

Class of 1962 History

By Russ Vollmer

I guess because my memory seems to work better going backwards, i.e., more recent memories triggering earlier ones, these are offered in a kind of reverse chronology.

During our last year at F&M, we experienced a couple of the earliest protest demonstrations that would become common throughout the 60s and beyond. There was the demonstration in front of the President's house on campus during which many protestors threw eggs at then President Frederick deWolfe Bolman. I am not sure of the reason for this one, but hazy memory seems to point to something about the college itself. There was also a "Ban the Bomb" protest march through the streets of Lancaster and, to my horror, one of my English professors, Gerald Enscoe, was right there in front of the group! This was all new to us who grew up in the 1950s and looked upon our teachers, as we did our parents, as paragons of the normalcy. It was the beginning of the major cultural changes that took place in the decades to follow.

Outside of our classes, fraternity life was the major factor in our social life and some fraternity parties were legendary. Of course, rush parties were always a hit. At my fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha, we had our annual Heaven and Hell Party. This involved three different musical groups in the house: Hell was hot, rock n' roll music in the basement with red lighting. Purgatory was popular dance music on the main floor with mood lighting and Heaven was very soft, romantic music up in the third floor barracks with blue lighting glowing through angel hair on the ceiling. We moved all the furniture from those rooms either into storage or onto the front lawn and the house was decorated with appropriate symbolism (such as a mural of centaurs chasing maidens up the stairwell) for the event.

In 1960, the Green Room Theatre enticed then struggling actor, Roy Scheider, to return to campus from New York City and star in our annual Shakespeare play which that year was *Richard III*. Other actors in our many plays included local female Green Room regulars, Helen Frey, Barbara Kabajian and Emily Hoffmann as well as student actors: Hugh Remash; Ted Wohlson; Sean Cunningham, who later became a movie producer and director – the original *Friday the 13th* being his most famous production; Gil Knier, and Bill Ferry, to name a few. The Green Room's director was Darrell Larsen, to whom our yearbook was dedicated by its editor, Bill Ferry, was a legend in his time and the Assistant Director was Professor Ed Brubaker, a Shakespearian scholar, who always directed our Shakespearian productions. I remember one particular night, the radio was on as I was building sets in the Green Room shop and I heard the announcement that John F. Kennedy had won the presidential election against Richard Nixon. I remember thinking we were in for some big changes.

How about the Homecoming displays? Some of them were pretty elaborate projects since there was a display competition among the fraternities, too. One year, our fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha, won first prize with its animated chicken wire and crepe paper "F&M Eats the Bird" display of a giant Diplomat attacking a bantam rooster that was designed by our brother, Toby Dunn. (I forget which school's mascot the bantam was.) We brothers spent nearly an entire night before the weekend stuffing the wire with crepe paper and Toby working hard on the mechanism that drove the animation.

Being an all-male college in those days, our dates were either from home, “townies” from Lancaster, student nurses at St. Joseph’s Hospital on College Avenue, or girls from the several nearby all-female or co-ed schools: Linden Hall, Penn Hall, Wilson College, Hood College, Bryn Mawr, Elizabethtown and Swarthmore being some that I remember... Besides the traditional Homecoming, Parents and ROTC Weekends, we had others, such as Snowball Weekend in February and Spring Weekend in April. On Friday afternoons, especially of those weekends, you’d hear Kingston Trio music radiating from many open windows. The college hosted dances and all the fraternities were in full “college weekend” mode. At those weekend events and dances and at other concerts in Hensel Hall, we witnessed performances by such greats as Lionel Hampton & Orchestra, Duke Ellington & Orchestra, the Dave Brubeck Quartet and Carmen McRae.

Random Memories

Playing “Frisbee” on the lawn in front of the now vanished East Hall... Bermuda shorts were the warm weather attire of the day... Jackets and ties were required for dinner... As freshman, we had to attend Chapel, wear beanies on campus and be prepared to sing the Alma Mater on campus whenever ordered to do so by an upper classman... Getting our mail in the campus post office in Diagnothian Hall and having coffee in the coffee shop in the lower level of the Campus House a/k/a Distler Hall. Remember those cream filled donuts?... Mrs. Hook (“lovingly” referred to as “Mrs. Crook”) ran the bookstore upstairs in that building where the present book shop has returned after later relocations to the Steinmann College Center and College Square.... Dr. Anthony Apple was the college physician who tended to many illnesses and injuries in the infirmary that bore his family name that was constructed while we were there to replace the more primitive infirmary originally located in East Hall, where the college’s central administration offices were also located... Hartmann Hall housed most freshman with the excess “frosh” being housed in then, recently constructed Marshall-Buchanan Halls and the older, Myron & Dietz Halls... We could drive our cars onto the central campus in those days... Schnader Hall, behind Hartman Hall, was built during our tenure at F&M, as was the Mayser Gymnasium with its indoor, subterranean, dirt practice field... Richard Winters was the Dean of Students and the registrar was Nancy Rutter, whose large class matrix chart each year was quite complicated and defied understanding... The college recorder was Yvonne Gibbel... The college’s official laundry service was Mary MacIntosh and the food service contractor was Slater Food Service... We would buy our clothes at Filling’s Men’s Store on Lemon Street, near North Charlotte Street, and pizza from Zangari’s, also on Lemon Street... When meals on campus were not offered or suitable, we might eat at Lou’s Stationery and Luncheonette down from campus on W. Frederick Street past Lancaster Theological Seminary. (“You want peas with your steak sandwich?” his son, Henry would ask in a nasally voice.) Lou also kept a supply of *Playboy* magazines for sale, under the counter, of course... Further down that street was (and is) the legendary Hildy’s Bar and Tavern where “those old enough” would go for beer, sometimes accompanied by a pickled red beet egg from the jar on the bar or a Beef Jerky, and a game of table shuffleboard (or was it bowling?)... There were the Inter-fraternity athletic contests and the annual pledge week when some of us pledges had to attend classes in clothes we wore for the entire week, complete with broken eggs that had hardened in our pockets, and after little or no sleep at night... Geology field trips were always interesting when we would study the dynamics of creeks or chop at rocks

looking for fossils. Legend had it that if you found a complete Trilobite fossil, you got an “A” for the course....Seeing Board of Trustees Chairman, William Schnader being chauffeured in his black, 1955 or 1956 Chrysler 300, replete with hands propped on his cane and a dignified Hamburg hat, being driven right up the campus front driveway towards Old Main....Sports cars were common on campus, so sightings included MGs, Alfa Romeos, Austin Healeys, a Jaguar, a Mercedes Benz, a Morgan, some Triumphs and a couple of Thunderbirds and Corvettes...During our freshman year, when stuffing phone booths with college students was the rage, 32 of us fraternity brothers piled onto an Austin Healey owed by one of us and a photo taken that day made the Lancaster New Era. I joined sports car group after buying an MG-TD the summer before my junior year, which I drove at F&M in my last two years here. (That car spent a lot of time and money at the Prince & Water Street shop of the local MG dealer, Packard Lancaster, but it was a lot of fun, and I’ve since acquired another one just like it. (While it is said that some of us never learn, it is also fun to re-live one’s youth.)

Some Classroom Memories.

Our freshman English Professor, Dr. Robert Russell, who was blind, taught by the Socratic method. You never wanted to try and cut his class and have a fellow student answer roll call for you because Professor Russell knew everyone’s voice, where you sat (alphabetically in the classroom) and could pick an imposter out of a crowd. He even remembered me by my voice on commencement day, four years after I was in one of his classes! His was the most enlightening course I ever took. I admire him immensely and was delighted when he and his wife, Elizabeth, joined us for our 40th Class Reunion Dinner in 2002I remember Dr. John Vanderzell teaching most of his courses sitting on or leaning against the front edge of his desk as if having a conversation with the class. He made Government class interesting even for those who were not majoring in the discipline....Other memorable professors were Vanderzell’s fellow Government professors, Richard Schier and Sidney Wise, History professors, Thurman Philoon and Frederick Klein; Sociology professors, Jetse Sprey, Charles Holzinger and Robert Eshleman; Geology professors, John Moss, Donald Wise, Marv Kauffman and Reginald Shagam (with his distinctive “Aussie” accent) and Freshman Math Professor Clifford Marburger, to name a few. Their distinctive styles made learning at F&M such an interesting and often entertaining experience. (And, long after graduating, I came to know Chemistry professor, Fred Snavelly, a neighbor of my in-laws.)

As an erstwhile member of both the marching and concert bands in my freshman year, I’ll always remember John Peifer, who “fired” me from the marching band when I got a ride home one weekend and missed the football game. He was also an alumnus fraternity brother whose profession as an insurance agent became my own after graduation and joining our family agency. So, regardless of his firing me from the band, we remained friends and whenever I saw him upon later returns to campus, we would trade notes, spiced with a bit of cynicism about our industry. Much later, I was pleased to have been able to make a contribution to the Hensel Hall renovations in his memory.

I cherish these memories to this day because they were such an integral part of my life.