

## **Reflections of the Class of 1972** **The World and Franklin & Marshall, 1968-1972**

**By Larry May**

We entered F&M just as one era in American life was ending and a new one beginning. 1968-1972 was neither the best of times nor the worst of times, but it was a chaotically transformational time. Most of all it was our time. We came to F&M having grown up watching Leave it to Beaver and thinking that married couples like Donna and Alex Stone (The Donna Reed Show) commonly slept in twin beds. Who knew that sex ended with marriage? We came to F&M as the last of the short-haired relics of the Eisenhower and e Kennedy years and many of us, we dare say, undoubtedly emerged more politicized and unquestionably less well-groomed. Our four years at F&M provided us with an imperfect sanctuary from the tumultuous goings on of the outside world. Consider all that happened during our college years:

- In the Summer of 1968 the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia putting an end to the Czechoslovakian Spring.
- The rioting in and the burning of our nation's inner cities continued and served as a constant and distressing reminder of the anger and frustration born of poverty, racism and inequality.
- On July 20, 1969 Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin set foot on the moon and we watched Walter Cronkite cry on TV probably for the first time since the assassination of John F. Kennedy.
- August 1969, Woodstock
- In November of 1969 we witnessed, and some of us even participated, in the watershed anti-Vietnam War march on Washington.
- On April 30, 1969 President Nixon told the nation that he had expanded the almost decade-long war in Vietnam to Cambodia through an "incursion" into that sovereign nation.
- On May 4, 1970 four unarmed students were killed and nine were wounded by national guardsmen at Kent State University.
- In May, 1970 our campus was shut down in protest of the events of Vietnam, Cambodia and Kent State.
- Shortly after we graduated in September of 1972 11 Israeli Olympians were murdered in Munich.

Each day brought its own little bit of madness and each evening, the war came home as Cronkite or Huntley & Brinkley or Reynolds gave us the day's casualty count.. Vietnam affected us in the moment and for years after-- it was our not so boon companion for our four years at F&M. For some, it influenced career paths and for others it shaped political consciousness.

Who could forget the evening in our sophomore year when the first national draft lottery was held. The library was emptied and the quad deserted with most of the student body listening to their radios in dorm rooms or apartments to the one lottery they desperately did not want to win. For some it was an occasion to understandably curse the day they were born.. We certainly recall our how our sophomore year ended with classes being cancelled, impromptu teach-ins popping up around the campus and the on-going dispute among the faculty and administration as to how grades should be assessed and credits applied for course work.

The war was the topic of robust debate in our dorms, the coffee shop, the letters to the editors of the College Reporter and on that publication's editorial page. No matter what our views of the war, then at ages 18 to 21, or now in our sixties, we were its captives.. Perhaps nothing more poignantly captured the toll it had on our generation than the anguished editorial which appeared in the April 15, 1969 edition of the College Reporter. The editors of our student publication marked the occasion of the 34,000<sup>th</sup> young man to be killed in Vietnam. "34,000 men died...[and] the American death toll has now surpassed that of Korea... and democracy is no safer."

While Vietnam was the dominating outside event, thankfully we had the ignorance and resiliency of youth to not let it spoil four of the most joyous and wondrous years of our lives. F&M was the perfect place for a bunch of naïve and ignorantly overconfident group of young men (at least until our sophomore year when we were joined by a too small in number of equally over-confident but far more sophisticated young women) to grow from adolescents to adults. Besides the first rate and demanding academics, it provided us with much more. In retrospect we all to our regret probably failed to take full advantage of that which was offered. Tell your children - - even they should recognize some of these names - - that when you had hair, a 32 inch waist ( 24 inches for the ladies), bell bottom jeans and tied dyed shirts and blouses-- the Beach Boys, The Grateful Dead, Linda Ronstadt, Tina Turner, Simon and Garfunkel, The Temptations, James Taylor, Three Dog Night, Emerson Lake and Palmer, Carlos Santana, Paul Butterfield and The Butterfield Blues Band, Sam and Dave, Richie Havens and The Association (who did we forget other than Vanilla Fudge?) all appeared on campus. Students could attend the live concerts for the princely sums of from \$3.50 - \$5.00 per event. For those of you with children of a more intellectual persuasion, you might mention that Nobel Laureates Saul Bellow and Isaac Bashevis Singer visited the campus; and for those of you who have kids that refuse to be impressed, try Timothy Leary.

No class reflection would be complete without a mention of Professor Wise's terrific film series, Nissly's Guest House, (Need a place for your girl?), the House of Pizza, Hildy's, the

Wilson College exchange kerfuffle and the thankful start of co-education.; and now that we have mentioned them, this reflection is complete—almost

The Class of 1972 is an extraordinary group and we should be proud of our selves, our classmates and the Classes' collective accomplishments. Five of our classmates have served as College Trustees, more than any other class 7 members have been inducted into the John Marshall Society for their generosity to F&M, with a lifetime giving over \$100,000 and as a class our total giving to the school places us first among graduating classes. Our classmates have achieved positions of leadership in medicine, education, law, business and military and government service. We count about seventy classmates with degrees in the healing arts, twenty-eight with doctorates or equivalent terminal degrees and too many lawyers to mention. We have as a group much to reflect on, much to be thankful for and much more yet to do.