

Class of 1954 History

By Rev. Daniel W. Reid

My fellow Germantown Academy classmate Dick Hanscom and I moved into 522 Hartman Hall in mid-September, 1950. Hartman Hall was the Freshman dorm, the former Franklin and Marshall Academy. The former chapel was made into three floors of small but adequate dorm rooms, and I think we were on the top floor. Hartman Hall of course has long since been demolished.

What a cast of characters we had that year. Chuck Trentalange and Warren Wenner lived next door; and close by was Nick Ajay – who periodically went in back of Hartman Hall to crack his whip! Across the hall was Tony Cuccinello, who dimmed the lights in his room each night after dinner to swing and sway with Sammy Kaye. Then there was the unlikely pairing of 5'2" Ernie Schwehm – who once blew the hopped-up engine in his Model "A" drag racing on Route 30 on the way home – and 6'4" Ralph Cadman, who liked to look down on us and snarl, "You're really ugly. Are you taking ugly pills again?" Then down at the end of the hall was Dave Werner, who liked to do head stands leaning against the door; and, at the other end, the late Jesse Rubin, with whom I studied College Algebra. Bill Shugars and Joe Stine also got their start on that floor.

Then we had visitors from around the corner on the main floor. The late Bill Hooper was a regular, announcing his entry by starting to laugh as soon as he hit the hallway. And Alan Stoneback, who discouraged me from a career as a stand-up comic by telling me only one joke out of eleven was funny.

Life in one way was free and easy there at first. I remember one time an R.A. knocked at our door as four of us were engaged in a tackle football game in that tiny room. For some reason the folks below us were having trouble studying! When the Phillies won the 1950 National League pennant, we had the pictures of the players on one wall – subject to constant hoots from Yankee fan Tony Cuccinello. I won't mention what was on the other wall – except to say they came down on parents' weekend.

At the same time: this was the era of the Korean War, and many dropped out during or following that Freshman year to serve their country for two years. Those who started college without any sense of purpose gained it during those two years, which showed upon their return. An Air Force ROTC Chapter was instituted during that period, although at first those of watching their drills on Williamson Field wondered: "Are they on our side?"

That first weekend of orientation changed my life. Dick – who turned out to be a fellow Presbyterian – and I attended a movie downtown (there were downtown theaters in Lancaster then), then looked up the 1st Presbyterian Church on East Orange Street. Turned out the Pastor at that time was father of Dick's Pastor back home! I started to attend for the high and lofty reason that perhaps I would meet nice girls there to take to fraternity parties! Instead, it was there that God called me to the Christian ministry (I started out pre-

dental); and where the next year I met my wife – whom I married six days after we graduated!

Freshman orientation was very ritualized. We had to wear our “dinks” until Homecoming, and stay out of the quadrangle! We also took part in the annual Pajama Parade downtown, in and out of stores, kissing as many clerks as would let us! How times have changed.

Fraternity initiation was also rather extreme. “Hell weekend”, as it was called, involved – at least at the Phi Kappa Psi house - going without sleep from Friday night until Sunday night. I won’t go into some of the cute things the brothers had us do.

I moved into that big house at James and Nevin Streets for my last two years, and it was a tremendous growth experience. We had at least two ex-Marines (Scotty Burgoon and Joe Savastio come to mind); and the big thing I learned was how to accept and like people whose lifestyles I didn’t necessarily agree with. This is a valuable ingredient for the ministry. I paid for my board by working in the kitchen – alongside the late Roy Scheider, who got his start by playing in Green Room productions under Darrell Larson. There were two shows a year – and we all went to all of them. (Our first date, November 13, 1951, was to a Green Room production.)

In sports: the 1950 football team became the first F&M football team in history to go undefeated, whipping Gettysburg 52-20 on Thanksgiving Day. I did a series of articles for the Student Weekly on the history of F&M football, which got me noticed, and eventually on the Student Council. (One of my Student Council memories, when Buddy Spannaus was President, was going one evening in a group to then-President Theodore Distler’s house to protest something. Mrs. Distler came to the door to say Dr. Distler wasn’t feeling well, and could we protest another time? We left quietly – and never returned.)

I covered the swimming team under Coach McGinnis for the Student Weekly, which got me a memorable trip to West Point to swim against Army! (We lost.) I also found myself on the track team, on which, in the spring of 1952, we took third (out of twenty teams) in the mile relay in the Middle Atlantics. I ran third, behind Irv Jiras and Gil Brown, and ahead of Carl Yoder. The basketball teams, led by Gus Lovett and Dick Dunn, also did well during that period.

I wish there was room for more – such as a number of us reading to our now-deceased blind classmates Ralton Noyles and Alex Zazow. 220 of us graduated, with 25 receiving commissions as 2nd Lieutenants in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. Of these, as of April of this year, some 96, or 44% of the graduating class, are deceased. John Geist and Phil Long shared in receiving the prestigious Williamson Medal at graduation, the first time in the thirty-some years of the award that there were dual winners.

The groundwork for life F&M provided is revealed in what happened after graduation: some sixty classmates, 27%, entered one or another field of medicine. In addition: it is possible to trace close to another fifty that engaged in one form or other of graduate

education – so that more than 45% of the class earned degrees beyond F&M's bachelor's awards. This is truly a fine testimony to the great experience intellectually and socially we all received during our four years. I'm sure we are all indebted for the opportunity.