Small World

 or

 The Ganglia of Friendships

This bare-bones article was inspired by reading an advt. in the NYRB, saying that Diane Arbus had committed suicide some years ago. In my Freshman Year at Harvard, Christmas Vacation , I had a date with her. Much fleshing-out of what follows is possible. I thank Google principally for the biographical dates .

* In September 1939, I matriculated at Harvard and roomed on the third floor of the Middle Entry of Thayer Hall.
* On the fourth floor of that entry, a fellow student , Adam Yarmolinsky, lived. I soon met him and a friendship of many years developed.
* Adam Y. was the son of Babette Deutsch, (1895-1982) , a poet of considerable reputation. His father, Avrahm Y. was head of the Slavic Department of the NY Public Library.
* Through the poetry connection, Adam got to know Howard Nemerov (1920-1991; Harvard ‘41 ) , a poet of considerable brilliance who in later years became the first U.S. Poet Laureate of the Library of Congress.
* Through Adam Y. I got to know Howard’s younger sister, Diane Nemerov (1923-1971).
* In the Christmas Vacation of 1939-40, I had a date with Diane. I took her to see William Saroyan’s play The Time of Your LIfe, that had just opened in NYC. The play won a number awards including the Pulitzer.
* Incidentally, Adam Y., Howard, and Diane, all three , went to Felix Adler’s Ethical Culture’s Fieldtson School in the Riverdale Section of The Bronx. The number of notable alumni of Fieldston is large, and includes the mathematicians Joe Doob and Marvin Minsky. My son Ernest was a “great - grand-student” of Minsky. Adler (1851-1933) proposed to teach ethics independently of theology.
* I had no further dates with Diane Nemerov. She became a photographer of considerable influence and notoriety, going out into the streets and taking pictures of unusual personalities, dwarfs, giants, deadbeats, deviants of one sort or another. This won her both praise and condemnation. Praise for her realism and condemnation for what was considered muckraking.
* Diana married Alan Arbus and adopted his surname as her professional name.
* Time marches on. A recent full page ad for a joint biography of Diane Arbus and Howard Nemerov appeared in the NYRB. It caught my attention for it included a clip from Alexander Nemerov, Howard’s son, and a statement that his aunt Diane had committed suicide.
* I await the receipt of a copy of the biography .

 P.J.Davis, March, 2015