

Reflections of the Class of 1963

By Bob Kafin

We probably were the last class that was culturally pre “The Sixties. We arrived at the College still in the time of the Eisenhower years of peace, prosperity and progress and left while the glow of Kennedy’s Camelot had not yet been extinguished by the assassination. Yes, there was the Cold War with the Berlin Wall going up in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, but the Vietnam War, Woodstock, the sexual revolution and the rest of the cataclysmic Sixties were unimaginable to most of us during our College years.

We wore beanies as Freshmen, as hazing was still part of the College routine, and no swimsuits in Fackenthal Pool, as nudity was a requirement. Everybody had short hair, and facial hair was a rarity. Saturday classes were a regular part of the schedule – but only for our first year -- and if you drove all the way to New York, you could still drink at age 18, but you had to be 21 to vote in most places.

We were the class that had four College Presidents during our Senior Year. But, we were taught by a faculty of giants with a mastery of subject matter and a passion for teaching. Nothing tells the story of our College years better than the transformative effects on us of our exposure to these dedicated professors.

But, in the outside world, the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy as President of the United States was the most significant world event during our college years that reached into our tidy, cloistered student lives. The young President’s declaration “that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans” and his challenge to young Americans to defend “freedom in its hour of maximum danger” made us all look up and wonder where we were going.

We now have more to see in our rear view mirror than in our windshield. However, whichever way we look, some reflection of our F&M years will always be part of the scene.