

Class of 1949 History

The Class of 1949 was unique in the sense that many members of the class completed four years of college and several years in the armed services during the period between 1943 and 1949. When the war began, the majority of students enlisted or were drafted.

There were very few civilian students on campus until the US Navy and Marines arranged to use the school and all the facilities as a training center for flight and deck officer training and to a less extent, education for pre-med and pre-dental students. The campus was full.

Fortunately, four years before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Professor Frederic S. Kline, a student named William Reber, and the assistant manager of the Municipal Airport organized the College Flying Club. Fred was the faculty adviser and teacher. He also had a small airplane at the airport. The training program had developed to such an extent by the beginning of the war that it was immediately useful for the navy. This specialized training was a great contribution to the nation's war effort.

Professor Klime taught Early American History and was an accomplished musician as well. He also had a great interest in aviation. He was a man of many talents.

A number of the older faculty taught the cadets the usual courses- math, physics, sciences, and English. There were 550 or more serious cadets working for the opportunity to complete this part of their training and be promoted. In time, naval officers were assigned to F&M to teach naval training courses. The medical students were taught by the F&M faculty.

After VJ day and VE day in 1945, the training programs came to an end. The marine contingent had been discontinued in 1944.

Once again, there were very few students enrolled. However, a great number of veterans returned in late 1945 and early 1946. The College began to revert back to a regular peace-time schedule. Enrollment reached a new all time high half of which were returning veterans.

Several members of the faculty also returned from wartime services. Professor Noel Laird returned from Germany. Dr. W. Nelson Frances returned from naval duty, as did others. Faculty members, after teaching war subjects or courses other than their chosen ones, were glad to return to work in their own class rooms. Lt. Col. W. Austin Bishop was named Professor of Physical Education and Director of Athletics. Richard Foose became Professor of Geology and so on. A number of older members of the faculty chose this time to retire.

Among the eight new instructors hired in this period were four alumni, Robert

Moss, Department of Religion. Wm. M. Kephart, Sociology, Fed Suydam, Chemistry, and P.P. Martin, German. They all proved to be excellent teachers. A few years later, Rev Moss, also a graduate of the Seminary across College Avenue, left F&M to teach there. A few years later, he became President of the Seminary. Later he became the national president of the entire UCC Church.

The College was very quickly returned to what was the usual schedule for classes.

The varsity athletic teams organized under the guidance of Uncle Charley Mayser assisted by Tom Floyd. All teams did well. As usual, the wrestling team was very strong. Our class was well represented by Larry Mackey. Herb Galebach, Abe Ashby, George Rutter, and Tom Smith.

Clubs and other student organizations took longer to reorganize.

Four of the fraternities were used by the navy for special offices. The Chi Phi house was used as the dental office. When the cadets left, the houses were returned in excellent condition. Chi Phi was beautiful. Professor Jerry Neprash, Sociology, was fraternity adviser. He was a good friend who made sure that all rules were followed. For example, guests had to be invited, all social events (parties, etc.) had to be chaperoned. As a rule he was the chaperone.

The Veterans Administration Vocational Center was located in Old Main. Two psychologists were available to the veterans. After their war experiences, some veterans needed to rethink their plans for their studies and career choices. This was a great service.

In our senior year, Alpha Delta Sigma, the national Professional Advertising Fraternity, who sponsored the annual student varsity show, Stunt Nite, was able to purchase an authentic Conestoga Wagon from a local farm and and business man. This wagon had been used for many years in an earlier era to haul freight between Philadelphia and Pittsburg.

President Lou Shenk presented it to Prexy Distler during a rainstorm at the Homecoming football game in 1948. It was used for college functions such as pep rallies, as well at civic and patriotic parades.

Some years ago, an alumnus, Richard Waitnight '60 made a gift to the College to have the wagon refurbished.

It now sits in the atrium of the Fitness Center.