

Class of 1957 History

In 1953, when we arrived at Franklin and Marshall College, Dwight Eisenhower was president, the Yankees were rolling to the American League pennant, and a military movie set in the Pacific ("From Here to Eternity") won the Oscar. In 1957, when we left F&M, Eisenhower was president, the Yankees were rolling to the pennant, and a military movie set in the Pacific ("Bridge on the River Kwai") won the Oscar.

Very little change? Not exactly. In the intervening years, changes in attitude and action were foreshadowed by many events. Sen. Joseph McCarthy was censured by the Senate in '54; the U.S. agreed to train South Vietnamese troops in '55; the AFL and CIO merged in '55; the Interstate Highway Bill was signed in '56. We saw our first terrorist attack on an American landmark when Puerto Rican nationalists shot up the House of Representatives in '54.

But the biggest changes were those just beginning in the struggle for civil rights. The Supreme Court ruled school segregation illegal at the end of our freshman year; Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat in December of our junior year; and the first civil-rights bill for blacks since Reconstruction (voting rights) was passed a month before graduation – a week before Justice William O. Douglas delivered the North Lectures on the Bill of Rights.

The really big changes, though, were in ourselves, as we all realize. Our top memories? Some remember Prexy Distler's remarks at the opening convocation: "Look to your left and look to your right. At the end of this year, one of the three of you will no longer be at F&M." Then quickly came the wearing of dinks ... the stoppages by the sophomores to recite a Blue Book regulation ... the greased pole pants fight with the sophs ... the adjustment for some to 8 o'clock classes, for others to being on their own to study ... the first tests, when we found things weren't as easy as in high school ... the use of the fire escapes to dash out of Hartman Hall.

We struggled with the inability to have cars; some remember hiding them in the neighborhood; others remember learning the short cut from the train station through Armstrong Cork. Standing out are the freshman mixers with the girls schools in the area; some of us funded weekends at Wilson with \$20 blood-bank deposits, our first experience at real "banking."

The taste of food and drink lingers: the deli at Frederick and Pine, where a \$5 meal ticket bought a week's worth of dinners; steak 'n' cheese at Speedy's; beer at Hildy's; steamed clams at the Horse Inn; spaghetti at the Rose Bowl; a great cheap meal at the downtown Y. One could learn about psychology by studying local regulars at Hildy's like Hoover.

Fraternity memories dwarf all others for many: the dining hall at Lambda Chi Alpha, where one of Mrs. Noults' creations was rumored to be embalmed tortoise; the moving of a brother's locked car at Phi Kappa Tau from College Avenue to Williamson Field; the two-cookie dessert limit by Ernie at Chi Phi; the mothering by Helen "Honey" Rhodes at Phi

Sigma Kappa and generalship of Elsie Fenstermacher at Zeta Beta Tau; the reassembled piano at Delta Sigma Phi; the double national honor won by Kappa Sigma; the IFC football title earned by undefeated Phi Kappa Psi, as it ended Phi Sig's 73-game win streak; Phi Kappa Sigma's surviving despite shrinking to Jack Mowbray; Pi Lambda Phi's retiring the scholarship cup; Sigma Pi's toilet-bowl and ZBT's two-story Diplomat Homecoming displays. Also Hell Week (both ends); dressing for dinner in coat and tie and ratty pants; parties where good times rolled without a trashing of the house; IFC sings, skits and balls.

A variety of individual events are recalled by some: the early November snowstorm in '53 that wiped out the Ursinus football game; Hurricane Hazel in October '54, which brought down branches everywhere; the downtown Halloween ruckuses that Gamma Delta Iota advertised as a pledge party; the assembly speaker who identified students' home area by listening to them say a few words; the controversial visit by His Imperial Highness Otto; the flap over "Who's Who."

We remember the thrilling performances of upperclassmen Roy Scheider (we were so close to greatness) and Dick Orkin in the Green Room; the superb efforts of national runner-up Ron Flemming on the mat and record-setting Don Martin over the hurdles; Jay Powell and Bob Bostic captaining the football team as seniors to a 5-2-1 record; Jack Ziegler and Rudy Koenig leading the basketball team to a 14-6 mark in '57; the spirited performances of the college band and John Peifer's unswerving dedication to it; the starting of the lacrosse team through Mel Kopilnick's leadership and Stan Dudrick's funding efforts; the few young women on campus who brightened it and made it a delight to visit offices, like Fredine Gehman, Dolores Schott and Pat Young.

Remembering the president is a little difficult, since we had a different leader in each of our four years. One was William Webster Hall, known for his forgetfulness as well as his brief tenure. It was said he once took his daughter to the train and by mistake got on it with her. (Had he lasted longer, we might have a Hall Hall on campus.) Of Deans Mac Darlington, with his flying lab coat and motivational ability, and Dick Winters, with his accessibility and counsel, we have tremendously better recollections.

Indeed, by far the top memories seem to be of the professors who so influenced our lives:

Dick Stonesifer, who waved "the fickle finger of fate" in contemporary fiction class.

Thurman Philoon, hoaxed by his history class into giving a passing grade to the imaginary William C. Brundage, and lecturing with a cigarette in one hand and a PBK key in the other.

Art Shively, who set speed records with his tree test.

Albert Bell, who was so willing to tutor struggling business students.

Art Harriman and Paul Whitely, psychology profs who became known (for their specialty and walking style) as Ratman and Penguin.

Ray Adams, delivering English lectures in his southern drawl.

William Toth, and the stack of art books he brought to history class.

Donald Prakken, who provided some delicious Greek dinners in his home.

Sid Wise, who good-naturedly kept peeling off the Eisenhower stickers on his car.

Fred Brubaker, and his booming voice in speech class.

Fred Snavelly, who startled the freshmen by calmly drinking what they thought was the first chem lab experiment, and followed with other tricks

Fred Suydam, finally running out of patience on lab reports.

Ed Lancaster, carefully shepherding all the accounting majors.

And so many others: Bob Cross, Harry Lane, Charlie Spotts, Don Western, Vince Haag, Glenn Miller, Fred Klein, Nelson Francis, Elias Phillips, Luther Binkley, Dick Schier, John Vanderzell, Pete Foose, John Moss, J. William Frey, Charlie Holzinger, Hugh Gault, Darrell Larsen, and coaches like Woody Sponaugle, Bill Iannicelli, George McGinness, Roy Phillips.

But the most remembered prof, according to an unscientific poll, was Paul Pletcher (P.P.) Martin in German, who delighted in referring to Roger Cutt as Herr Cutt. We recall his "All aboard" yell when class was beginning; his throwing of chalk at inattentive students or banging a waste basket; his brandishing of a Luger; his scheduling of a class at 6 a.m. (when he locked the door); his introducing students to "Brigadoon" by way of "Germelshausen."

Martin served in Army intelligence during World War II; the country could use him there in 2007. And we are convinced that the college, despite its excellent current reputation, would be even stronger if it still had many of those profs of whom we have such great and grateful memories.