

Class of 1948 History

By R. Kenneth Pierce and Dick Luxner

Our Class was made up of a unique assemblage of young men. Some of us arrived on campus as freshmen in October of 1941, hardly thinking that we were not to graduate in 1945. Others joined the Class over the next several years; some started their higher education at other colleges and were sent to F&M to serve in the Navy V5 and V12 officer training programs. By 1943 316 from the Navy and 212 from the Marines were enrolled, many of them in F&M's rigorous pre-med and pre-dental programs. It is remarkable that of the total of 315 in our original Class of 1948 we have 20 MD's, 9 DDS's, and 3 DO's (as well as 13 PhD's, 22 JD's, 1 Ed.D, and 1 MLS). Surviving today are only 120 classmates.

But the U. S. declared war on Japan on Dec. 8, 1941, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, and Germany declared war on the U.S. on Dec. 11. In November 1942, the draft age was lowered to 18 and many of us enlisted in the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps, with the hope of staying to complete our college education. But it was not to be. On Saturday morning, February 20, 1943 about 100 of us Enlisted Reserve students were all called up at once and went to the Lancaster Rail Road station to board the train for Fort Dix, NJ. Johnny Peifer and the band were there, and he was quoted as saying, "They went away by train, and about ten or twelve people were all that was left of the band. We played for them as they left out there, and I'll never forget it. I started to cry, the whole band started. Here were all these guys gone."

A few selected reflections of the V-12 Cadet Corps experience:

- * Early morning calisthenics on Hartman Green, overcoming the obstacle course 'round Williamson Field, and the 22-foot jump into the water from the swimming pool rafters.
- * The Thanksgiving Day, 1943 football game lost to Bucknell after an undefeated season. The team included two Navy petty officers as well as regular F&M students. Little All-American track and javelin star, Bill Iannicelli, who as End caught many forward passes recalled, "Had we won that day, we would have gone to the Orange Bowl."

After the War several former members of the V5, V12, and Army Enlisted Reserve returned under the GI Bill. The College was attuned to the needs of older students and provided housing for the married ones. Some of us joined Prof. Fred Kline's Aero Club where we had the unusual opportunity to learn to fly and to earn our Private Pilot's License. We were taught by other returning veterans of the Army and Navy Air services.

Another few selected memories:

- * The champion undefeated wrestling teams of 1941 and 42 under Charlie Mayser.
- * Darrel Larsen's Green Room productions, including "Casey at the Bat," starring Cliff Chamberlain, and his own snarling portrayal of Sheridan Whiteside in "The Man Who Came to Dinner. He also taught the Public Speaking course and would yell at us if he couldn't hear us from his seat in the back row.
- * Prof. Foose in Geology who took us on geology trips and roamed over the rocks with his crutches so quickly we, even without crutches, could hardly keep up.

* Tough Prof. Frey in Physics where we had to buy the lab manual he had written and published himself.

* Prof. Weisgerber in Chemistry who had lost a thumb (from chemicals?).

* The “Student Weekly” newspaper where some of us could write political criticism, or parodies of Chaucer, if we liked, or other humor, or even unbiased reporting of campus, city or world affairs.

* Two of us have been honored with the F&M Alumni Medal for particularly distinguished service to our Alma Mater: Bill Iannicelli and Bill Simeral.