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THE BEGINNING OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES AT HARRISONBURG

TWENTY-TWO years ago, June 13, 1911, I sat in the shade of the apple trees which overhang the stage of the open air theater and read the prophecy of my class. Around me stood the other nineteen of that first group. Before us stretched the future. For each I painted a glorious one. For our Alma Mater, as she blessed us her first born, I dreamed dreams. It was a day of climax, the first achievement of Virginia's New Normal, the climax of our faculty's first endeavor, the climax to two years of expectancy, the hour when we at last received from our president, Mr. Burruss, our school pins, the badge of alumnae. This, he said, was the actual beginning of an endless chain of women who would ever be pouring forth to shed honor upon this, *our* Alma Mater.

That night on the stage of the courthouse amidst the plaudits of the town, we received our diplomas. The faculty, proud mothers and fathers, smiling classmates, white dresses and wilting flowers, diplomas proudly bedecked in violet and gold, were all crowded together in that great hour. It was the end!

Now after these years I am called back, not as a prophet, but as a historian, to recount for you who have followed us the story of the beginning.

There are four basic factors in the life of any institution. First, the buildings and its financial support; second, the faculty, their courses and work as teachers; third, the students and their interpretation of the whole thing; and fourth, those same students grown into alumnae and the success they make in life. Of these factors the stu-

dents, whether active or alumnae, are the most important. What they make of the buildings, what they say of the curricula, how they interpret the whole to the public; how they react to the experiences of college life, make that intangible something which permeates the institution and creates the atmosphere, the aroma of its life, which is in reality the college.

The Harrisonburg College, like other institutions, has changed with each new group of students, with each new building, with each new dominant faculty member, and with its change in administration. At each of these turns in its history it has stamped its impress upon the graduates: to each that impression is Harrisonburg.

My Harrisonburg

To me Harrisonburg is an apple orchard, two gray stone buildings, (Maury and Jackson Halls), a cottage, a laundry, a board walk, a high school, (two of us took chemistry at the high school, for chemistry was not taught at the college), a Chestnut Ridge (the rural demonstration school in which I did my practice teaching), a privet hedge, the C. & W. railroad trestle, a Mr. Burruss, a Mrs. Brooke, a Doctor Wayland or Mr. Heatwole, a Miss Sale, Miss Betty, Miss Annie or Miss Lila Cleveland, Miss Lancaster, Miss Loose and Mr. Johnston (theirs was the major romance of the first two years), Miss King and Miss Harrington, Miss Shoninger and Miss Bell, Miss Lyons, Black Willie, Page and Walker; Florence, Ethel, Tracie and Pearl, Virginia, Katherine, Annie and Louise, and a hundred other girls. Around these hover the memories that make this place mine.

From this nucleus the life of this college sprang. I was one of the first students to arrive. Miss King met us at the station.

There were surries galore and in the midst a four-seated carry-all. I chose this and there, perched high amid telescope suitcases, bandboxes and umbrella, I with about thirty other girls formed the first parade of normal girls the public square of Harrisonburg ever saw, *and they saw us*.

Everybody in Harrisonburg knew the Normal was opening. Triumphantly we rode up South Main Street, around to the corner of the dormitory (Jackson Hall). Marshalled about by zealous faculty committees, I finally landed bag and baggage in Room 21, my home for the next two years. That night we ate the first meal ever served in this college (the dining room was in the basement). We had baked apples ("shrivelled witches"). We continued to have baked apples until we had depleted the apple orchard, drunk the cider, and eaten the last "gnarl" from the Science Hall basement.

The next day (September 28, 1909) we registered. The preliminary organization of the faculty functioned. Each one at his station served us with a card. I can still see those cards, large ones, small ones, white ones, pink ones, blue ones—they had a card for everything. Having divested myself of fourteen dollars, the charges for one month's board, I shuffled my pack of cards and chose the color which stood for Household Arts. I little realized that in that choice I was making history. The five of us who chose household arts as a major that day were the first Virginia women ever to start training in a Virginia institution for that greatest of women's callings, home making education. (Three of us are still "old maids!")

Thus our college life started. Every one had an equal start; there were no old girls to steer us about; there were no organizations to flaunt their virtues in our face, only girls who had the faith to try a new school. As I look back at those first few days at Harrisonburg, and at the same period in Radford's history, I am struck with the

fact "that where there is no leader, a leader will arise." It was not many hours until leadership began to assert itself: certain faculty members became dominant, certain girls assumed responsibility, student ideas began to sprout. We registered on Tuesday. May I read you some extracts from my first Sunday letter home, written October 3, 1909? This letter gives you a student's account of that first week.

"I am having a hard fight to keep from being homesick and I think I shall come out victorious. Well, I have been having some great experiences in the past week. I shall never, never regret them. I mailed my last letter in the basket (a wire basket by the dormitory door) as I went to assembly for the first time.

We had a lot of men to make addresses. Some were very good, especially the prayer offered by Mr. Wayland. All of Thursday we spent in going to classes. At assembly all of the churches were represented by their pastors, who made addresses of welcome. Friday night there was a called meeting to form two literary societies. The decision was put off until next Friday when the faculty are to have a reception. After the meeting we played folk games and danced. Saturday I went to Manual Arts the first two periods, eight-thirty to ten. I hemmed napkins until dinner and cheered up homesick girls. After dinner I went down town again to get another clothes bag—I can't go down town again for two weeks—well, Saturday night the Bible class of our church gave a reception to Presbyterian girls—I wore my white dress. It was a swell affair. Perfectly beautiful dresses. The hostess wore a garnet dress trimmed in rich garnet velvet and gold braid. One of her daughters wore pink silk, the other green. The dresses of all the town people were fine. Most of the girls wore white. I had seven girls helping me dress. Really our room is full all the time. Virginia (my roommate) has the reputation of being the

prettiest girl in school. . . Behold your daughter a Sunday School teacher! they asked a friend and me if we wouldn't take a class to teach. I said I would. . . I think every young man in Harrisonburg has been out here this P. M. They act like they had never seen a girl. . . Oh, I am so glad I have such a nice roommate; some of the girls are so different. I have one friend who is 'most sick over her roommates, she is so homesick. . . We had cooked-to-death chicken today, and O dear, we have had chipped beef three times this week, twice in one day. We have burnt rice, potatoes and tomatoes or corn, and tough beef every day. The girls at our table form a family. I am father, Virginia mother, one girl is sis, another Bud, Pet, Baby. We have one vacant place for beaus, which I think will never be. . . Some of the girls seem only anxious to hear from some boy or other. . . I get up at six o'clock. Books cost like forty here. I paid \$1.40 for one book and thirty-five cents for notebooks. . . the girls are after me to wear a rat (hairpad), but I flatly refused and I solemnly mean to stick to it."

Thus through reams of such accounts I relayed the events of those first two years to my mother. From this source material, a diary, and a memory book, I have culled the story of the organization and the early development of those student activities which still exist upon this campus.

Literary Societies

Two literary societies were organized the second week of school (October 8, 1909); a faculty committee, Miss Cleveland and Dr. Wayland, named them "Lee" and "Lanier." They selected twenty charter members for each. It fell to my lot to be a Lee. Rivalry started at once. Each organization took on an identity: the Lees a fearless independent type, while the Laniers were more temperamental and literary. Dr. Wayland became Lee advisor and Miss Cleveland led the Laniers. With much

seriousness we drew up constitutions; one point of contention arose over limiting the membership to the societies. This was settled in the first public debate held March 5, 1910. Four of us, representing the contending forces, debated: "Resolved, that membership in the literary societies should be limited to fifty." For weeks we surveyed the colleges of the state and nation for precedent upon which to base argument.

Senator Conrad was one of the judges and in sad defeat my colleague and I went down and limitation lost. Years later the membership was limited and the Page Society organized.

Much of the early social life of the college centered around these two societies. Each held receptions for the other, gave special programs, and the Lees were entertained at an elaborate reception on January 19, 1910, by the Daughters of the Confederacy.

The selection of a pin was a problem. The Lees got their original design of the open book and sabre finally worked out in the spring of 1911.

Young Women's Christian Association

The Y. W. C. A. was organized by Miss Oalooah Burner of the National Board. She visited the school the week of October 17, 1909. She explained the organization to us. Miss Lancaster became advisor and a cabinet was elected.

In those days everybody went to everything. The Y. W. weekly meetings were held in the assembly hall (the present chemistry laboratory). This room, the largest on the campus, served as an auditorium, gymnasium and student meeting place. Walker (the janitor) and students were kept busy shifting the chairs back and forth. The Y. W. was primarily religious. We soon had Bible and Mission Study groups, meeting in various rooms of the dormitory. The cabinet held many meetings. They were always making a budget or trying to keep our feeble little group consistent with the elaborate committee system suggested by the

National Board. We had many of their representatives to visit us. Each visit was like a revival to our fainting spirit. But by much persistence this organization took a most important place in our life.

Under its auspices our first student representative (Katherine Royce) was sent to a convention. Such a consternation her trip caused! We all assisted in her packing and in getting her started. Faculty as well as students were apprehensive of this first fledgling pushed from the nest into the courts of the experienced. We listened with wide-open wonderment to her reports of this territorial conference of the Young Women's Christian Association which met in Richmond, but we were more solicitous as to how she had impressed the representatives of other colleges. Harrisonburg's reputation was at stake. Pride in our school and faith in its superiority marked us from the beginning.

Class Organizations

Our class organizations were entirely unique. There were only thirty-eight students in that first group who had completed high school. The majority therefore were in high school classes. Them we dubbed Third, Fourth and Fifth Year Class. Those above the secondary level were classified according to curriculum major. It was here that war centered between the so-called professionals (those working for certificates) and those of us who were called industrial or special, (the household arts, kindergarten, manual arts, and one year specials). Each little group had its organization knit together by an intense loyalty. A major issue arose over raising money for representation in the annual. Each group staged an entertainment. In this connection the first play, Miss Fearless and Company, was given by the professionals. The Households Arts followed with a "Stamp Evening" from which we realized about \$40.00, the largest amount of money raised by any entertainment that year.

In spite of the animosity and rivalry of the first year, by the end of the second it had died, and united we stood in that first class of twenty graduates. Never was a class so fêted. The biggest events were a picnic at Mr. Heatwole's farm and a banquet at Massanetta Springs.

The Schoolma'am

The first talk of an annual was launched in general assembly February 2, 1910. I think it was of faculty origin. A month later we had a staff elected and work started. Naming the book was very carefully considered. All were given an opportunity to compete in suggesting a name. "The Schoolma'am," when proposed by Miss Cleveland, was accepted by acclamation as the only name that would ever do. It is a far fling from the simple little Schoolma'am of 1910 to her elaborate successors of recent years. Yet within her covers she holds the romantic achievement of my life, "The Grave Between," penned at midnight in the bathroom of Jackson Hall. The poems and stories of that first annual are the labored contributions of "Special English," a remedial English course taught by Miss Betty to the whole school as the feature of assembly two days a week. Every one took it until she could cram enough spelling to be excused. When the annual came up, we were given one month in which to write a story and a poem. On the night before these were due, the literary genius of the inmates of our corridor burned until the wee small hours in the bathroom.

Athletics

We were introduced to "gym" the first week of school, when "Dr. Spitty" (Dr. Firebaugh) thumped our hearts and Miss Loose (Mrs. Johnston) measured us for suits. And such suits as we had! Blue serge bloomers, two yards full, with blue serge waists, carefully buttoned together and cut with conservative square necks and elbow sleeves. Gaily attired in these, we

waved Indian clubs and dumb bells to the rhythmic count of our instructor. The athletic program emphasized basketball and tennis. There were many teams with ferocious names; some really played on the outdoor court which was near the site of this building. The Pinquet and Racquet Tennis Clubs were quite active. In the spring we had a tournament to determine the winner of a silver trophy cup given by Mr. Johnston and some other gentlemen of the town. The Pinquets won that first year. Where is that cup now?

Dancing

A German Club was organized during the first month of school. This club sponsored dances among the girls. The climax of its glory came on December 16, 1910, when we had the first "man dance." Mrs. Burruss and some ladies of the faculty made all the arrangements, invited the men, and made out our programs. Oh, it was thrilling! Mr. Logan, then a gay gallant of Harrisonburg, was one of my partners.

Glee Club

Music has always been stressed by this college. During the first year a glee club was organized under the direction of Miss Lila Cleveland. The members practiced and sang with great credit "Merry June" and "Pond Lilies" at Harrisonburg's first commencement, June 14, 1910. Governor Mann was the speaker. We all wore white dresses, but there were no graduates.

Discipline

We had Faculty Government, personified by Mrs. Brooke, our matron and housekeeper. Mrs. Brooke had rules which we got by absorption rather than in printed form. She presided over us with the gracious dignity of a cultured lady and held us to Victorian standards of dress and decorum. She was elderly, stout, with beautiful white hair, immaculately dressed in black with dainty white turnovers to her high collars.

I see her still as she parted the green curtains to shoo us into submission, or her shocked expression and personal anguish at our crude sense of fun, abnormal appetites, or unfinished toilets. She patrolled the halls and at most unexpected moments would appear to admonish us. She had a way of ending all interviews with a "hey-hey" giggle, which in time became the pass word of the students. Mrs. Brooke held court after dinner in the dining room. Here we pled our cause and received our permissions. We were allowed to go to town once in two weeks. Hence most of our life was confined to the campus. We were expected to go to church at least once on Sunday. There was very little Sunday studying. After dinner we were supposed to stay in our own rooms, or go walking "over the hill" or to the trestle, but never to town or on the pike. We had very few "dates." It was quite difficult to get a man passed by Mrs. Brooke; if you did, it caused so much consternation that few girls ever made the effort.

We did not sleep out of our rooms; only once did this become a major issue. Halley's Comet appeared in the heaven. After several fruitless efforts to see it from the porch rooms, we moved ourselves upstairs and doubled up. At 2:00 A. M. we aroused the dormitory to see this glory of the heavens. Mrs. Brooke was horrified, but we scored when she discovered Mrs. Burruss in our midst. Mr. and Mrs. Burruss had an apartment on the second floor of the dormitory; they ate in the dining room. Although Mrs. Burruss did not assume any responsibility for us, she was much beloved and we coveted her attention and counsel.

We knew nothing of student government, which was just then being tried in a few Southern colleges. One Saturday morning, however, some girls having heard there was such a thing, proposed we have it. A great mass meeting was held with fiery speeches against faculty control, and the clarion cry

for freedom went forth. But it never got outside the door and I suppose to this day few of the faculty know of that meeting. In those days Harrisonburg was not ready for student government, and fortunately some sane students realized it and stopped the clamor.

On May 27, 1910, the faculty proposed the honor system for class work. This we adopted and without much organization except an honor committee we launched a campaign for high ideals of honesty in student work, which I hope has not waned to this day.

Miscellaneous

To us you owe your colors: they almost were red and blue. But the royal hue of purple and gold we handed on to you. Dr. Wayland explains the selection of the school colors as originally violet and gold. One color each was taken from the colors of the literary societies, gold from Lee and violet from Lanier. For you we planted trees but saplings, now full grown. The Maple planted by the class of 1911 is the central tree of the circle by Jackson Hall. To us came our Alma Mater "Blue Stone Hill" and "Shendo Land," penned by Dr. Wayland. These we sang first and sent their call to you.

To us there is a memory, too sacred to reveal to you, of friendship, hopes, and stirred ambition, of happy days and dreams come true.

Although my Harrisonburg is not your Harrisonburg and our ways seem strange to you, yet my Harrisonburg made your Harrisonburg. Now the future Harrisonburg rests with you.

May I in conclusion read a part of the prayer offered by Dr. Wayland at that first assembly twenty-three years ago? It is just as appropriate now as it was then:

"Bless all who have labored for this school hitherto, and all who shall labor for it henceforth in any capacity. Bless the school; may it become a sacred place—a shrine, as it were, de-

voted to liberty and to truth. Standing upon this hilltop, under the rising sun, may it grow as a mighty oak or a cedar of ancient Lebanon, and in its shelter may health and gladness abound. Like the hills and mountains round about it, may it be strong and steadfast; like the skies that smile above it, may it be boundless in its compass and ever full of light; like the hills and plains that surround it, may it be both fruitful and beautiful; like all the works of righteousness, may it be fostered and blessed of God.

Give these, thy servants who teach, knowledge and wisdom and power; give the Trustees of the Commonwealth, who shall direct us, foresight and wise discretion; may all labor unto thy glory and the good of mankind.

And now, O Lord, as we end our petitions, we voice one more special prayer. Bless these young women in their lives and in their work. They hold in their hands the cure of many ills, the key to many joys; and they too are standing at this hour in the dawn of a great future. The skies are bright above them, and hope calls them forward. Give them grace and strength and wisdom, O Lord, and guide them into usefulness and all those forms of special service for which Thou hast so richly endowed them. Give them hearts of love and sympathy and sincerity, and through them bless the land—the State, the Nation, the World, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

M'LEDGE MOFFETT.

PRAYER

I do not ask a truce
With life's incessant pain;
But school my lips, O Lord,
Not to complain.

I do not ask for peace
From life's eternal sorrow;
But give me courage, Lord,
To fight, tomorrow!

There are few worthier careers than that of advising and aiding young people through their adolescent years. Had our pious citizens spent on such counsellors the hundreds of millions they have wasted on foreign missions, our land would be much better off today.

WALTER B. PITKIN