

## Slice of MIT Podcast | Creamed Spinach and Community: Alumnae Memories of MIT

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[SLICE OF MIT THEME MUSIC]

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to the slice of MIT podcast a production of the MIT Alumni Association.

**MARGOLIA** My name is Margolia Gilson. I'm named after my grandmother. Everybody called me Margie.

**GILSON:** I'm class '56 and in my class--

**HOST:** In the 1950s, MIT'S male to female ratio was less than 50 to 1. Margolia's class entered with about 17 women, and 13 graduated together. Margolia remembers some of the advantages of being one of a few women, especially when it came to dating.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**GILSON:** There were so few girls. A lot of guys wanted to take out an MIT co-ed, once at least, and so I have to say I had a very active social life, but I confined it to Friday night and Saturday, and sometimes Sunday afternoon bicycle ride, because they had to get my work done or I wouldn't have lasted.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**HOST:** Originally from small town Keene, New Hampshire, Margolia was the first female from her high school to attend MIT. Ever since she can remember, she had an interest in science.

**GILSON:** When I was in seventh grade, I read an article in the New York Times Magazine-- "Wanted, Magellan's of the Ocean Above," and it was about the upper atmosphere. And I decided that's what I really wanted to study. And there were only two schools that offered that in the Northeast, MIT and Cornell.

I applied to both. I applied into both. Never visited Cornell, but came here.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**HOST:** Today in The Slice of MIT podcast we celebrate women at MIT, highlighting some memories of their time at the institute. In this episode, we bring you stories from four women of different generations. Stories of favorite professor's, memorable courses, community spirit, and even a

creamed spinach revolt.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**HOST:** Megan Pasquina is a Course 4 alumna of the class of 2008, and she spent many a long night in the architecture studio perfecting her line drawings and boards. And while her coursework meant a lot to her, she remembers a story about how a 2:00 AM sparkling cider break taught her about what's really important in life. Here's Megan.

**MEGAN PASQUINA:** My thesis advisor, Jan Wampler, was and still is an awesome man. The first year I started at MIT, I would see him in the halls and honestly I--

**HOST:** Megan remembers professor Wampler as a character. His crazy hair and the convertible he drove were just a few of the characteristics that stood out in her mind.

**PASQUINA:** He's so unassuming. But he's brilliant, and probably one of the most supportive people I've ever met. And he pushed us very hard.

**HOST:** When the students were pulling an all-nighter in the studio, before the final review, professor Wampler would show up in the middle of the night to offer support and--

**PASQUINA:** He would bring sparkling apple cider and snacks, and basically tell us to stop working, let's hang out and celebrate. And he'd give any comments if we needed it, and just told us to relax.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**PASQUINA:** That was a really great moment for all of us to kind of step back, stop stressing out. We were all freaking out because that's what you do when you're preparing for your final presentation.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**PASQUINA:** And the fact that he would come in, in the middle of the night, and to be there for us was just really pretty wonderful. And it helped you realize there are more important things than making sure your line drawings are perfect, and making sure your boards are perfect. That it's much more about community.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**HOST:** Dale Krouse, class of 1971, and an economics major, took a lab in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science. She shares the story about how her lab project fed her need to help others.

**DALE KROUSE:** The project was to see if they could bake bread for poor countries, and underdeveloped countries, at a cheaper price that was healthy and nutritious.

**HOST:** For two afternoons a week, Dale would bake bread. She experimented with different proteins, to see if they could create a cheaper product.

**KROUSE:** One week we did a milk protein in the bread, or soy protein, or fish protein. And we baked lots of loaves of bread, and then we would test it. How did it taste? What was the consistency? And, you know, a report was written at the end.

**HOST:** After every class, Dale would bring back the extra loaves to the dorm for her friends to enjoy.

**KROUSE:** It was wonderful. I got my lab. We had some good bread. And it was doing a good deed, you know, to see if we could help underdeveloped countries.

**HOST:** Of course when you're pulling all-nighters and taking rigorous labs, sometimes it's good to just have a little fun. Ann Street, undergraduate class of 1969, graduate class of 1972, lived in McCormick Hall, the all women's dorm.

She tells this next story about sending a message-- with creamed spinach.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**ANNE STREET:** The dining service in McCormick Hall was catered by Stouffer's, the people who give you frozen food. And we believed, at the time, that they used us as test animals for their new frozen food dishes.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**STREET:** And it seems to me that they were testing creamed spinach. And they would give us cream spinach again, and again, and again, and we got really tired of it.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**HOST:** And so after one too many nights of creamed spinach, the women were ready for a new

menu. They decided to revolt.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**STREET:** All the girls got together, and we made a deal with ourselves. We would go through the cafeteria line, we would get an order creamed spinach, and we'd get a couple of extra trays, and then we dumped all of our creamed spinach on the trays.

And we made a mound a couple of feet high of nothing but creamed spinach and put it through the window where the dirty dishes went as a statement. And we never got creamed spinach again.

**HOST:** To this very day, Anne doesn't eat creamed spinach. It's amazing how collaboration and teamwork can make a huge difference. And it's always been an important part of the MIT experience. Megan Pasquina, class of 2008, remembers a time when the power of teamwork helped avoid a major setback.

**PASQUINA:** I think most people have this image of architecture as people being in a studio all night, all the time. And a lot of that is true. But I think that what's great about the studio is you're all working in the same place all night, and so unlike some of my friends who are working in their dorm rooms by themselves, you know, I had a built in community.

**FRAN BROWN:** Megan.

**HOST:** That's Megan's mother, Fran Brown, class of 1979.

**BROWN:** Do you remember the kid who, you were working in the studio, and he fell and broke his model?

**PASQUINA:** Yeah.

**BROWN:** I think that's a--

**PASQUINA:** I do.

FRAN BROWN: That's a great story because that's--

**PASQUINA:** I forgot about that.

One of my friends, it was-- I don't know if it-- it was the night before our final, and he tripped,

and he was carrying his model, and it just--

**BROWN:** He broke it.

**PASQUINA:** Broke. And he was devastated, and didn't know what to do because, you know, we had eight hours before our presentations, and there was all his work. A whole bunch of us, you know, we stopped doing what we were doing and we helped him glue back.

**BROWN:** --put it back together.

**PASQUINA:** Glued his model back together, yeah.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**PASQUINA:** It wasn't even a question. It was just, we're all there of course. We're farther along, you're not doing well. Like, of course we can help you. Which was just a very great thing to be a part of.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**HOST:** Well that's it for this episode of The Slice of MIT podcast. But the reminiscing doesn't have to stop here. What are your favorite memories of your time at MIT? Tweet us your stories on Twitter @MIT\_alumni That's MIT underscore alumni.

Special thanks to Margolia Gilson, Megan Pasquina, Dale Krouse, Anne Street, and Fran Brown for sharing their stories with us for this episode.

If you want to hear more surprising, insightful, and quirky stories from the MIT community, subscribe to the Slice of MIT podcast on iTunes. Let us know what you think. Please rate the podcast and leave us a review. We'll be back next month with another episode of the Slice of MIT podcast. In the meantime, check out our website at [slice.mit.edu](http://slice.mit.edu). And thanks for listening.

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**HOST:** For this episode of the Slice of MIT podcast, we're highlighting AMITA, the Association of MIT Alumnae. AMITA promotes alumnae accomplishments maintains connections among alumnae, and supports women on campus. For more information, visit AMITA that's [amita.alumgroup.mit.edu](http://amita.alumgroup.mit.edu).

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