Reigelman

1 What would you say was the main concern of W&M students in the early '60s? Jobs after graduation? Social life? Grades?

How involved or interested were students in national issues such as the 1960 election, civil rights, the Cuban missle crisis?

What kind of attitude did the students have about W&M and their role here?

You may not have known this firsthand, but was it commented upon by other students?

In 1960, how did students receive the new president?
-Was there an observable change from Chandler?
-Was Dr. Paschall accessible to students in early years?
-Did you see any change in the student attitude toward Paschall by 1963? } 2

Did the system of the Colleges of William and Mary (either the establishment or the separation) have any bearing on the students at W&M, and if so, in what ways? } 3

Were the students of the early '60s at all upset over social restrictions the way the students would be in the later '60s? What were the "oppressive policies toward student activities and self-expression" that were creating the "stultified, apathetic atmosphere which hangs over the campus," as charged by the 1962 Flat Hat? } 4

How deep was the feeling among the students about expansion? This shows up frequently in the FH. ) 5

What made the Flat Hat the good paper it was in the early '60s? ) 6

Was the FH leading or was it reflecting student opinion in the early '60s?

Prior to the Blue Room incident was there any administrative control of the paper?
-What was the role of faculty advisors? How active were they? ) 7

-Would your answer to the previous two questions be the same for the period after the Blue Room?

Did the students see the communist speaker issue as a real issue of academic freedom or was it something deeper?

Was there disagreement on the editorial board about the editorial? If so, on what grounds?

Indexing Terms used

Reigelman, Milton Monroe 1960/64

Flat Hat -- 1960-1964

Student Life -- 1960-1964

Student Protests -- Blue Room Incident (1962

Was there any thought of not running the editorial after the conversation with Paschall and Lambert?

Was there pressure to retract the editorial in the next issue?

Was Paschall's reaction typical? Did he see it simply as a challenge to his authority? What did he object to: the speaker or the questioning of the administration? What was his explanation in the Blue Room?

Did many students know of the incident?

What was there in the nature of the Blue Room incident that blew it out of proportion?

Had there not been a communist speaker issue, would there have been another catalyst?

Was this the end of Paschall's honeymoon with the students?

Do you view the whole situation differently now than you did in the fall of 1962?

As a result of the Blue Room or perhaps other factors was the accessibility of the administration (and the president specifically) to the students as a whole or to the FH changed?
-Were students' attitudes changed?

What effect did the Blue Room incident have on the editorials or the staff of the FH as long as you were on it? Did it have an effect on the paper in succeeding years?

Was it true, as the Nov. 15, 1963, FH said in an editorial note to the article by Bruce Potter, that failure to understand the academic freedom controversy was failure to understand William and Mary? Why or why not?

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1 January 1977

Emily Williams
William and Mary oral history program
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Dear Miss Williams:

One of my New Year resolutions was to catch up on things which I have put off, this being example #1. I've numbered your questions, and will key my answers to them to avoid repetition. (I've just read through the old file of Flat Hats (it's extremely embarrassing to see things you wrote in "less mature" days) so everything is fairly fresh in my mind.

Here goes:

1. The early 60's at W&M seemed to me a more "normal" time than the present. Students viewed the college (pretty much) as a place to prepare for a secure later life, I think. By the junior year at least we were thinking, if only vaguely, about careers and job possibilities. For many of the men, including me, the ROTC program meant that for at least 2 years after graduation we'd have a job--and this was before Viet Nam, of course, so this kind of job was considered somewhat dull but solid, secure, fairly profitable. Social life, I think, was more important then than it is presently for students (the college I teach at--Centre--is roughly analogous to W&M then--small, liberal arts, residential). The fraternities were immensely important, as were the sororities. From my individual perspective, the Greek system was the bane of William and Mary life then; I later wrote an editorial asking for a radical change into "eating clubs." They were segregated as to types of students (Sigma Nu for animal jocks, Kappa Sig for jocks with academic and social pretensions, Phi Delt for swimmers and "cool" dressers, Pi Lamb for jews and northern liberals, SAE for those who became dangerous when drunk, etc.) Certainly there was an element of sour grapes in my perspective on them then--but they did seem to many non-Greeks as devisive, exclusive, and unfair.

The 1960 election caused a real stir on campus. I remember the debates being telecast on sets in the union to packed rooms, and much talk after the debates. When Bobby Kennedy came to Williamsburg he was booed by a faction of students, led by Allen Greenfield as I recall, trying to disrupt his talk, which they pretty well did. It was my thought that JFK never came to Williamsburg as president because of this--although I have no reason except my intuition to say that.

Most other events, such as the Cuban missile crisis, were important to people on the Flat Hat, the "intellectuals," and others but not to the campus as a whole as, say, political events were in the early 70's.

2. I recall that there was a great wave of good feeling when Paschall began his tenure the year I began mine. Chandler was regarded, at least by students in the know, as aloof, authoritarian, and slightly repressive. It was the feeling that Chandler had been named President only because of his father (this may be totally incorrect, but I'm talking about perceptions, not facts). Paschall seemed more open, more folksy, more accessible. By 63 many had come to regard Paschall as a politician who was

a necessary evil for the college. He was equated with parochial, rather than national or even humane concerns. This was true, it was thought, both in his vision of the college (we wanted it to be like Haverford or Princeton) and in specific courses of action, such as integration of blacks. Perhaps he was doing his job well, that is, getting money from the legislature. But to some, especially those on the newspaper, he was regarded as a mediocre person without the vision to turn W&M into the school we thought it should be. It was probably a serious distortion of the real situation, but I thought of him then as a political hack.

3. This had little bearing on students. It was regarded as simply one of many administrative shuffles. There was some thought that these "lesser" colleges shouldn't be part of William and Mary.

4. Generally students didn't take the restrictions on their own rights as seriously as later students would do. Many students didn't feel as if they had any rights. People like Al Volkman, who edited the paper my first year, and Bruce Potter, a columnist my last year, charged repression at various times, but there probably wouldn't have been widespread support for their position. The Flat Hat was probably the focal point for students who wanted change.

5. I think this issue was fairly important to most students. I can remember students on my hall in Monroe dormitory who wouldn't have cared who was President talk about how the college was turning into a huge, impersonal thing. It seemed to me to be the central issue facing the college; I was not aware that my editorials wouldn't have much sway with Paschall.

6. I'm not sure what made it good. A number of people associated with it had worked on other papers in the summer, or had decided to go into journalism--people such as Mason Sizemore (now w/ Seattle paper), Pete Crow (now owns his own papers in Oklahoma), Allen Brownfield (syndicated columnist), Al Volkman, Jerry Van Voorhis, Sandy McNair. Perhaps it was good in the early 60's because it tried to lead rather than follow campus opinion. The average student then, as now, wasn't much concerned with events outside his life--the paper tried to broaden his perspective to state and national affairs. Moreover, in the early 60's there was a feeling of a dynasty within the Flat Hat--when I took over as editor I first went back and read the papers of Volkman (60), Van Voorhis (61), Sizemore (62), and others further back, realizing that my job was to carry on the tradition established by these people. There was always a sense of real competition for the top jobs on the paper, also, which made them seem more important than they perhaps were. I always regarded myself, for instance, as much more important than any president of the student congress could ever be. They were always fraternity men who seemed part of the Paschall -"don't rock the boat" syndrone.

7. There was always someone called a "faculty advisor" I think, but he was never of any importance. One year Dr. Cecil McCulley served in this capacity; he would write long, single-spaced letters to the staff carefully commenting on various articles, grammar, etc.; the staff regarded this as quaint and a bit silly. Prior to and after the blue room, the paper functioned pretty much on its own. Paschall worked things so that we were our own censor. None of us would have worked on the paper any other way. We were very aware of our rights as journalists, and our opposition role to Paschall's administration; this of course increased after the blue room.

8. I'm not sure I understood very well what academic freedom was other than an important phrase. But Sizemore, Roger Swagler, Jim Truxell (and I) and others on the paper realized that this was a crucial issue in that it did show how different William and Mary was from campuses where intellectual ferment was more noticeable. In retroppect, I think I might now say that academic freedom was challenged on purely political grounds--Paschall didn't want anything to happen that might upset conservative state legislators on whom he depended and with whom he probably agreed on most issues.

9. The Blue Room is so crucial, I think, to understanding the college and Paschall in the early 60's that I'm going to give a couple of my impressions in some detail. Mostly I remember the meeting itself. We were very suddenly asked ("asked" is the wrong word, "commanded" is perhaps a bit strong, but close) to appear one afternoon in the blue room, a place most of us didn't know existed. We got there and Lambert was seated. I forget what he said, but I remember Paschall coming in (maybe he was already there--I'm not sure now) and beginning his tirade. I was struck by the fact that Paschall did all the talking; there was no chance for anyone on the paper to correct him, to give his side, to give extenuating circumstances, or anything. It was the decree of the inquisition. Paschall himself was irrationally wild--I remember thinking that the political cool and "honey" approach that I had respected him for being able to use well had disappeared. I don't remember the content of what he said so much as the way he said it, and the repressive "vibrations" in the room. Had he handled the situation differently, I think I would have understood no matter how harsh his position was. But because of his manner, I thereafter regarded him as an unprincipled, Machiavellian figure. I was never comfortable around him after he had done that. It is now some 14 years later: I still regard it as an outrageous, unforgivable action. Because of it, I came to feel that there were only two kinds of people in the world: people like Paschall, and people like those I knew and wanted to emulate. (Of course this is ridiculously simplistic, but events like the Blue Room often taken on that kind of perspective.)

In the Blue Room Paschall, as I recall, said a series of things had happened which could not continue. I think he named 3, although I only remember two: announcing a history professor's appointment at the college before the official date (his name had already been put on his office door when we made the announcement), and the editorial about academic freedom. Clearly it was that editorial that did it, although Paschall probably felt the paper needed a strong reminder of its place before that.

I would guess that only about half of the students ever even heard of the incident. Paschall's honeymoon was over before this as I remember; clearly, though, this was the symbolic event.

Dean Lambert, whom I always admired and respected (even during this whole thing) once told me that in 5 years what would be important to me would not be specific issues but the fact of having worked on the paper at all. He was wrong, I think. After 13 years that single issue still seems important. Because it was the issue which made it clear that W&M was not Princeton, or even U.Va. We probably shouldn't have thought W&M was [illegible] although we were aware that U.Va. was a relative late-comer, as was Princeton.

I think that after the Blue Room the paper became more polarized from the student body as a whole than previously. Any real communication between the paper and Paschall was of course ended. Even the next year when he once called me into his office to chat, it was clear to me that this ritual was painful even to him.

I can think of one specific effect the blue room incident had on me personally. Editors of the FH could name their successors pretty much, even though the Student Cooperative Committee (I think that was the name) officially selected them. There wasn't a clear choice to succeed me. Midway in the year I determined that Howard Busby--a person who hadn't really worked on the paper--could do it; I indicated to him that he would be a possibility, and began to groom him as best I could. Very shortly before the selection was made, I realized that Paschall would be pleased with my choice, since Busby was a nice, competent, socially popular student who could probably be "counted" on not to rock the boat, not to challenge Paschall in any significant way. I could see Busby having dinner with the entire Paschall family. So I did a really questionable thing: I decided Skip Bamen would be my choice. At the time I think I rationalized my choice on the grounds that Bamen was more imaginative, more likely to do a really good job rather than a competent one. In retrospect, I think I realized that Bamen would be less acceptable to Paschall, and would better carry on the anti-Paschall position of the paper.

One other thing. Many students on the paper viewed Paschall as rather benighted on race matters. We knew that this was the time of sit-ins. William and Mary had no blacks, and then a single black--a town student named Oscar Blayton. We decided to do a feature on him as "Student of the Week." Bruce Potter was going to do it, as I recall. For some other reason Paschall called him in; during the talk Potter mentioned that he was going to do a feature on Oscar. Paschall blew up, charging that we were trying to incite an issue, and would needlessly bring great wrath on the College. (This was Potter's analysis of the meeting; I had [redacted] reason to trust him.[redacted].) On that one issue, Paschall, it seemed to me, thought first of possible ill-effects on conservative (at the time I thought stupid) legislators. Why, I thought, doesn't he admit openly that the college recognizes the historic wrong done to blacks, and is making efforts to recruit them and integrate the campus. A man of vision, a man of real principle, I thought, wouldn't have wanted to keep even our one lone black hush-hush. At the time I remember members of the philosophy department (I was a major) bringing up an ex-president of the college, a man whose name I think was Thomas Roderick Drew (I may have it wrong). Anyway this man apparently wrote a long treatise proving that negroes were inferior to whites and should serve them. A Jefferson, I thought, wouldn't have thought in these reactionary, predictable ways. Drew & Paschall weren't a Jefferson.

Looking back, I think that Paschall served a very important purpose to the Flat Hat subculture of which I was a part. He served as a symbol of parochialism and even stupidity for us; that was one thing most of us agreed on. I suppose he functioned to unite us and make us work harder at turning out a paper.

I realize what I've just written about Paschall is one-sided and probably vastly unfair to the man. On the other hand, what I've written was a widely-held perception and therefore might be of interest to future historians or other people interested in the early 60's. If I can be of any further help I'll be happy to answer any additional questions if they arise. Meanwhile, I hope the project goes well; I'd like to do some research in the period myself when I retire in approximately 2006.

Cordially yours,

Milton M. Reigelman

Milton M. (Bucky) Reigelman
class of 65