

Class Reflection: 1990

Looking back to the fall of 1986, it's clear that the '80s were already well past their prime when we arrived at F&M. We were forty years into the Cold War, mid-way through the second term of the oldest sitting president in history, and the Iran-Contra scandal was in the news. We were using pay phones, landlines, turntables, and cassette players - and were lucky to pick up three channels on TV. Musically, 'New Wave' was wearing out its welcome, 'Hair Bands' were ascendant, and classic rock continued to dominate. If we look closely, however, we can see that many developments we experienced would in fact come to define our first decade out of school and beyond. The Macs we used taught us the concept of icons, the 'desktop', and the mouse. The fact that they kept getting better and cheaper showed us the dramatic acceleration of tech innovation. U2's 'The Joshua Tree', released in our freshman year, showed us that it was indeed possible for one band to be played on WFNM's 'new wave' *and* 'classic rock' shows. Rumblings of a 'grunge' scene in Seattle, the ascendance of hip-hop, and early techno showed us that the world of music was headed in new directions. *How* we listened to music was also changing: the widespread adoption of CDs introduced us to the concept of 'digital' music that worked without a needle or a tape. 'Ben Net' was installed in the ground level of South Ben while we were Juniors, allowing us to send 'e-mails' for the first time, and *also* proving for the first time that people will actually send messages to people literally sitting right next to them. As seniors we literally watched the world change: The Berlin Wall came down, the Cold War ended, Germany agreed to reunite, elections were held in the Soviet Union, and Nelson Mandela was released from prison. And while hindsight is 20/20, one can look back and see that what we experienced during our four years at F&M gave us a hint at what the 1990s would become – a decade defined by political change, relative peace, technological advancement, the internet, great music, and an optimism about the future.