

## Reflections of the Class of 1951

**By Bob DeChant**

We began our journey at the end of a massive World War II. Ours was one of the largest classes F&M had – 382 members. Almost half of us had already served in the Armed Forces and were older than those who had just finished High School. They had the opportunity to attend College under the GI Bill which paid for tuition, books, and room and board. Some were married and all were most interested in getting a degree, a job, a family, and moving on.

Several significant world events occurred during our college years. The first use of the term “Cold War” happened in 1948. It turned out to be one of the longest wars in which we were engaged, and we won! Think about how the “Cold War” affected you and your career.

The next year, 1949, Chairman Mao Tse-tung declared China a Communist state. Notwithstanding the tremendous economic progress China has since made, they are still a communist state.

In 1950, U.S. forces invaded Korea. Some WWII veterans were called back into service. Maybe some were in our class. Sixty years later, the troops are still there.

In our last year, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sentenced to death. Also, the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution was passed to limit the Presidency to no more than two consecutive terms. Not a bad idea which has seemed to work very well.

Several significant events also occurred on campus. In our sophomore year, Fackenthal Laboratories were enlarged to the tune of a half million dollars.

Junior year was sort of laid back . . . more severe freshman regulations, dedicating the Lab addition and breaking in several new Deans. Black Pyramid Senior Honorary Society was established to replace Blue Key. Shober Barr was our Faculty Advisor.

Our senior year began with the imposition of prohibition, yes, no booze! It didn't work very well, but we ended the year with “dry” parties. On a heavier note, we had an undefeated/untied football season resulting in our first league championship. Our Soccer team had the best record in F&M history, winning the Championship of the Southwest Division of the Mid Atlantic Conference. Go Dips!

## **Some Recollections, F&M Class of 1951 – in 2011.**

**By Dale Heckman and Bill Rader**

A memoir of our 4 years, 1947-'51 must nestle within the unique context of that time. People, both military and civilian, were now exploring their futures after a horrific worldwide war. The college now could chart its new course after hosting a budget-saving Navy training program. Some classmates had experienced military action, and some professors had served "close in." (Rumor had it that the strange shuffling walk of one professor came from leaky boots on the winter front.) Fred Klein told of observing the Nazi build-up in 1930's Europe. Bob Pitcher had worked in our wartime U.S. government. The U.N. was just then being born. *In such a context*, we plunged delightedly into our tasks of serious learning, reaching out for new friends, trying new abilities, stretching ourselves. Ever in the background lurked three new facts: (a.) The Atomic Age. (b.) Aggressive, Soviet-style communism, and America's budding paranoia in reaction to it. (c.) Growing awareness of the enormity of the "Holocaust" mass murder of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and the disabled by a highly educated and technically advanced nation. As Gen. MacArthur stated (1945), "The problem is now a theological one." With all that weighing in the background, we still had a jubilant four years, for we'd survived the horror; it was time to rebuild.

Wrestling won our loudest cheering, at least until our senior year's football season. Some of us new to the sport submitted to sparring with more experienced wrestlers. One recalls seeing Coach Phillips' sign *on the ceiling* of our practice room: "If you can read this, you're in the wrong position." Lacrosse won varsity status briefly, with experienced players from Baltimore, Philly, and Long Island. Soccer soon commanded attention by its growing success; and swimming.

The band and its leader won many accolades from newspaper critics. Librarian Herb Anstaedt invited two or three of us to exhibit their artwork in the library, before F&M had an art department. Director of Buildings & Grounds Walt Doner kindly expedited our organized request to help furnish the top floor of "Campus House" as a student commons – not all of us chose to "go Greek." So it was a ripe time to revive and re-make our old college.

Socially, too, it was a big moment of transition. Anti-Semitism was no longer "in" (See "holocaust," above.) But the renowned president of Morehouse College (Atlanta) – a "historically Negro" institution – came to address us in the chapel, and one of his students came to F&M for two semesters. Looking back over a half century, it's still hard to realize that was groundbreaking! (M. L. King, Jr. was our age-mate.) We welcomed several Black classmates, both local and from abroad. One with the difficult name "Mgbako" came from W. Africa. Other classmates came from Eastern Europe and Near East, and went on to academic careers in the U.S.

At the same time as this blossoming global interest, however, Prexy Distler shared the spreading fear of creeping Communism. He nixed at least one speaker invited by a tiny student inquiry group named "Publii," and was not amused that a too-liberal student "inquirer" was elected Student President. So we were not isolated from winds of the off-campus world!

It would take another entire essay to tell about our favorite faculty members and, even then, how could we select only a few for our diverse class? We honestly cannot recall any certified "villains" in that wonderful cast of faculty characters, and nearly all who taught us then were surely at F&M because they enjoyed interacting with undergraduate students. So, symbolic of that, we simply recall an evening of fun in our freshman year when Prexy and the three deans performed as a very harmonious barbershop quartette. Such a harmony, who could forget?