

## Reflections of the Class of 1962

**By Henry Brubaker**

Many events shaped our class and our years at F&M. Freshman orientation began about a month after President Eisenhower sent Marines into Beirut – an event that baffled most of us. We were sure, and reassured, that it would not set a precedent. Over the next four years we wrestled with atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons, the U-2 incident, the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and the Berlin Wall.

While we were dealing with world events, the Civil Rights movement grew around us. Sit-ins, freedom rides, white supremacist reactions. It was hard to see which issue – civil rights or the cold war – was going to emerge as the most important.

In a way, however, it was what was happening on campus that was most important. The faculty and administration coalesced behind Fred Bolman, the third President of the College in the 1950's. Big decisions were being made. F&M was going to take bold steps to improve its academic excellence.

As students, we faced a significant loss of stature when athletic scholarships were phased out. F&M was no longer going to be a school out of a 1930's Hollywood comedy. A new curriculum, based on courses, not hours, was introduced. Liberal arts courses counted as much as lab sciences and the required work increased accordingly.

At the same time, the board of trustees did what they did best – they raised tuition until it passed \$425 a semester! Unthinkable!

Being of sound mind and great foresight, the students reacted by having a demonstration that began as a tribute to the old ways, particularly the athletes who were being abandoned, and ended as a near riot. That was in the spring of our junior year.

In the spring of our senior year, there was a campus-wide series of seminars on Africa. Counting exchange students from Africa, the student population of Africans and African-Americans reached 32 out of about 1,100 – a high number for the era compared to most other schools in the area.

Now, 50 years later, what can we reflect on:

President Bolman only lasted the summer after we graduated before being dismissed by the board – a black eye for the college, but one that led to the Presidency of Keith Spaulding – a definite plus.

The civil rights struggle made progress, slowly at first, but by leaps and bounds over the years. Voter rights, equal opportunity, Hip-Hop music, and now, an African-American President, are the result.

US troops did go back to Lebanon, where many died in a truck bombing, and they also went to Viet Nam, Kuwait, Iraq, Bosnia, Iraq again, Afghanistan, and all the other places where they have served and sacrificed.

The Cold War ended in a wonderful, surrealistic celebration as the Berlin Wall fell. The most unexpected moment in my life and one of the happiest.

The most fundamental change at F&M was not in the curriculum or athletic policies – it was, of course, the introduction of co-education. Unfortunately, our class was long gone from campus by then.

On June 4, we start the next 50 years, but someone else will have to tell that story.