



Ruth Benedict, YSN '48, and Howard Benedict, Yale '45W

“We consider YSN a part of our family”

For Ruth Benedict '48, giving back to Yale has proved to be a lifelong pursuit. “Yale has played a key role in our lives ever since Howard and I met at YSN’s old Nathan Smith dormitory more than 62 years ago. We were married in Dwight Chapel in 1947 with many of our classmates in attendance,” Ruth remembers. Howard Benedict entered Yale with the class of '45W, and interrupted his undergraduate years to serve in the Navy in the Pacific theater during World War II, graduating in 1946. Ruth continues, “I graduated from YSN in 1948. Ever since then Howard and I have tried to ‘give back’ to Yale in a variety of ways.”

Ruth’s alumni efforts began in 1957. “One day, I was home with four small boys when the phone rang. I remember distinctly that I was changing a diaper at the time. It was Dean Bixler. Since I lived in the area, she asked if I would organize the first Alumnae/i College. I agreed, and it was a great success for its time, but only a small beginning of what has grown to become an impressive series of programs at YSN.” That was the first of many “firsts” for Ruth.

In 1969 Yale President Kingman Brewster sought to forge closer relationships with alumni and formed the Founding Board of the Association of Yale Alumni (AYA). The only woman on the 24-member Board, Ruth served as first chair of the Nominating Committee and the Accreditation and Election Committee. Later, she went on to hold a number of key leadership positions on the AYA Board, including chairing the Committee on the Graduate and Professional Schools, which dramatically increased their visibility at the University.

“Most of my fellow Board members didn’t even know that Yale had a graduate-level School of Nursing. It was an exciting time, and YSN was absolutely instrumental in the creation of the AYA.” Ruth was recognized in 1974 for her outstanding commitment and volunteer efforts on behalf of the University with the Yale Medal, Yale’s highest honor.

But it didn’t stop there.

Ruth served on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the Yale Alumni Fund, the first woman on the Board of Directors in the 82-year history of the Fund at that time. She also served as National Chairman for YSN’s part of The Campaign for Yale in 1977, leading YSN to meet its goal ahead of all the other schools. In 1979 during the first energy crisis, with Yale’s energy costs going off the charts, President Bart Giamatti asked Ruth to be Yale’s first Director of Energy Conservation. She mobilized students, faculty, and staff, saved over \$4 million in electricity that year alone, and was awarded a \$13 million federal grant for retrofitting Yale’s college buildings.

In 2003 Ruth was asked by YSN to serve on the School’s External Advisory Board, which was created to reach out to new constituencies, broaden the School’s friends network, and advise the Dean on matters of strategic importance. Ruth served as the Board’s first co-chair.

“Yale was preparing for a capital campaign, and I knew YSN would need to set some aggressive fundraising goals to meet the needs of students and fulfill the vision Dean Grey set forth for the School. I wanted to help,” Ruth added.

Recently, Ruth and Howard attended a Yale event in Tucson, Arizona, near their home in Green Valley. At the meeting, Eileen Donahue from the Planned Giving office described ways to make a gift to Yale by leveraging assets and maximizing tax credits. The Benedicts have designated YSN as a \$1,000,000 beneficiary in the future sale of select real estate holdings.

“We both have benefited from our Yale educations and we always knew we wanted to give back in a way that will have a significant impact,” Howard said. “We hoped our gift to YSN would make a difference and would be an example to others. Being married to a Yale Nurse definitely helped focus my attention on YSN’s pioneering work worldwide.”



Ruth and Howard posing in front of the medical school shortly after they met in 1946. Ruth was a student at YSN and Howard was finishing his senior year at Yale College a month after he was released from active military duty.