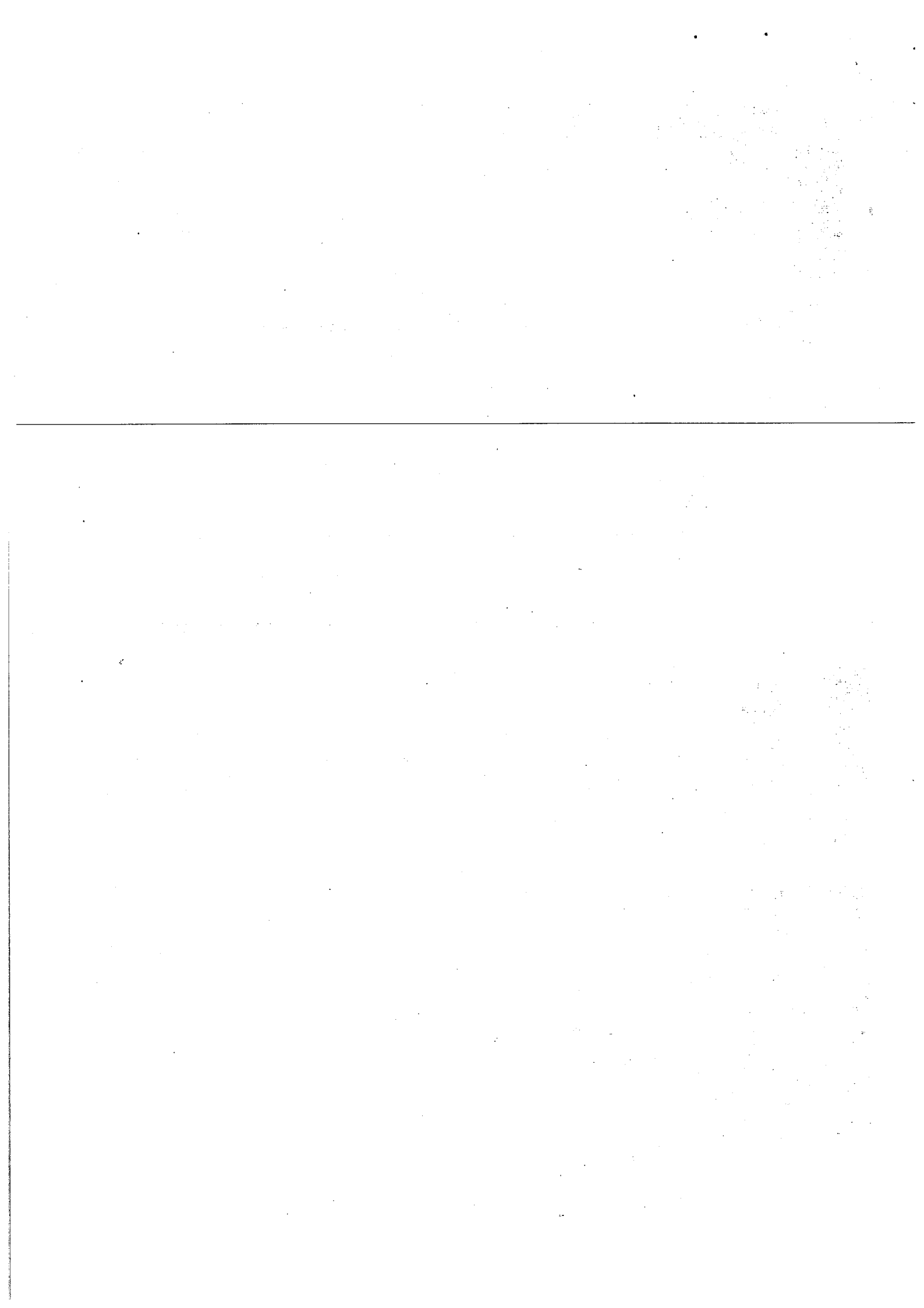
IN THE OFFICE
WITH STELLA, 1954



1955 FORUM DELEGATES MEET PRIME MINISTER
NEHRU AND V.K. KRISHNA MENON IN INDIA
DURING TRIP AROUND THE WORLD



"YOUNG WORLDS" DISCUSSION



WE REMEMBER MAMA

Mrs. Waller let each of us see her in some personal moment that made her our friend as well as teacher. The day we were to meet Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana we were eating breakfast together. She took one look at my long hair, limp in the tropical heat and rushed me up to her bedroom, promptly removed every bobby pin from her hair, seized a rat, a handful of native flowers, pulled over a mirror and combed my hair into an elegant twist.

She had the unique ability of enjoying young people's enjoyment. She scrambled into the backs of station wagons and sang our songs and kidded us about the Arab or Pakistani we thought we loved. When she was too tired sometimes she would leave the group. She never forced a syrupy, condescending togetherness on us. When she felt like entering our fun she did so wholeheartedly singing, "All the cats dig Saturday night the most" at the top of her lungs.

She knew a great deal about us we didn't know she knew. On the last day of the Forum she surprised several girls by presenting them with photos of the boys they had crushes on. Most amazingly she put up with us. We blamed her when the host mother burned the roast and didn't know how to make rice Malayan style. We blamed her when we stayed up all night laughing in Washington and were too exhausted to listen attentively to a speech the next day. We complained about the slushy snow and upset stomachs and not enough foreign aid and corrupt dictators and expensive taxis and lost passports and dogs that ate our visas. And she listened to it all and never told us we were foolish ungrateful youngsters. The last time I saw her she spoke affectionately of all the small problems delegates presented her. She gently mimicked the endless "Mama, I can't sleep at night, mama I'm cold, mama no mail." Every few months I received a short note from her advising me on a plan for foreign students I had started at my university, or an article that would interest me or just a memo saying she'd enjoyed seeing me. She remembered every delegate from every year, because at lunch one day we quizzed her, picking names, countries and years at random.

She lived a noisy, telephone ringing, people helping, organization contacting, hectic life, but one of her favorite stories was about a Japanese girl who said the greatest gift she'd give the American people would be composure. Mrs. Waller was a woman of international prestige. She could have spent her stay in Ghana, wining, dining, laying wreaths on graves, and wearing pastel colored suits with matching accessories. Instead she brought three dresses, and in 101 degree heat climbed a rickety ladder through the roof of a hospital to see the rainwater converters there-- leaving one exhausted hospital director and three fainting delegates on the ground. She talked to the revered Ashantehene of Ghana who is supposed to communicate only through a spokesman according to tradition. But her vitality overwhelmed him and he nodded and smiled in response.

I think we forgot how much she liked people. We forgot because she forced us to think in a new way. This caused us pain, and we were mad at the engenderer of it. She had known at least 400 charming, intelligent, and talented delegates when I was a delegate. But she sat on the floor and listened with tears in her eyes to a tape of Dona Nobis Pacem sung by two ex-delegates. She had received hundreds of gifts, but she greeted each new ebony statuette, yard of native cloth, lacquer box with a genuine joy and interest, because she really liked the giver. There was nothing hypocritical about her. If she wasn't satisfied with an article you'd written, she'd call you up and there would be a note of iron in her voice that brought the revised article in the next morning. But she always found a way to compliment a contribution she was proud of, and to thank you personally.

We called her mama for good reason. She seemed not to care about the image she projected of herself. She would not settle merely for a chic, worldly, Auntie Mame

reputation. On New Year's Eve I had a severe cold and felt unequal to greeting guests at Kober House. In the midst of the huge celebration, up came mama to hug me and tell me not to worry and to wish me a Happy New Year. After we returned from Ghana, I went to visit her in Katonah. Wearing a pair of blue jeans, pony tail, and flannel shirt, she stepped over the canoe on her front porch, appearing quite different from the svelte Forum director in New York City. She had just redecorated her home and showed me the wallpaper and rugs with love and pride.

I am glad she went mountain climbing, because it was her great pleasure. I suppose because of the challenge. It's useless to say, "If only she hadn't climbed." She couldn't be Mrs. Waller if she didn't. She couldn't have made people listen with respect to seventeen year olds' ideas or found one hundred American families a year to be hosts, or placated angered television viewers or developed the patience with impatient young minds that made her understanding. Why did she make a Forum? Why did she care about the U.S.'s reputation? Perhaps because it gave her satisfaction. Perhaps because she couldn't endure the idea that people hated each other. Perhaps because so much energy and intelligence had to be used for more than climbing mountains and self-fulfillment. None of us knows because she talked so little of herself, her aims. We only know what happened to us because we knew her. For me she was a great teacher whose lesson was to think with the heart as well as the mind. But she was so much more than just an inspiration. She was a dynamic, sometimes enigmatic, sometimes frightening, always demanding, warm, understanding, friend. It is this very feminine person whose presence behind the desk is so much missed.

Lynn Baron
United States '60

It is impossible to include here all the expressions of condolence from alumni and friends. The following few are merely representative.

KIRSTEN RUNGE (Denmark '61): Many are the thoughts and tears that have been sent to her last rest from all over the world. She brought me so much, may I be able to pay back a small part in contributing to her memory and the continuation of the Forum in her spirit.

SUHELL ARANKI (Jordan '61): I am sure that we, the people who were associated with Mrs. Waller and who were loved by her, will never forget her encouraging smile, her wise direction, her respect and love of people, her outstanding intelligence, and her dynamic leadership.

FRANCA AMORETTI (Italy '60): And of course it has been this deep love for truth, this inclination to find out the deeper being of every action, this ability to understand and penetrate meanders of human soul, that make us feel so much her loss now. I only know that every time I'm able to understand reasons which make people act in a certain way, or when I shake hands with somebody whose colour of skin is different from mine or who believes in a religious or political creed different from the one I profess, I'll say only these words, "Thank you, Mrs. Waller."

NII T. QUAO (Ghana '59):

Oh! Dear Helen what should we say!
We mourn thee more than we can pay
With human moan or tear, pen or lip.
The honor due thee because of the ship
That came to your life without a tip.

Yet Mrs. Waller, we cannot remain dumb
Tho' dumbfounded we are to lose a trump
Of your calibre and rarity, who with deeds
And poise, words and tact did pick weeds
Estranging men, and set ideas on wheels.

Great Mother, so well you nurtured the Forum
That individuals and memories form a quorum
To mourn, praise and immortalize your name
Which spreads everywhere with familiarity same
Oh! We cannot blame you, but we feel lame!

Farewell then, our Dear Helen;
You achieved greatness by your deeds.
Forever we shall all feel sullen
Tho' we know you rest in Peace,
And your blessings adorn the Forum like beads.

BASHIR ABDEL GADIR (Sudan '58): We have all lost her constructive inspiration, dynamic leadership and motherly love.

TOMAS de ESTRADA (Argentina '57): She gave happiness and made us all a part of this great institution - a unique example throughout the world.

SALIH S. BINGOL (Turkey '56): We all are much indebted to her because she has inoculated us with the courage to fight for our ideals and has shown us the path that would lead us to success. We had always felt the warm atmosphere of her charitable attitude on us. She could never bear to see us in sadness, was a good mother to each of the young Forumers and an outstanding leader. And we will be cherishing all our lives the sweetest memories and the most exceptional opportunities, which she made possible for us to enjoy.

MAJID TEHRANIAN (Iran '55): I came to know her through her legend a few months before I actually met her at Kober House. She was described to me by the Persian Forum delegates previous to myself as a woman of great vitality, intelligence and imagination, or in one word "extraordinary". We were not introduced the first time we encountered. She walked up to me in a manner as if she had known me for many years, called me by my name and asked me about my trip and the previous Forum delegates. She was more than charming: she exuded a certain human warmth which was difficult to resist. The conversation was all too brief, but the lasting impression it left with me was of a woman who, above all else, possessed a depth of human understanding and compassion -- a quality which gave her an unusual strength of character. I fully realized only later that was Mrs. Waller.

KIMIKO FUJII TSUCHIYA (Japan '54): What a person we lose! She has visited my family in Hiroshima. When I was in New York she was deeply touched by my sister's letter that told that Japan is beautiful at cherry blossom time and my family will welcome her. She cried having that letter in hand at her house's parlor, "I am going to Hiroshima" and she really came the next spring and stayed at our home. How will my family grieve to hear the news! How I like to be with others who are grieving too in New York. But she may be laughing at us beyond the "Fate" I can't think she died. She isn't so weak as being defeated before the "Fate". I remember when I visited her home in Katonah, while talking suddenly she broke the paper and wrote in it "Love is stronger than death". It was a part of a poem and she asked me if I knew it. I still have that piece of paper. She is living, I believe.

JUDITH PERRY HOLST (Canada '53): Every student that attended the Forum was influenced by the impact of her personality. But you know, I feel that the Forum has influenced my personal life perhaps more than anyone else's -- first by spurring me on to attend university and to bring me all the happiness I could ask from life in my marriage and ultimately our little Haldis Margrete.

AMI TAL (Israel '52): Since I knew Mrs. Waller almost ten years ago, I remembered her always as one so dynamic and so full of life, as if she were symbolizing eternal youth. Her death is unbelievable. Yet, her death reflects in many aspects Mrs. Waller's way of life. She died while climbing up a mountain -- and among friendly, though strange, people. It seems that all her days she was surrounded by many strangers who appreciated her strong will and who loved her, and that she never stopped climbing one mountain or another. Her devoted pupils all over the world will always remember her, and by their deeds will build an alive monument to her unforgettable memory.

PATRICIA FENDER BENSTED-SMITH (United Kingdom '48): You will be receiving letters from hundreds, probably thousands, of people who, like myself, were privileged to work with Mrs. Waller and to know her. Those of you who have worked side by side with her in the Herald Tribune office, and those of us who came to know her through being Forum Alumni, will miss her in particular.

BEATRICE LOPEZ MONESTIER (Uruguay '47): I am deeply sad for the death of a lady whom I saw twice in 1946 and some 15 times from January 25 to March 11, 1947. I never saw her again. I only once, or maybe twice, corresponded with her in the fourteen years that followed, and yet now that she is gone I too feel a very deep loss, and I cry. This is, of course, entirely logical and comprehensible referring to Mrs. Waller. She was just that type, the type to reap these affections; tactful and loving, hopeful and ever so constant. No wonder, I am sure, there will be many, many prayers said by us all over the world, in different languages, through different credes, but all aiming at her peaceful rest. Yet, let us do more than pray, and all of us honor her memory and all her efforts by cooperating with the Forum to the development of her ideals.

Her loss will be keenly felt by many who, like myself, have been faculty advisers for Forum students. In our own school, the Forum has had an influence far beyond the limited numbers of students who have been directly involved as delegates or hosts. The interests and understandings which have grown from these associations are the fruit of Mrs. Waller's efforts and the decision to continue with the Forum is the best possible memorial to her.

Frank M. Updike
Burlington Senior High School
Burlington, New Jersey

Mrs. Waller was a great source of inspiration to our students and to me. She accomplished so much in the field of international understanding. Our contacts with her and the Forum over the last eight years changed our student body from a provincial one into one with very definite feelings of the need for helping on a world scale. Many former hostesses and hosts have gone on into international study and work.

Anna V. Howell
Verona High School
Verona, New Jersey

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Some of the alumni in the New York area met together on August 24, bound together this time not only by the Forum but also by the loss of Mrs. Waller's strength and friendship. Somehow the desperation we felt individually disappeared as we met together. We spent the afternoon in the office. The torrential rain outside the window seemed to enclose us in that small world where we had made so many friends, learned so much, and where Mrs. Waller still is. Perhaps it would comfort you as it did us to visualize how her office is now, how much of her is there.

The leather chair in the corner is, as usual, filled with scrapbooks, raincoats and dust. The bookcase is bulging with delegates' gifts, books, an Indian tea set, pictures, albums and reel upon reel of Young Worlds tape. The scrapbooks are piled high everywhere and delegates from all years mingle in the photographs spilled on the table. Two pictures hang on the walls, both scenes Mrs. Waller loved. They are snowy mountains. In one, a lone person climbs a steep slope. The chair that only Mrs. Waller could lean back in without falling over is there ready to swing around when the phone rings.

For us she was still so present that we felt compelled to discuss Berlin and not to waste a minute of our afternoon. Those were special hours, time stood still, all of us everywhere seemed to be together, nothing had changed yet. This is the most lasting gift that "Mama" has given us, this experience that permits us to know each other deep down. Nothing could make us all like each other, but somehow we learned in three short months to find the person in mere people, to realize that humanity is really after all composed of humans. We will not forget this lesson nor its remarkable teacher.

Lynn Baron
United States '60

Handsome, determined, courageous, vibrant, vital, in love with life and deeply convinced that every individual can do something to make the world a better place to live -- this is how we remember Helen Waller, those of us who were privileged to work with, live with, and grow with her as members of the Forum staff.

It makes us truly happy to know that the Herald Tribune, in deserving tribute to Helen, is determined to carry on the work of the Forum to which she was so completely dedicated. We miss her more than words express; we all owe her so much.

Joan Smith
Forum Staff

September 5, 1961

MEMO TO ALUMNI
FROM FORUM OFFICE

Many people have called and written to share with us the sadness and feeling of loss we all feel at Mrs. Waller's death. Most were concerned that her life's work should be continued. Of course it will be. All indicated a desire to somehow pay tribute to her memory in some concrete way. A group of the alumni in the New York area met and will contact you separately about such plans and suggestions which they have.

A special newsletter in Mrs. Waller's memory is planned for September 15. This will include the many expressions of sympathy we have received. If you wish to contribute, please write, quickly, so that we can include your sentiments.

The regular September newsletter will include all the latest Forum developments.

