

# HIGHLIGHT

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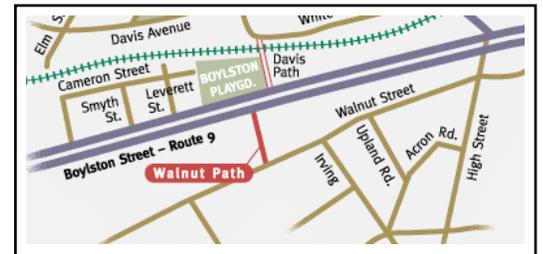
*The Newsletter of the High Street Hill Association*

*January 2012*



## Walnut Path *by Linda Olson Pehlke*

Traveling Walnut Path is an experience of dramatic contrast. Linking Walnut Street with Boylston Street, the path carries you from the world of early Brookline to the present day, beginning, as it does, near the heart of colonial Brookline, and ending beside four lanes of careening traffic! Walnut Path is probably the oldest of Brookline's paths, and was once known as "Cat Alley." To make things more confusing, today's Davis Path was at first called Walnut Path.



Accepted and constructed by the town in 1890, Walnut Path is 226 feet long. Land damages in the amount of \$500 were paid to the estate of Edward S. Philbrick (son of Samuel Philbrick), and construction costs were also \$500. Walnut Street, laid out in 1658 and called the old Sherburne Road, was the main street in the early settlement days of Muddy River. It is narrow and tree lined; and just down the street to the west lies the historic town green, around which was built the first "town hall," and upon which the militia gathered to march to the revolutionary war battle at Lexington. Many of the homes lining Walnut Street date from the early to mid 19th century.

One of the most important is the home of Samuel Philbrick, a stop on the Underground Railroad that gave safe passage to slaves fleeing to the free north. His former home, located just across the street from the entrance to Walnut Path, is marked with a plaque. Boylston Street, formerly called the Worcester Turnpike, was built in 1807, and soon became the main route west out of Boston. It seems logical that a footpath or "alleyway" would arise to link these two roadways, allowing pedestrians to bisect the long block between High and Cypress Streets.

The path's entrance is marked with a 1937 cast aluminum sign. On the right-hand side, a stone wall, worn with age, surrounds a colonial-style house built in 1800. A majestic European Beech, at least 100 years old, graces its front yard. For the protection of pedestrians, a raised crosswalk has been built across Walnut Street where the path begins, slowing through traffic.

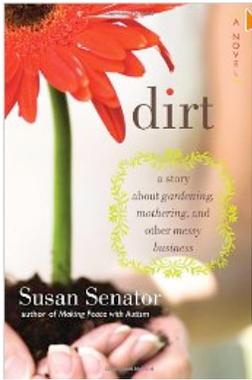
Big old maple trees shade this end of the path, which is asphalt and slopes gently downwards towards Boylston Street. About three-quarters of the way down the path, a passageway to the old Lincoln School veers off to your left. Trumpet vine entwines and softens the passageway's fence. Continuing on, the massive concrete foundation of the school playground looms, gaining in height as the path descends. Encircling the playground, atop the foundation, is an ornate wrought iron fence, which, when viewed from the path, is dramatically silhouetted against the sky, casting patterned shadows to the surface below. To your right are the backyards of homes on Boylston Street, with their expected artifacts of domesticity, such as clotheslines, clay pots, and lawn chairs.

Fortunately for those on foot, there is an activated crossing with a traffic light about 50 feet to the west that makes it possible to get to the other side of Boylston Street, and gives access to Boylston Playground. Once across, the foot traveler can continue on into the Emerson Park neighborhood via Davis Path, which takes you up and over the T tracks.

*Linda Olson Pehlke is an author and urban planner living in Brookline. This is from her book, Exploring the Paths of Brookline, available at Brookline Booksmith. Printed with the permission of the author.*

# Author! Author! Meet Your Neighborhood Scribes

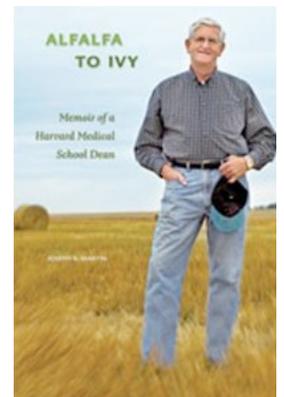
Please join your neighbors and friends as we kick off the **Pill Hill Author Series** on Sunday, March 25, from 4-6 p.m. Over the next three months, you'll have an opportunity to hear from three distinct voices in the neighborhood – a novelist, an educator, and a biographer.



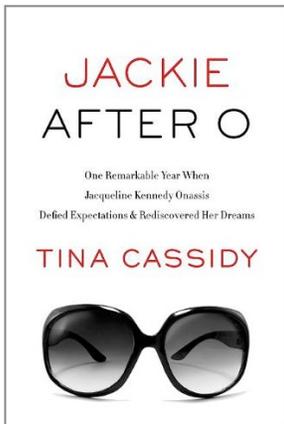
Our first author/guest speaker – on Sunday, March 25 – is **Susan Senator**, who recently published her first novel, *Dirt: A Story About Gardening, Mothering, and Other Messy Business*. (Please note a change from the announcement in the December edition of the *Highlight*.)

Susan, a longtime resident of Allerton Street, is a writer, speaker, political activist, and mother of three boys, the oldest of whom is severely autistic. Susan has previously published two non-fiction books about raising children with autism. Her latest book is a fictional story about a suburban single mother's struggle to raise three boys—one of whom is autistic. Emmy's haven from it all is her garden, and her dream is to start a landscape design business. But lack of time and energy keep her stuck selling real estate; it is all Emmy can do just to keep her life and family under control. According to one reviewer: "Dirt gets to the heart of family and the power of love to pull us through."

On Sunday, April 22, **Joseph B. Martin**, former dean of Harvard Medical School and a Hawthorn Road resident, will discuss his book – a combined personal memoir and reflection on education and leadership – *Alfalfa to Ivy: Memoir of a Harvard Medical School Dean*. In the book, Joe traces his roots in a remote Mennonite town in rural Alberta, Canada, to his days at the University of Alberta and medical school, then on to a career at McGill University, Mass. General Hospital, the University of California, San Francisco, and ultimately to a deanship at Harvard, where he and his team located the gene for Huntington's disease.



Joe says he wanted to write about "the process of how you get things done. Academic leadership is hard and erratic and complicated by the big egos that you work with, and some things go well and some things flunk. I wanted this book to be a personal illustration of how those things arose, and were dealt with, and walked away from if they weren't working."



The third event in our series is an afternoon with **Tina Cassidy**, author of *Jackie After O: One Remarkable Year When Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Defied Expectations and Rediscovered Her Dreams*, on Sunday, May 20. Tina was a reporter and editor at the *Boston Globe* for more than a decade. A relative newcomer to Walnut Street, she also is the author of *Birth: The Surprising History of How We Are Born*, published in 2006.

In her new book, which will be published in May, Tina chronicles a pivotal year in Jackie O's life, when she rediscovered talents and passions she had set aside for her role as public wife. In January 1975, she kicked off a year of great activity and change, including a high-profile role in the campaign to save the landmark status of Grand Central Station in New York City; and the death of her second husband, Aristotle Onassis, the public speculation about his enormous estate, and her tumultuous relationship with his daughter, Christina. The year also included Jackie's pursuit of her first real career with a job in the editorial department of Viking Press and the early stage of what could have been the most meaningful romantic relationship of her life.

These major changes reflect a cultural shift, with women taking on larger roles in the community and in the workplace. *Jackie After O* takes a unique look at this time and at the life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis as she shook the world's expectations and pursued her dreams in middle age.

**All three events take place at the home of Blake and Dorothy Cady, at 24 Walnut Place, from 4-6 p.m. While RSVPs aren't required, please let us know if you plan on attending by emailing Bill Weber at [bweber8@hotmail.com](mailto:bweber8@hotmail.com) or calling 617-738-5504 as seating is limited. We look forward to seeing you at one or more of these sure-to-be-interesting events!**