



## Ann Harnwell Ashmead

October 7, 1929 - January 17, 2026

Photograph Credit: Courtesy of the John Ashmead Estate

Ann Harnwell Ashmead an internationally noted research archaeologist and specialist in Greek Vase Painting, an authority on the depiction of felines, sometimes quizzically and humorously referred to by her colleagues as “The Cat Lady” which greatly delighted her and made her laugh, died Saturday, January 17, 2026 at home peacefully in her sleep from Chronic Congestive Heart Failure. Age 96.

She started life, in Princeton, NJ, born October 7, 1929 and thereafter referred to herself as a child or product of the Great Crash, the Depression and World War II. As a result, she had a life long interest in the stock market, its ups and downs, and investments in general, and she was very thrifty and frugal, relishing any opportunity to save or re-use items in new and creative ways, for as long as she could make them last.

She was born Ann Wheeler Harnwell, the second of four children of Princeton Professor of Physics, Gaylord P. Harnwell and his wife “Mollie”(Mary Louise Rowland Harnwell) who was a faculty wife par excellence. Her siblings include her older sister Mary Jane Harnwell Krumbhaar Wallace, born 1928, her younger brother Frederick “Teddy” William Harnwell, II (1931-36, died of mastoid leading to spinal meningitis) and her youngest brother Robert Gaylord

Harnwell (1938-2022). Ann is predeceased by her parents and both brothers.

Her education began at Miss Brearly's Princeton Grammar School, a public school, and steadily advanced from there. When her father accepted a position at the University of Pennsylvania as Chair of the Physics Department, the family moved to Wynnewood, PA where she attended Penn Wynne School (4th-6th), then Lower Merion High School (7th) (LMHS). World War II intervened and the family moved to La Jolla, CA where her father became Director of the Radio and Sound Laboratory at Point Loma, CA to manage the research and development of wartime uses of underwater sonar for submarines and mine detection. Several books about the history of submarines and WWII developments in the field of FM sonar extol her father's wartime contributions for which he was awarded the Medal for Merit by the US Navy and an OBE by Queen Elizabeth II. Ann was always tremendously proud of her father's scientific achievements (as well as academic and educational). During the War years, she attended The Bishop School (8th-11th) along with the children of Hollywood stars. Upon their return to the East Coast, post WWII, her parents re-enrolled her in LMHS from which she graduated 1947. She entered Bryn Mawr College (BMC) with the Class of 1951, but delayed her graduation due to marriage (1949) with Haverford College (HC) Professor of English John Ashmead, Jr. (taught at HC 1948-1988) and child bearing in 1950 (John, III at the time of birth, now the XIII) and 1951 (Graham Gaylord).

She received her BA from Bryn Mawr College (1952) graduating with Honors in Archaeology, Magna Cum Laude, and quickly thereupon received her MA (1954) and PhD (1959) in Classical Archaeology. Meanwhile she had given birth to two more children in 1955 (Gaylord Harnwell) and 1957 (Louisa Harral). Her father, as President of the University of Pennsylvania (1953-1970), gave the Commencement Address in 1959 to honor her PhD attainment. She studied under Professor Rhys Carpenter who founded the

Archaeology Department at BMC, she also did fieldwork in Greece with noted archaeologists Homer Thompson and Dorothy Burr Thompson and attended lectures given by George M.A. Hanfmann.

During her graduate work and 25+ years of marriage, she followed her mother Mollie's example as a faculty wife par excellence, but she also began to juggle many, many different side interests and hobbies which lasted throughout her long life.

Primarily, she began to travel and live abroad with her husband who was a Fulbright Scholar Teaching Abroad in the field of American Studies and Literature for the US government. First, they lived in Kyoto, Japan for a year (1955-1956) while her husband was teaching at Osaka Gaigo University, where her third child and third son (Gaylord) was born. Next on her insistence, to balance the marital equation, they lived in Athens, Greece for a year (1956-1957) while she was on a prestigious Ella Riegel Scholarship BMC to attend the American School of Classical Studies, work at The Agora, and research and present lectures on bus field trips throughout Greece; meanwhile her husband taught History and English to High School level boys at Athens College, a compromise for him since the Fulbright he was offered in Thessaloniki (Macedonia, Northern Greece) was too far away from Athens and his family; he gave up a Fulbright award for her. She almost gave birth to her fourth child and first daughter (Louisa) in London, UK while on the return trip racing home (she was heavily pregnant when she stepped on the plane, no matter! she needed to travel on); this trip homeward bound (from Athens to Philadelphia) was an intensive multi-country camping trip – while she was becoming more and more pregnant - across Europe out of a Volkswagen "MiniBus." Post PhD she continued to bear children with her fifth (last) child and second daughter (Theodora Wheeler) born in Taipei, Taiwan while her husband was teaching American Studies for a year (1960-1961) on a

Fulbright split between National ChengChi University and National Taiwan Normal University. One more and final stint with a Fulbright occurred in Benares, India where the family, now complete and numbering seven, lived for a year (1964-1965) while her husband was teaching American Literature at Benares Hindu University (BHU) with a nearly three month respite from the heat in The Kashmir on a houseboat on Lake Nigeen (then Lake Nagin), in Shrinagar in 1965 during The Kashmir Riots; they also lived in India during the very turbulent times of the “Language Riots” (Hindi versus English).

During these years of her living abroad 1950s-1980s, Ann’s communications home to the USA consisted of hundreds of hand- and type-written, once- and/or twice weekly, air-mailed letters (along with hundreds of her husband’s letters) which were full of details of their daily lives and her concerns for her family members including those separated from her on the other side of the world. She was a devoted and consistent “overseas” writer of letters, post-cards, thank you notes, birthday greetings and telegrams (in the days of paper mail, lacking instant communications). The recipients of these letters loved to read them, kept them and would frequently re-circulate them to other family members with initialed check-marks on them as having been read and to pass them along to the next reader. Over time, these fascinating and cherished letters made their way back to Ann, returned to her for her own safe-keeping and records.

There was one more Fulbright offer to Professor Ashmead, to Warsaw, Poland, in the 1970s, but the India Fulbright had “done the family in.” At the end of the India Fulbright, Ann, almost died of Hepatitis which struck her in The Kashmir (perhaps from the sanitary conditions? the water?). While on the homeward bound air-trip embarking from New Delhi to Tokyo (for her husband’s researches in Japan for several weeks to a month) Ann started to slip into a coma when her second son saved her life by getting her to a doctor who diagnosed and treated her condition – that son (Graham) later became a

doctor. Further, at the end of their stay in India, two of her five children were also struck by serious illnesses (Hepatitis and Murine Typhus) and were rushed home separately directly to the USA for treatment and recovery. Upon her return to the USA, Ann never fully recovered from the fatiguing effects of Hepatitis: she came home looking very gaunt and in a wheelchair (she was 35 years old at the time), needed nursing care and bed-rest, and could only manage limited household responsibilities for some time afterwards. Additionally, at the time of the “Fulbright-to-Poland” offer, both she and her husband felt their lives and those of their children’s were too fixed in place in Haverford; it would be too disruptive to live another year-abroad due to the couple’s own academic careers and to their children’s middle- and high-school educations as they headed towards college. With India, their time of living abroad, for a year, came to an end, however they continued to set up new temporary households elsewhere (USA, France) during summer breaks from Haverford College and to continuously travel around the world and USA on short trips of several weeks to one month.

In the summer of 1968, Ann gamely set up a new household in Tallahassee, Florida while her husband was teaching a master class in the teaching of College Level English at Florida State University. During these hot and humid months in The South, Ann got out her Florida guidebooks, and assiduously researched and planned each weekend as an educational experience for the family to learn about Floridian culture and history, with excursions to: St. Augustine, the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center, the Weeki Wachee Springs mermaids, Wakulla Springs glass bottomed boat tours, Tarpon Springs bell-suit sponge diving demonstrations, Okefenokee Swamp canoeing, and any Stuckey’s along the way. She and her husband also lived in Paris, France for two summers (1970, 1971); on the first trip they ended the summer with their two daughters in tow by driving and camping through Eastern Europe (going behind the “Iron Curtain”, crossing many harrowing militarized road checkpoints with nerve-wrackingly intensive and

comprehensive luggage searches, ominous passport examinations and protracted step-asides for interrogations and scrutinizations of all four family members in the car) this done while her husband was studying Foreign Cinema and meeting with Eastern European filmmakers.

A notable highlight of this “transition travel period” was a month’s long archaeological and cultural trip to Turkey (1972), mainly along the coastline, that Ann scheduled ahead by letter with visits to academic colleagues conducting site fieldwork; her husband and youngest daughter followed along in her planned exhaustive itinerary from Istanbul to Ankara. Her trip diary reveals the many archaeological stops, her colleagues’ names/work, the food, the cultural sites and experiences: visiting Hagia Sophia, shopping in the Grand Bazaar, seeing the Whirling Dervishes, as well as visiting phenomena such as Goreme and Pamukkale, and the major archaeological sites of Troy, Ephesus, Aphrodisias, Gordion and smaller sites along the way, making many fascinating stops through continuous traveling over 30 days. She was indefatigable.

In the late 1970s to early 1980s, after her divorce (1976), Ann lived in Copenhagen, Denmark, and eventually (1983) returned to live in the United States permanently for the rest of her life, settling into her own house in Haverford, PA.

Throughout these years of living abroad, Ann quickly picked up foreign languages learning passable “household” Japanese, Greek, Chinese, French and Danish. She was forever interested in improving her French: by attending the Alliance Francaise, Paris and the Institut de Francais, VilleFranche-sur-Mer, and auditing upper level French literature courses (in-French) at BMC. She also enjoyed learning to speak Italian better; she regularly took Italian language classes at Rosemont College. She was always continuing her

education; her learning never stopped.

Ann began her career in Classical Archaeology as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, handling the slide presentations for Professor Rhys Carpenter, and she was also the Curator for the Ella Riegel Memorial Museum at BMC. From these experiences, she realized that she preferred to do research and write.

Her career crystallized for her when she met her future co-author of many years BMC Professor Kyle Meredith Phillips, Jr. They formed a mutually beneficial, stimulating partnership and productive association of researching and writing articles and books together. They most notably published the *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum (CVA)*, *The Ella Riegel Memorial Museum, BMC* (1971) and the catalogue of *Classical Vases for the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)* (1976); their *Penn Museum Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum: The Attic Red Figure Cups* is in press production scheduled for publication 2026.

After Professor Phillips's death (1988), Ann pushed on alone and continued to publish with a comprehensive article on Etruscan images of cats for a book in his memory (1994) and a catalogue of *Classical Antiquities (mainly Greek Vases)* at Haverford College (1999). She had approached the College with the idea for the project; they agreed, and she completed the text, attributions, photographs and line drawings; she then asked her niece Polly Krumbhaar Lewis, a prominent artist, to design the book cover and she secured a grant for its publication from her friend Anne Franchetti who had attended BMC. As Ann told her daughter Theodora about the origin of this publication, "I just needed something to do, I needed to keep myself occupied and busy," thus another book in "retirement." A 2014 exhibition at the HC Library, of some of their Greek Vase collection "Putting the Pieces Together: Antiquities from the Allen Collection", relied on material in her 1999 catalogue. Just before Ann's death, she had put the finishing touches on a visual/oral presentation about felines as shield devices on Greek Vases with her colleague Professor

Emerita Ingrid M. Edlund-Berry (at The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Classics – specializing in Etruscan and Italian Archaeology and Culture).

During Ann's career as an archaeologist, she steadily published: book reviews and scholarly articles in monographs/Festschriften and academic journals such as the American Journal of Archaeology, Hesperia, and Expedition the Bulletin of the PennMuseum (where she was a Research Associate in the Mediterranean Section for decades). Ann was very modest, humble and self-deprecating about her publications and academic achievements, she never touted them: sometimes you were not even entirely aware that she had just produced another publication.

For her career and work in Classical Archaeology, she traveled throughout the world attending conferences, meetings and special exhibitions, constantly researching, gathering information on and writing about Greek Vase Painting and cats, while collegially and convivially keeping in touch with a wide range of academics both in the USA and abroad. When she attended an AIA (Archaeological Institute of America) Conference she never lacked for connecting with any and all participating archaeologists; she "conversed" her way through the meeting rooms and hallways; and, while at these conferences she continued her exploring interests in that particular city whether it be Los Angeles, New Orleans or Chicago, always sampling diverse restaurants with colleagues joining her, so pleased and happy to see them and be with them again, however briefly; this was her "sociability side" of archaeology. She also made it a point to keep in touch with, nurture and support any of her late colleague's BMC students, including Ingrid Edlund-Berry, Ingrid D. Rowland, and Penny Small, just a few named here. And, she always kept in touch with her generation of esteemed colleagues, some of whom became devoted good friends, including her co-author Kyle Phillips and notably: Jes Canby, Bruni Ridgway, David Mitten, Miriam Caskey, T.A. Carter

and Marit Jentoft-Nilsen, to name a few.

While undertaking her archaeological career she simultaneously worked weekly as a volunteer at The Owl Bookstore BMC, which she did for decades. Naturally, of course, she managed the intake and processing of books on art history and art (including objects of art: posters, prints, etc.) which poured into the famed local used bookshop - later sadly closed. She was simply delighted when she discovered a choice find – of books and prints -- that had been donated to The Owl; and immediately purchased the bargain for herself, home and family (in like fashion, Ann's mother Mollie Harnwell was well known in the community for having volunteer-managed a Chestnut Hill Thrift Shop similarly identifying choice items to take home to the family – it was a family tradition).

Ann was an avid regular reader of books herself, and she read to others, reading to her children at bedtime, instilling in them a love of reading. She was a frequent patron of BMC Book Sales (1960s-1970s) and The Ludington Library, bringing her children along with her, teaching them to use the Library and read. She maintained a collection of books numbering 5,000+ (some acquired, some inherited) organized in hand crafted wooden bookcases; all of these books were significant to her, reflecting her various interests and/or serving as mementos of her family, such as her late husband's Loomis School Academic Award Books which she treasured. Some of her collected books reveal the start of her own interest in books with a large group of well-worn children's books passed down to her as gifts from her mother Mollie Harnwell, and through both her grandmothers Nona Harral Williams (maternal) and Nani Wilcox Harnwell (paternal). She was very sentimental about these children's books of her past due to their special family associations, these books were frequently pasted-in with beautifully designed Book Owner Labels and inscribed with handwritten re-gifting inscriptions extending back to the 1900's. As a mother and grandmother, herself, Ann loved to acquire children's books,

both used (usually from The Owl Bookshop and the BMC Book Sales) and new, for her own children and grandchildren; later in life she sought out revival copies of past editions reprinted in the 1980s-90s, as gifts for her grandchildren and for herself. Books were always a Christmas and/or birthday gift from and to Ann, in her family.

And, she could quote from her books, especially from the works of William Shakespeare, famous poets and Nursery Rhymes. She especially cherished her complete works of Shakespeare, and could instantly quote some apt line by The Bard at an entirely appropriate moment – memorized from decades past. Later in life, she loved to read memoirs and non-fiction, gravitating from the reading of fiction, she always had some form of reading material with her (a book, a magazine, a newspaper) as she traveled on airplanes, buses and trains, waited in a line, or sat through a session at the hairdresser's.

Ann was a smart, highly intelligent, interesting, well-spoken, articulate, widely-read, well-informed, humorous, lively and dynamic person, with a sense of fun, constantly in motion, full of activity, forever curious and inquisitive, undertaking a range of life-long interests, some concurrently, some sequentially, including: dancing (with partners on ice and in precision ice-skating teams on a nationally competitive level, ball room and square dancing), needle crafting (designing her own crewel and Bargello embroidery, quilting, sewing and smocking dresses for her little daughters, designing dresses for herself and her daughters from lovely fabrics bought abroad), collecting antiques (Shaker furniture and boxes, Turkish rugs, ceramics, Japanese prints, netsuke, and tansus), researching her and her husband's family genealogies (participating in oral histories with her siblings and writing family biographies including one for a 19th century silver watch which emigrated along with a Harnwell ancestor from England to America!), gardening at a master level (knowing the Latin names for plants, able to identify a wide variety of plants, grasses, shrubs and trees, emphasizing only

organic gardening), decorating and designing her homes and gardens, dressing stylishly with a flair and nod to the fashion of the times (in 1960s-70s labels such as Pucci, Lilly Pulitzer and Diane von Furstenburg), breeding cats (Himalayans), creating artwork (painting, water-coloring, photographing and drawing), creatively cooking (planning menus, making home-cooked meals for a family of seven, baking pies/cakes, frequently for large dinner-dance parties and her children's birthdays), to book collecting as already mentioned, the list continues and could be amplified.

Throughout her busy life of intellectual pursuits and cultural activities she prioritized a similarly busy personal life devoted to her "family" – she was a mother, wife, sister, daughter and granddaughter, herself. She was nurturing of, interested in and supportive of her five children in their childhoods, making sure they were taken care of as to basic everyday and medical needs as well as those emotional; she was concerned if she was ever separated from a child and distraught if they were distraught. And, of course, she was very engaged in their education, pleased with their proceeding steadily from high school, to college, to graduate schools (MD, JD, MBA and MAs); she helped them along the way with financial aid, psychological support and housing, if needs must. She attended countless secondary school events: recitals, pageants, plays, teacher in-school nights and graduations, fluidly fitting them into her busy schedule. She involved her children in her work: perhaps at The Owl Bookstore or maybe by bringing them along to the Louvre while she was meeting with a curator to examine a Greek Vase of particular interest to her (either on display or in the storage rooms hidden behind wood paneled walls where she would sometimes put together pieces of Greek Vases and make her own recommended attributions for the Louvre curator).

When her children became adults, her traveling days continued along with them. She always tried to meet one of her children abroad whether she was living abroad (Paris, France and Copenhagen, Denmark) or they were living

abroad (England and Italy). And she went on trips with her adult children through North America and Europe, often she would invite an adult child on a trip if they were in distress about a divorce or a break-up; it could, she felt, serve as a distraction from their woes and an opportunity for them -- together -- to see more of the world (from The Four Corners States to Norway). She prioritized both Ashmead and Harnwell family holiday gatherings, Thanksgivings, Christmases and Easters (she loved, particularly, to plot out Easter egg hunts), frequently cooking large meals for such occasions.

She always marked family birthdays and was ready to host, cook, and provide presents for her children's birthday parties from childhood to adulthood. Some of her children's early-days birthday parties were educational events themselves with her "producing" and staging creative participatory games (such as testing your ability to identify certain certain smells and odors) or cooking that reflected her frugal monetary interests (such as baking coins into cakes for the winning eater to find); she also distributed valued coins under the pillows of sleeping children in exchange for a tooth, she was the Tooth-fairy.

Eventually her schedule shifted from focusing on and tending to her children's toddler-to-teenage betterment (daily needs, educations and career starts) to attending their marriages and welcoming their grandchildren – she transited from maternal to matriarchal. She was always pleased to hear of the arrival of a new grandchild, six in total, loved to buy them baby clothes, playful educational toys and books, and have fun board-games at the ready for them (her second opportunity to do so), and attended grandchildren's birthday parties and grandparent in-school days, if living locally. When some of her granddaughters (from Holly Springs, Mississippi and Cleveland, Ohio) were older she hosted them for overnight stays at her house for summer camp at Haverford College, a "dual theater festivals" trip to Canada - both the Shaw

and Stratford Shakespeare Festivals, plus Niagara Falls, or a BMC postbac entrance interview. She enjoyed any opportunity to see or hear from her grandchildren; she loved to receive their hand-written and -drawn cards, to welcome them into her home for in-person visits (from Atlanta, Georgia; Mississippi, Ohio, Switzerland) or to telephone chat and video-conference with them (FaceTime calls with her grandsons in Lausanne, Switzerland, and telephone calls with her granddaughters in Ohio and Mississippi).

As she aged, and those around her did likewise, she dutifully attended family (and friends') funerals, even though the loss of these family members (and friends) greatly saddened her, they were an opportunity for her to remain connected with the people around her whom she cherished. She was also saddened, upset and concerned whenever her adult children underwent a surgery and/or developed a chronic condition of their maturity. In her own middle age, she maintained close contacts with her parents and in-laws (even after her divorce) and when that generation departed, she made sure to stay in touch with her brother and sister, through in-person visits and a series of gatherings with her siblings (2000s) to conduct an oral history project which she greatly enjoyed participating in and researching to "prep for" before each meeting.

When her former husband, John Ashmead, Jr., began to enter retirement in the 1980s, she (unbeknownst to either her or him) signed up for the exact same educational trip to China (CET). When they discovered this happenstance, they were greatly amused, pleased and proceeded to travel together again to China, even thriftily, sharing a room to reduce single-room add-on fees. They enjoyed the trip as companions, and seemed to have momentarily revived their former days of traveling together. During his final decade, Ann was very supportive of her former husband: his ongoing publications and musical concerts (with HC Professor John Davison and soprano opera singer/BMC graduate Shoshanna Shay). Ann also assisted

him, significantly, when he had to severely downsize and transition from his large multi-roomed 19th century faculty house (in which they had once lived together) into a small two bedroom HC “retirement” apartment. As her former husband entered his seventies and became frailer due to Lymphoma, Ann made sure he was “seen to”: ensuring he was taken to/from the airport for his scholarly trips to Scotland (for publication on Robert Burns) and Japan (for publication on Lafcadio Hearn). She invited him in to her own nearby comfy house for home-cooked Sunday dinners; his tiny apartment kitchen being completely inadequate, like his former wife, he was a very good cook. And she visited her former husband in Bryn Mawr Hospital at the end; dramatically, when he entered his final hospitalization (after he was found by his youngest daughter one late night collapsed from the effects of chemotherapy), Ann happened also to be at the same hospital (for an orthopedic surgical procedure), upon learning of his admission into the Emergency Room she insisted on seeing him, visiting him by wheelchair transport when he was finally assigned a private room at 2AM-3AM; he was comforted and consoled to see her – they laughed ironically they were “both in the hospital together!,” albeit for separate issues. She was greatly distressed as he became increasingly sickened by cancer over three years (died 1992); she then hosted a funeral reception in her home for his family (their children and her in-laws with nieces and nephews) and close associates, and thereafter continued to keep-up contacts with his family and she attended his Ashmead family’s reunion in 1998.

At the end of her own life, as she progressed into her terminal illness, she expressly wished for her adult children to find peace, contentment and happiness in their own lives, as they proceeded on with theirs, and she left them.

“She is one smart lady,” “she has a remarkable memory,” “I love speaking with your mom, what a conversationalist,” “I so enjoy getting to know your mom,” ...

these are some of the comments received about her during her life. And, then, upon hearing of her death: “what a fascinating life”, “what a remarkable person,” “I knew her only slightly...I wish I’d known her better,”“a life energetically and worthily lived,”“I enjoyed our intelligent conversations and the fact that she was always interested to hear my opinion about our different topics,” “she was a very distinctive member of the BMC Archaeology family and a long and friendly presence here,” “she had so many adventures and interests, ” “she was a fascinating person.”

She was a member of the Philadelphia Skating Club and Humane Society, Ardmore, PA. In the horticultural/gardening sphere, she was a member of the Hardy Plant Society, the Henry Foundation for Botanical Research, and local arboretum at various times (Jenkins, Scott). She was on the board of the Haverford College Arboretum for several years and had taken high level Barnes Foundation Arboretum Classes. She loved to attend local annual plant sales, loved to acquire plants and loved to see them thrive in her garden, and was very struck down, remorseful and saddened, if they died under her care.

She leaves her five children and six grandchildren, sons John Ashmead, III, Dr. Graham Gaylord Ashmead (granddaughters Alexandra Ashmead and Claire Cecile Ashmead-Meers), Gaylord Harnwell Ashmead (spouse, Daniela Ricci-Ashmead, grandsons Thomas John Ashmead and Jamie Angelo Ashmead), and daughters Louisa Ashmead Robinson (granddaughters Hannah Harnwell Robinson and Nora Ashmead Robinson), and Theodora Wheeler Ashmead.

She donated her body to the Humanity Gifts Registry, Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

Please make Memorial Donations to the Haverford College Arboretum and the

Ludington Library, Bryn, Mawr, PA, in Ann's name.