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# Cremations, Canes, and Freshman Customs: One Hundred Years of Lehigh Class Traditions

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Cremations, Canes, and Freshman Customs:  
One Hundred Years of Lehigh Class Traditions

by

Janet Worsley Norwood

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

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This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History.

Cremations, Canes, and Freshman Customs:  
One Hundred Years of Lehigh Class Traditions

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	v
Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Sources and Historiography	7
Traditions, Social Control, and School Spirit	14
The Rise of Lehigh Class Traditions (1865-1920)	19
Calculus Cremation	23
The Cane, or Class, Rush	25
Freshman vs. Sophomore: A Tradition of Hazing	32
Freshman Rules	34
The Dink	36
Greater Lehigh, Greater Traditions? (1920-1940)	39
“Joe College” and “Joe Veteran” (1940-1960)	54
Goodnight, Sweet Dink (1960-1970)	58
In Conclusion: “Traditions Make Them Family”	63
Bibliography	65
<i>Curriculum Vitae</i>	68

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Calculus Cremation Invitation, Class of 1899	24
Figure 2.	<i>Eptiome</i> Illustration, “Four Classes”	28
Figure 3.	<i>Eptiome</i> Illustration, “Before Christmas, After Christmas”	38

## ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at class traditions of students at Lehigh University from the founding of the institution in 1865 until the early 1970s, specifically examining how and why they waxed and waned through the years. Traditions for and by students were readily embraced by the undergraduates. Examples included the Calculus Cremation, the cane rush, freshman/sophomore hazing rituals, and campus rules, such as the one dictating the wearing of a freshman hat known as a dink. In their purest form, in the hands of students, these traditions inspired class spirit and an identity as a “Lehigh man.” When administrators or faculty co-opted these traditions in order to gain control, the traditions quickly became contested within the community and faltered or failed. Traditions also withered when they ceased to inspire and motivate the student body.

“...Make fallow the freshmen’s minds for the future growth there of the Lehigh traditions which have proved their worth by surviving the test of time.”  
– 1935 *Brown and White* student editorial<sup>1</sup>

“When a tradition outlives its usefulness and fitness of its age, it should be abolished.”  
– Max McConn, Lehigh University’s first dean of students, 1922-1938<sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction**

In 2008, the Lehigh University Alumni Association introduced what it called “The Little Brown Box.”<sup>3</sup> The wooden, hinged box, emblazoned with the university shield, held a series of more than 40 cards, each outlining a Lehigh fact. One highlighted prominent Lehigh alumni. Another showed the school’s seal, offering the history of its elements – the heart, the book, and the sun – and Lehigh’s motto, *Homo Minister et Interpres Naturae*, which translates loosely to “Man, the servant and interpreter of nature.” Lehigh leaders through the years were covered, including the story of the school’s founder, Asa Packer.

One card, titled “old-school traditions,” read: “Out of deference to the upperclassmen, freshmen once were expected to follow extensive rules – most famously, that they had to wear their brown beanies (or “dinks”) at all times on campus.” Freshmen were also expected to keep off the grass, stay out of the library’s browsing room, always

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<sup>1</sup> “Attendez! Messrs. Les Frosh,” *Brown and White*, September 24, 1935. The *Brown and White* has been digitized and is available online at <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/browndwhite/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Officials Favor Plan to Abolish Frosh Customs,” *Brown and White*, March 13, 1931.

<sup>3</sup> The content of the Little Brown Box was researched and selected by students who were members of the Association of Student Alumni (ASA), a group managed by the Lehigh University Alumni Association.



wear black socks and a tie, and they were expected to carry matches at all times even though they were not permitted to smoke on campus. One last note: “According to the unofficial handbook, only seniors were permitted to smoke on campus.” The cards were presented to each class of incoming first-year students when they arrived on campus for orientation. The “Introduction” card stated, “Chance brings people together. Tradition makes them family.”<sup>4</sup>

This thesis takes a close look at student traditions, like those listed in the Little Brown Box, and the role they played in shaping new students into members of the Lehigh family. Of the many traditions that came and went through the years, I will examine class traditions in particular: those specific traditions practiced by students who shared a class year and moved through the institution together as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. While many other practices and traditions existed and continue to exist, especially around athletics and fraternity and sorority life, focusing on these class traditions offers the opportunity to understand how students saw themselves and how they vied for control, with each other and with the administration. What’s more, students’ acceptance, protests, or abandonment of these traditions can be examined to gain insight into shifts in Lehigh culture.

These class traditions, which were a mainstay in the years following Lehigh’s founding, are scarcely remembered today. This thesis considers why these traditions were initially embraced, the purposes they served, and what made them disappear. Specifically, I propose traditions were strongest in the hands of the student community, where they were used to inspire unity, carry forward the existing social hierarchy, and

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<sup>4</sup> Lehigh University Alumni Association, *The Little Brown Box*, 2008.

foster the identity of the “Lehigh man.” But when these traditions were co-opted by the university administration or failed in their purpose, they disappeared.

Class traditions were embraced by new students seeking to identify themselves as “Lehigh men” and were later passed on to the next generation in order to instill the same ideals in them. By imposing these traditions, upperclassmen also ensured new students knew their place and assumed the identities and roles dictated to them. These traditions were established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. At certain junctures in Lehigh history – the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, the post-World War II period, and the end of the 1960s shifts within the university disrupted the balance of power. In some cases, administrators stepped in to regulate or take over control of student-driven traditions, causing the traditions to falter and fade. In others, social changes among students rendered traditions meaningless. When their root purpose of creating unity and identity ceased to exist, so did the traditions themselves.

A few specific class traditions are under consideration here, all adopted at the university in the first few decades after its founding in 1865. One is the Calculus Cremation, in which sophomore students celebrated the end of the abhorred mathematics course by burning their textbooks. Another is the cane rush, in which students (usually freshmen versus sophomores) battled for possession of a cane. Similar traditions in the same vein included rushes around banquets and class photos, where the opposing side attempted to prevent the protagonists from holding their event. The third category is the tradition of freshmen rules – the ones cited by the alumni association’s Little Brown Box. In particular, the long-enduring rule requiring freshmen to wear a dink (a small, round hat) provides insight into the culture of Lehigh, the values and mindset of its students,

and the hierarchies of the classes, through the course of more than one hundred years. I will also examine the relationship between the freshmen and sophomore students, who often pitted themselves against each other. The concept of school spirit will also be explored as both a manifestation of traditions in action and a tool that motivated feelings of unity.

The social dynamics of Lehigh University were, of course, never constant. Outlining all the ups and down and subtle changes in class traditions through the entire course of Lehigh's history is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, an examination of four key periods in Lehigh's history allows for an examination of how class traditions changed over time. Alongside an initial discussion of college and university traditions in general terms, I will look at the earliest Lehigh traditions, which took root between the founding of the institution in 1865 and the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These could be said to represent class traditions at their strongest. A second period of interest was the mid-1920s through the 1930s, when a newly strengthened Lehigh administration inserted itself into determining what it meant to be a Lehigh man. The resulting shift in the distribution of power revealed itself in contested traditions. Another time of change comes after World War II, when the ranks of Lehigh students swelled with the arrival of veterans taking advantage of the GI Bill – veterans whose willingness to submit themselves to the existing power structure was in question. Finally, I will briefly touch on the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Lehigh traditions were no longer able to help enforce control and shape identity in the face of America's rising social revolution – not to mention the arrival of co-ed education on campus.

Through these periods, many factors affected the way class traditions were shared and received at Lehigh. The demographics of the university is one consideration, especially the total number of students and their socioeconomic status. The university experience also plays a role. The percentage of students who lived off campus, the range of their available activities, and how students spent their spare time were all factors in how traditions were used. The ways that university administrators interacted with students were also important, since the directives of university leadership intersected with the rules that students set out for themselves and their classmates. Of course, the world beyond Lehigh's campus also influenced students, their attitudes, and their campus roles.

This work is important for a number of reasons. As the Little Brown Box project indicated, there is ongoing interest in the traditions of Lehigh University, even those that have long disappeared. Whether they are considered whimsical or ordinary, these traditions are part of the fabric of the institution's history and should be noted and remembered. While college traditions are documented here and there in other Lehigh University histories, none specifically follow class traditions through the years. Traditions are also widely appreciated because of the insights they can provide into an institution's culture. Each tradition serves a purpose for the university. A tradition may help new students connect and bond with each other. It may allow an upperclassman to assert power over a freshman, ensuring the hierarchy of power remains intact. It may demonstrate students' independence, or rebellion. Other scholars have examined the roles and purposes traditions play at various institutions and a few have tackled freshmen rules, hazing, and even the fashion sense of college students. However, Lehigh's class traditions, including first-year rules and the dink, have not been examined in terms of

their dynamic meaning. Finally, even more important than a review of the traditions themselves is their value as a reflection on the evolution and growth of the institution. Lehigh changed through the years, and so did what it meant to be a “Lehigh man.” Class traditions provide insight into those changes, allowing for a greater understanding of the culture of the university over time.

### **Sources and Historiography**

Lehigh shares a history similar to many of its peer institutions, and the kinds of traditions being explored here were common among the schools, having been passed along by networks of students. For this reason, the scholarship focused on the history of American education and the student experience is valuable. This research provides context for a close look at Lehigh traditions, providing an understanding of how colleges and universities developed and the kinds of students who attended college and what they hoped to gain. These works also include observations on the purposes of traditions and the ways in which they served the students who upheld them.

Many works on the subject are broad and sweeping, touching only briefly on campus culture and traditions. In *American Higher Education: A History*, Christopher J. Lucas used ancient Mesopotamia as his starting point, then proceeded to medieval and Renaissance institutions before looking at American universities through the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> His work ends with the profound but perhaps unsatisfying sentiment: “*Plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose* – the more things change, the more they remain the same.”<sup>6</sup> Laurence R. Veysey’s *The Emergence of the American University*, focused more

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Lucas, 316.

narrowly on institutions within the United States between 1865 and 1910. His perspective concerned the evolution of academics, academic freedom, and the structure of the American institution, but gave little attention to the culture of the students.<sup>7</sup>

In *The American College and University: A History*, Frederick Rudolph documented how institutions of higher learning developed, taking into account economic, political, and cultural factors.<sup>8</sup> Rudolph began his book with an account of the Colonial era, then touched on America's shift from agrarian to an urban society, industrialization, the funding of land-grant colleges through the Morrill Act of 1862, the secularization of higher education, and the ongoing struggle of universities to respond to the needs and demands of their students. In the years after the Civil War, a movement arose in support of technological and scientific education. Industrialist Asa Packer founded Lehigh in the midst of this trend, which arose while he was seeking an outlet for his philanthropy.<sup>9</sup>

Rudolph focuses on the structure of higher education, including the training of professors, changes in curriculum and the rise of electives, and the organization of university administrations. He does touch on the nature of students and how their needs drove the character and culture of their institutions. According to Rudolph, college in the 1860s was not about securing a job, but developing a network. These young people, often from wealthy families, were not reliant on the outcome of their scholarly pursuits for their vocation. Instead, they sought connections with other men of similar status, creating relationships that would serve them once they graduated and returned to the family

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<sup>7</sup> Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965).

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

<sup>9</sup> W. Ross Yates, *Lehigh University: A History of Education in Engineering, Business, and the Human Condition* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1992), 22.

business. “Now what mattered for so many young men was not the course of study but the environment of friendships, social development, fraternity houses, good sportsmanship, athletic teams,” wrote Rudolph.<sup>10</sup> From their need to network and test each other’s mettle came university traditions such as cane rushes and class competitions, as well as athletics. Rudolph explored football in particular, which in by early 1900s had become a violent sport in the hands of the students. Alumni and administrators stepped in, institutionalizing university athletics and providing structure and rules for the games, as well as staff and funding. In doing so, they began to fulfill a need once satisfied by traditional student-driven clashes and contests.

John Thelin, author of *A History of Higher Education*, also offered a broad overview of the evolution of institutions of higher learning, building on Rudolph’s work.<sup>11</sup> His stated aim was to shed light on less traditional venues of higher education, including women’s colleges, historically black colleges, and community colleges, and to dispel some of the more traditional thinking about the historical evolution of institutions. He also used sources beyond the mainstream, including architecture, college legends and mottoes, magazine covers such as *Life*, fiction like F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise*, and memoirs.

Thelin spent more time on student life and campus culture than Rudolph, discussing college songs, mascots, student fashions, and the rise of the “Big Man on Campus.” While he did not delve deeply into any one of these subjects, his observations regarding the evolution of student activities are worth keeping in mind when considering how traditions wax and wane on campus. He wrote, acknowledging Rudolph’s work,

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<sup>10</sup> Rudolph, 289.

<sup>11</sup> John R. Thelin, *A History of Higher Education* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

“...student-initiated activities had a discernible life cycle. In the initial stage, an activity would surface informally and even spontaneously among undergraduates. If a particular activity enjoyed sustained popularity, it attracted scrutiny from the administration and then attempts at either official abolition or control.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, students would devise activities (or traditions) in order to fulfill a particular purpose within their experience. When it became too visible, university leadership would step in to assert their authority. Administrative involvement generally resulted in the students’ abandonment of the project; when students relinquished control, voluntarily or involuntarily, to administration, the activity or tradition tended to fade as their ownership and stake diminished. It is a pattern also seen throughout Lehigh’s history, and a phenomenon useful to understanding why some traditions ultimately disappeared.

The scholarship of Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz is steeped in the examination of student life on a college campus through the years. She focused on the development of undergraduate student culture in her book, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*.<sup>13</sup> Like other scholars, she noted that when the United States became an industrialized nation, apprenticeships and vocational training waned. More young men, many of them wealthy, turned to colleges in order to prepare themselves with professional and technical knowledge. While poorer students were inclined to buckle down and follow the rules, wealthy students were more interested in developing networks and connections than in academics. These mainstream students were categorized as college men. Yet other categories existed, she proposed, including outsiders and rebels. Outsiders tended to be more studious, leveraging the opportunities

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<sup>12</sup> Thelin, 65.

<sup>13</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).



of a college education for post-graduations gains. Rebels, on the other hand, opposed the system. These iconoclasts had little concern for their reputations as students or their coursework. Decrying uniformity, they battled their classmates and college administrators alike.

Horowitz followed her categories of students through the decades, ultimately examining modern campus culture through the lens of generational change. Horowitz specified that she was talking about broad experiences and casting a wide net, comparing her work to aerial photography (the only perspective from which the high level trends can be seen). Her purpose was to provide greater understanding of the evolution of college life, so that alumni, students, and parents today do not become bound to historical structures and hierarchies such as fraternities, which she considers an unhealthy holdover from the often-violent masculine culture that developed at many universities in their earliest days. She wrote, “As students in college today reshape their cultures perhaps they will be able to create forms appropriate to their own experiences and not to that of their great-grandparents.”<sup>14</sup> Through her work, she urged the creation of new enlightened campus cultures that were not beholden to the past.

Instead of focusing on the different characteristics of undergraduate students through the decades, Simon J. Bronner, a folklorist, took a close look at higher education traditions in and of themselves. In “The Rise and Fall – and Return – of the Class Rush,” Bronner examined social control, hierarchy, and identity as the reasons for violent aggression among students, then and now.<sup>15</sup> In *Piled Higher and Deeper*, its title a nod to a joke acronym for Ph.D., Bronner looked at the hierarchical structure of academia and

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<sup>14</sup> Horowitz, xiv.

<sup>15</sup> Simon J. Bronner, “The Rise and Fall – and Return – of the Class Rush: The Study of a Contested Tradition,” *Western Folklore* 70, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 5-67.

the social trials that students must endure to prove themselves worthy of a degree.<sup>16</sup> In addition, his book, *Campus Traditions: Folklore from the Old-Time College to the Modern Mega-University*, brought together his research on a wide range of college activities ranging from freshman hazing to senior graduation ceremonies.<sup>17</sup>

When it comes to university class traditions, Bronner provided the most focused research and writings. His work belies his fascination with sometimes quirky traditions, dissecting the class rush, dinks, campus myths and legends, school spirit, sports, songs, and more. Yet Bronner offered more than descriptions of these activities. He also provided insights into why traditions exist, offering sociological and psychological reasons for higher education rituals. He speculated on identity formation and questions around masculinity, aggression, and hierarchy. Bronner also looked into the origins of the traditions. Of course, he did not address Lehigh traditions specifically, but his work is valuable as a way to understand the reasons behind student behavior and attitudes as they changed through the years. Other scholars follow the same vein as Bronner in other areas. For example, Deirdre Clemente took a deep dive into college fashion and its meaning in her article, “Caps, Canes, and Coonskins,” which looked specifically at Princeton University styles.<sup>18</sup>

One early example of writings about Lehigh University would be the work of Catherine Drinker Bowen, daughter of Lehigh president Henry Sturgis Drinker and wife of a professor. Bowen grew up on the Lehigh campus, where her father had been a student himself during the 1880s. Her memoir, *A History of Lehigh University*, painted a

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<sup>16</sup> Simon J. Bronner, *Piled Higher and Deeper* (Little Rock: August House Publishers, Inc., 1990).

<sup>17</sup> Simon J. Bronner, *Campus Traditions: Folklore from the Old-Time College to the Modern Mega-University* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Deirdre Clemente, “Caps, Canes, and Coonskins: Princeton and the Evolution of Collegiate Clothing, 1900-1930,” *The Journal of American Culture* 31, no. 1 (March 2008), 20-33.

vivid portrait of the campus and its people as it existed in its earliest days through 1921. Her writing is witty and genuine, showing her personality and charm. Her voice and first-person perspective brought turn-of-the-century Lehigh to life. Her comments on Lehigh traditions make her writings a valuable complement to the important but more general observations of other scholars in the realm of higher education.

Another Lehigh resource is *Lehigh University: A History of Education in Engineering, Business, and the Human Condition* by W. Ross Yates.<sup>19</sup> Yates, who was a faculty member, offered a survey of the university's history from its founding in 1865 to 1980, in which he covered many milestones ranging from presidential transitions and curriculum changes to the establishment of new colleges and major building projects. In each section, he conscientiously documented news of the main characters in Lehigh's story: the faculty, the administration, the alumni, the students, and the campus itself. His book remains to date the most complete and definitive history of Lehigh. Combined, these sources provide a survey of the culture of higher education generally, and Lehigh specifically, as it developed after the Civil War and through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, to understand Lehigh class traditions and how students perceived them, one must also seek out the Lehigh student voices. They are found in student publications, including the *Brown and White* student newspaper, the *Epitome* yearbook, and a literary magazine called *The Burr*. These publications included songs, poems, letters to the editor, cartoons, and other articles referencing class traditions and student attitudes. The university's alumni publication, *The Lehigh Alumni Bulletin* provided documentation of many Lehigh activities as well as commentary by graduates. Lehigh's collection of

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<sup>19</sup> W. Ross Yates, *Lehigh University: A History of Education in Engineering, Business and the Human Condition* (Lehigh University Press: Bethlehem, 1992).

freshman student handbooks clearly laid out class rules and showed how these traditions changed through the years. Almost all of these sources were created by students (or former students) themselves and represent first-person impressions of Lehigh's traditions and its culture. Through these voices, and some added writings of administrative deans and presidents, we have the best opportunity to get to know the students of Lehigh's past and understand how they saw themselves, their classmates, and their institution.

### **Traditions, Social Control, and School Spirit**

Where do traditions come from, and what are their uses? Before examining specific Lehigh traditions, it is helpful to consider what traditions are and how they might serve as a source for a common identity and a tool for social control. By understanding the role and meaning of traditions, it becomes easier to see the circumstances under which they are adopted, as well as the reasons why they are abandoned.

Sociologist Edward Shils, whose work focused on the sociological aspect of traditions, defined traditions as beliefs with a social structure – that is, a belief that is shared and passed along by a society through generations or over a long period of time: “Those who would explain why a particular action is performed or a particular belief accepted say that 'there is a tradition ...' which motivates or elicits the desire to act or believe in that way; the matter is left at that.”<sup>20</sup> Those who are new to a community, social circle, or institution are given these beliefs by an established member of the group so that they can understand their new place and keep the existing order. Here is his description of that process:

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<sup>20</sup> Edward Shils, “Tradition,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13, no. 2. (April 1971), 123.

A person who arrives in a situation which is new to him – a person taking up employment in an organization in which he has not been previously employed, a student entering a university which he has not attended previously, a recruit into an army unit or an immigrant into an alien society – comes into an ongoing situation. He must become or do something which he had not previously been or done and he will so do by acquiring beliefs which are already believed in his new environment or by performing actions which are already being performed in his new environment. Those who are already there seem, more or less, to know what to do at each moment, they know what is expected of them and they know how to meet those expectations.<sup>21</sup>

Herein lies an important purpose of traditions: to provide a level of structure to newcomers to an organization. Shils wrote that many newcomers embraced traditions, not necessarily because they respected their longstanding history, but simply because they were comfortable with the idea of living within the existing order. Yet according to Shils, traditions do evolve when those keeping and preserving the traditions perceive them to be inadequate in some way, or when those receiving the traditions deem them unacceptable.

Folklorist Simon Bronner also wrote about the value of traditions for newcomers:

Every day people are involved in events they recognize as traditional, and at the same time they look to establish precedents for traditions of the future. They do so because tradition fuels their culture. It provides the precedents by which they make their cultural choices and locate themselves in place and time... In short, tradition informs people where to begin and guides them on how to proceed.<sup>22</sup>

W.H. Cowley and Willard Waller examined college traditions as “a sociological study of student life,” examining socially inherited behavior among college students. They wrote, “the presence of a given culture trait in the traditions of any student body

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<sup>21</sup> Shils, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Simon J. Bronner, *Explaining Traditions: Folk Behavior in Modern Culture* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 8.

indicated that it was either invented by members of that group or borrowed from another group.” In the context of university life, they stated that, “in dramatics, in debating, in student publications, and in fact all down the line of extra-curricular activities, invention and diffusions are continuously shaping and reshaping campus life.”<sup>23</sup>

If traditions provide a foundation for a community and a framework for understanding how one should behave, they also offer to existing group members a tool for social control. Sociologist Morris Janowitz, looking at the evolution of the definition of the concept of social control, stated, “In the most fundamental terms, ‘social control’ referred to the capacity of a society to regulate itself according to desired principles and values.” While in the 1930s the term also came to describe the process through which a group developed conformity, this original definition persists as a way to describe the ways groups, through content and criteria, self-regulate.<sup>24</sup> In the context of college culture, traditions such as class rules are imposed on freshmen by sophomore and upperclass students in order to reinforce the social hierarchy within the university. These for-student-by-student social control measures differ from those imposed from on high by university administration.

Cowley and Waller’s sociological study of student life spoke to the use of traditions like class rules and hazing as a means of social control: “One student generation transmits them to the next, and they are unreflectively accepted and obeyed. This is control through indoctrination.” Forms of regulation include gossip, initiation practices, ceremonies, and the functions of fraternities, athletic teams, campus

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<sup>23</sup> W.H. Cowley and Willard Waller, “A Study of Student Life: The Appraisal of Student Traditions as a Field of Research,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 50, no. 4, (July-August 1979), 379.

<sup>24</sup> Morris Janowitz, “Sociological Theory and Social Control,” *American Journal of Sociology* 81, no. 1 (July 1975), 82-108.

publications, extracurricular activities and, they wrote, “no less important, those unverbilized codes, of the existence of which participants are only half aware but which drive great power from the fact that they work unobserved, in the background of the individuals’ consciousness.”<sup>25</sup> As a result, they said, students are drawn into the community by traditions, whether they like it or not. The authors wrote, “Educators must come more definitely to recognize that to the average undergraduate student life constitutes the real life of the college,” and that, “From his first day as a Freshman to the last ceremony of commencement he is being fashioned by pressures which he understands but little, but which he knows to be vital.”<sup>26</sup>

Traditions also provide students with a sense of belonging and identity. University class years, clubs, fraternities, sororities, dormitory living groups provide opportunities for acceptance by others with similar values. In many cases, the development of relationships within such circles depends on the bonds created by shared experiences. Those experiences might involve sharing a room or class, participating in a sport or activity together, or pledging a Greek organization. In *Higher Education in Transition: An American History*, John Brubacher and Willis Rudy commented on identity, school spirit and class bonds. Classes moved through the curriculum together, they said, which “served to heighten the sense of identity which their members came to feel.” Because the students were obliged to associate, they developed a “class spirit,” which in turn “led to the development of certain well-marked college customs which involved relations between the classes.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cowley and Waller, 380.

<sup>26</sup> Cowley and Waller, 387.

<sup>27</sup> John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition: An American History 1636-1956* (New York: Harper and Bros. Publishers, 1958), 133.

Robert Angell, in his work *The Campus: A Study of Contemporary Undergraduate Life in the American University*, addressed school spirit when he captured a portrait of student life as he saw it in 1928. His description is one of a modern, hurried, commercialized existence, in which undergraduate life is unbalanced and superficial. Young men were pursuing fads and breaking away from their parents while at the same time being drawn to the solidarity that college social circles provided. He observed, “The freshman coming to a university where he is eager to be socially accepted lacks self-confidence and becomes a scrupulous conformer to the prevailing customs.”<sup>28</sup> While other classes suffered a decline in spirit as their ranks became split across classes and activities, freshmen spirit remained highest, he observed, because of their common newness and the ministrations of domineering sophomores.

Angell observed that class spirit was much like community spirit, arguing that: “The average citizen only identifies himself with his home town when the latter is brought into conflict or comparison of some sort with other communities.” In that case, residents who hardly know each other will join forces for the common interest. Internal threats can also stimulate unity, he said. “Threats to the traditions of the institution from within such as the refusal of a freshman to wear his distinctive cap will usually give rise to a strong ‘we’ feeling,” he wrote.<sup>29</sup> In this way, even challenges to class unity could be seen as stirring up emotions and giving rise to a fresh wave of class spirit.

It perhaps goes without saying that a freshman student is at a point in his life where identity is called into question. For many, the transition to college was one from a familiar home to a new environment and from family to community life, where parents

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Cooley Angell. *The Campus: A Study of Contemporary Undergraduate Life in the American University*. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1928), 29.

<sup>29</sup> Angell, 210-211.



were no longer watching. In this new environment, students were challenged not only to find their place within the institution, but also chart their course for success after graduation. Free to reinvent themselves, they were also under great pressure to conform to the standards of their new home away from home. Wrote Horowitz, “If American boys needed a period of separate trial and initiation before entering adult society, this was it. Removed from their homes, the community of boys entered their own social system to emerge at the end ready for adulthood.”<sup>30</sup>

### **The Rise of Lehigh Class Traditions (1865-1920)**

Imagine you are a freshman arriving on Lehigh’s campus during its first decades as an institution. You probably would have come to campus by train, walking up to campus after your trunks had been picked up. After getting your bearings, you would have reported directly to the president to register for classes.

Life would have been disjointed. As no dormitories yet existed (only a few rooms in Christmas Hall), you and your fellow students would be boarding in houses scattered throughout South Bethlehem or Fountain Hill, or living in off-campus fraternity houses. Academics would have consumed your days, with classes scheduled so as to leave little free time. After the 1880s, when intercollegiate athletics were established, you might have taken to the field – or maybe even played in the first football competition between Lehigh and its arch rival Lafayette in 1883. If you were a student in the 1890s, you would have a growing selection of other activities to choose from, as a variety of student-run clubs and organizations were taking hold.<sup>31</sup> The 1890 edition of the *Epitome* yearbook

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<sup>30</sup> Horowitz, 42.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

lists nine academic societies, four musical groups, and eleven clubs and activities, including the “Toothpick Whist Club.”<sup>32</sup>

In general, you would have been largely on your own. University rules were limited to the basics and, wrote Yates, “those intended to build good moral character were often indifferently enforced.”<sup>33</sup> In this fragmented community, how did you come to know about campus life and how it was structured? How did you learn how to fit in? In short, the hierarchy and social standards of the community would have been passed down to you by your classmates through traditions that instilled in you the shared values and identity of a Lehigh man.

Despite the fragmented nature of campus life, students from the start spoke of themselves as “college men” and “Lehigh men.” In an 1899 speech to alumni, President Thomas Drown described Lehigh men as modest and self-reliant: “We like to think of the Lehigh man as one characterized by earnest purpose, who, having practically begun his professional work before leaving college, realizes more fully than the average college graduate what is his place and duty in the life before him...”<sup>34</sup>

In fact, much of the rhetoric about what makes a Lehigh man revolved around duty – particularly toward the university itself. This rhetoric of the responsibilities of a “Lehigh man” to the university can itself be considered a sort of social control, as the language is often invoked to encourage a particular action, whether it be attending an event, cheering on a team, or contributing dollars to the athletics coffers. The *Brown and White* student newspaper, first published in 1894, captured the essence of student-to-

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<sup>32</sup> Lehigh University, *Epitome* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Bethlehem Press, 1890). The *Epitome* has been digitized and is available online at <http://www.archive.org/details/lehigh>.

<sup>33</sup> Yates, 45.

<sup>34</sup> “Annual Meeting and Banquet of the Northeastern Lehigh Club of Penna., at Wilkes-Barre,” *Brown and White*, March 14, 1899.

student exchanges, Most early issues featured front-page editorials addressing the student body as “Lehigh men,” usually with the purpose of commanding them to take a particular action. One 1894 editorial encouraged students to participate in the oratorical society, stating, “Wherever a College man may attain distinction there the Lehigh man must be found, winning renown for himself and honor for his University.” Other editorials invoked the duty of the Lehigh man with phrases like: “We would recommend the College men to attend these lectures”; “The Lehigh man cannot let slip the opportunity offered to him”; and, after a raid by the opposing school before the Lehigh-Lafayette game: “We condemn any thought of retaliation as being unworthy of Lehigh men.” In this way, the idea of the “Lehigh man” was used to encourage students to comply with the mandates of the university and the rules and regulations dictated.<sup>35</sup>

Class spirit was also used to admonish students and compel action. Consider these guilt trips from various eras, predicated on the concept of duty and class spirit. One plea for help with the *Epitome* was printed in 1899: “The *Epitome* ought to represent Lehigh; Lehigh life, Lehigh customs, and Lehigh spirit. Don’t you think it is your duty to get in line and help them? Whether we like it or not people are going to judge us and our Alma Mater by our works, and the *Epitome* is one of them.”<sup>36</sup>

An 1897 article, touching on lack of student involvement in clubs and cheering sections, stated, “Whether graduate or undergraduate, every loyal Lehigh man has the best interests of his alma mater at heart, and esteems it an honor, a privilege, and a duty

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<sup>35</sup> “South Bethlehem,” *The Brown and White*, Jan. 26, 1894.

<sup>36</sup> “The *Epitome*,” *The Brown and White*, Feb, 21, 1899.

imposed upon every loyal son, to labor resolutely to promote and advance the reputation and best interests of the University.”<sup>37</sup>

Class traditions, of course, were not unique to Lehigh but were inspired by trends at other institutions. Articles in the *Brown and White* newspaper routinely covered dispatches from like institutions, including Lafayette, Bucknell, Princeton, and Yale, indicating that students were routinely in touch with their peers. Through their networks of family and friends, students formed opinions of what a college experience looked like and then adopted and defined university traditions for Lehigh.

Established customs that were brought to Bethlehem included the Calculus Cremation, an elaborate ceremony in which sophomores burned a hated book at the conclusion of the class, and the “cane rush,” where first- and second-year students literally fought over possession of a cane.<sup>38</sup> They also adopted class rules, including one requiring first-year students to wear a hat known as a dink, and assumed the typical adversarial roles of freshman versus sophomore as the Lehigh hierarchy developed.

These traditions helped establish Lehigh’s college culture. By adopting them, the students agreed what their experience – and their identity as Lehigh men – should look like. They also endorsed a social structure for the university, how it would be passed from class to class, and how it would be enforced. These were strongest in Lehigh’s earliest years, before administration became more developed and began to involve itself in student life.

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<sup>37</sup> Editorial, *Brown and White*, December 9, 1897.

<sup>38</sup> Yates, 46.

### ***Calculus Cremation***

The Calculus Cremation enjoyed its heyday leading up to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the conclusion of the dreaded calculus class, taken en masse by all sophomores, students would burn their textbooks during an elaborate ceremony. Such cremations were held at a number of schools (Bucknell, Purdue, Amherst, Haverford, Syracuse, and Lehigh among them), although the subject matter of the book sometimes varied based on that institution's curriculum.

The cremation ritual often included a performance, complete with poems and songs, depicting a trial of the textbook's author. Upon finding the writer guilty in the mock trial, the students paraded through campus with their books and an effigy of the condemned. Ultimately, a pyre was built and the dreaded books were made to disappear in dramatic style. The cremation was a full on ritual, often taking on the attitude of a secret ceremony.

For the sophomore students, the cremation represented the end of the shared experience of the calculus course, the kind of intense rite of passage that would have helped cement their identity as a unified class. With this ceremony, they also transitioned to the ranks of upperclassmen, another step toward maturity and the successful attainment of a Lehigh degree, as the likelihood of graduating increased at that milestone. The ceremony and bonfire allowed them, as a class, to alleviate the stress of studying and examinations – essentially an end-of-term party to blow off steam. Cremation of calculus, like the class rushes, was also a show of defiance. The program was created for and by the students, with pageantry designed to ridicule and humiliate the professors and academics who had subjected them to the crime of calculus. Finely drawn invitations

portrayed devils dancing around pyres, and other hellish imagery. The ceremonies took place late at night, with an air of secrecy (though the parade and party were usually disruptive to both the campus and community). Here again, the class was showing its independence, even though they may have been at the mercy of the faculty in the classroom.

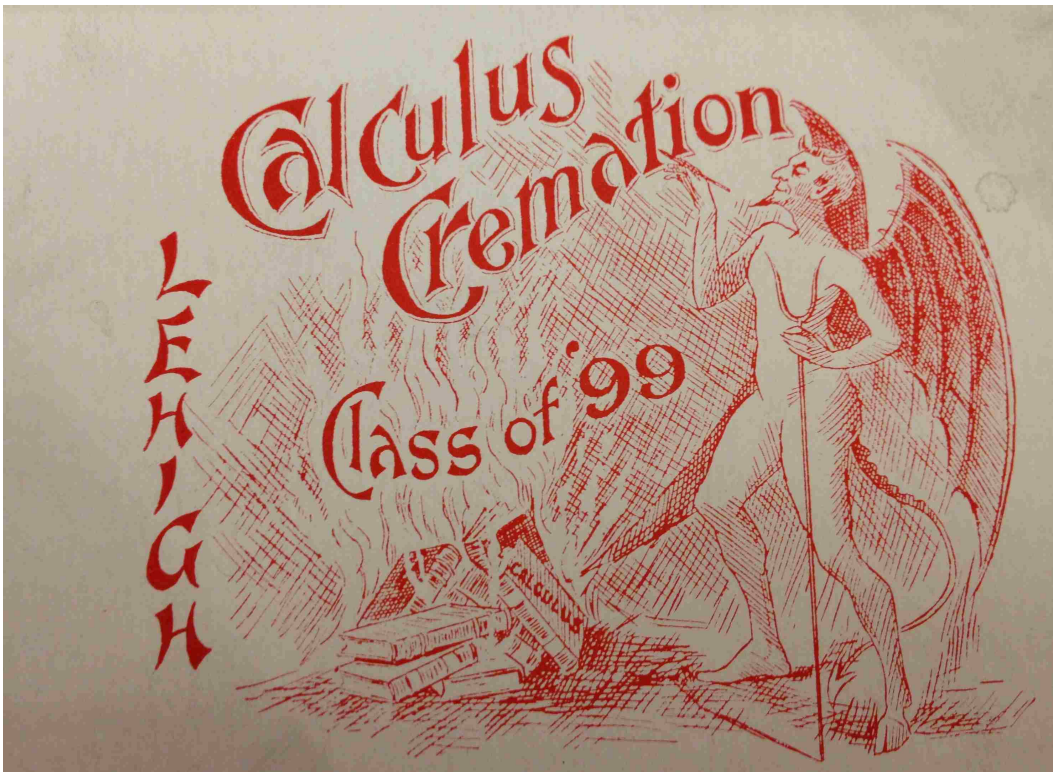


Figure 1. A Calculus Cremation invitation from the Class of 1899. From Lehigh University Special Collections.

W. Ross Yates reported that the cremation, a spring event, was initially hosted by freshmen and involved the burning of a book written by the university's president, Henry Coppée. "At first, the book was Coppée's *Logic*, a text required of all freshmen.

Cremation of *Logic* was said to be disconcerting to its author. Other faculty seem rather to have enjoyed the proceedings,” Yates wrote with dry wit.<sup>39</sup>

The Class of 1878 recounted the history of its celebration of the Cremation of *Logic* in the 1875 edition of the class yearbook, the *Epitome*.

“Immediately after the examination in *Logic* a secret meeting of the Class was held, and after due deliberation it was decided that, as *Logic* was no more, she should receive a decent burial. Fearing that too much room would be occupied by her body in the University burial grounds, according to the latest style, *Logic* was cremated and her ashes placed in a handsome rosewood casket. On the evening of *Logic*'s death the funeral services were held, after a procession of the ghostly-attired Class through the principal streets of town, led by the dirge-playing band. The unusual scene in town excited much attention and drew hundreds of sympathizing friends to the grave, where, with appropriate ceremony, the ashes of *Logic* were confided to earth.”

By 1880, said Yates, Olney's *Calculus* became the hated book, and sophomores sponsored the event, which continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***The Cane, or Class, Rush***

The cane rush was a class tradition widely practiced at American universities. The rush was essentially a brawl between freshmen and sophomores with the stated objective of obtaining and possessing a cane or other object; some institutions fought over hats, flags, kegs, and the like. The fights could be spontaneous, but were often related to a milestone event such as a class banquet or ceremony, such as opening day or Founder's Day, in the case of Lehigh. All are described, often with pride, as extraordinarily violent.

The Lehigh student publication, *The Burr*, provides this colorful portrait of the October 1882 Cane Rush:

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<sup>39</sup> Yates, 46.

“It was one continuous, violent struggle, lasting an hour or more, and the execution done upon the turf and shrubbery of the campus, and the clothing of the contestants, was appalling. At the bottom of an indistinguishable mass of fresh[man] humanity was the cane; while around this was formed the remainder of the class, like the Scots about their king at the battle of Flodden, receiving the impetuous charges of the untiring sophomores. As rushes go, it was the best ever seen here....”<sup>40</sup>

What characteristics of identity were at stake in a class rush? Fighting in any realm, of course, is a demonstration of strength, bravery, and dominance. Yet in a college context, maturity was also being called into question. Proof of this lies in the symbolism of the cane itself. First-year students were seen as immature and unworthy of carrying a cane, which at the time was a symbol of status, age, and refinement. Similarly, tall hats were considered for gentlemen only, making them a similar object for the battles. Wrote Simon Bronner, “The cane rush was also an occasion not only for asserting coming-of-age by stepping into a dominant position with a claim to the hard rod, but additionally for humiliating or infantilizing/feminizing opponents by pulling off their trousers and exposing their underwear or buttocks.”<sup>41</sup> Freshmen fought to avoid being seen as babies, while upperclassmen battled to defend their maturity. Masculinity was also called into question. Bronner pondered the meaning of the cane, not just as a sign of maturity, but also as a phallic symbol. He also noted the masculinity of traditional male combat as a factor, and the perception that the intellectual “life of the mind” found at a university could be seen as effeminate. Rushes, therefore, were demonstrations of manliness.<sup>42</sup>

The rushes were also a demonstration of defiance. Initiated by students without the permission of faculty or administrators, class rushes showed they were not under the

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<sup>40</sup> *The Burr*, October 1882.

<sup>41</sup> Bronner, “Rise and Fall,” 17.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



control of university leaders. Even when administrators attempted to curb the violence of the rushes, students persisted in rioting, in part to show their independence and power. Horowitz believed the defiance was a way of showing faculty and administration that only students should evaluate the worth of their peers.<sup>43</sup> Bronner suggested that conducting the fights under the guise of tradition was a way of excusing the event, making permissible a violent show that would otherwise be completely out of the question.<sup>44</sup>

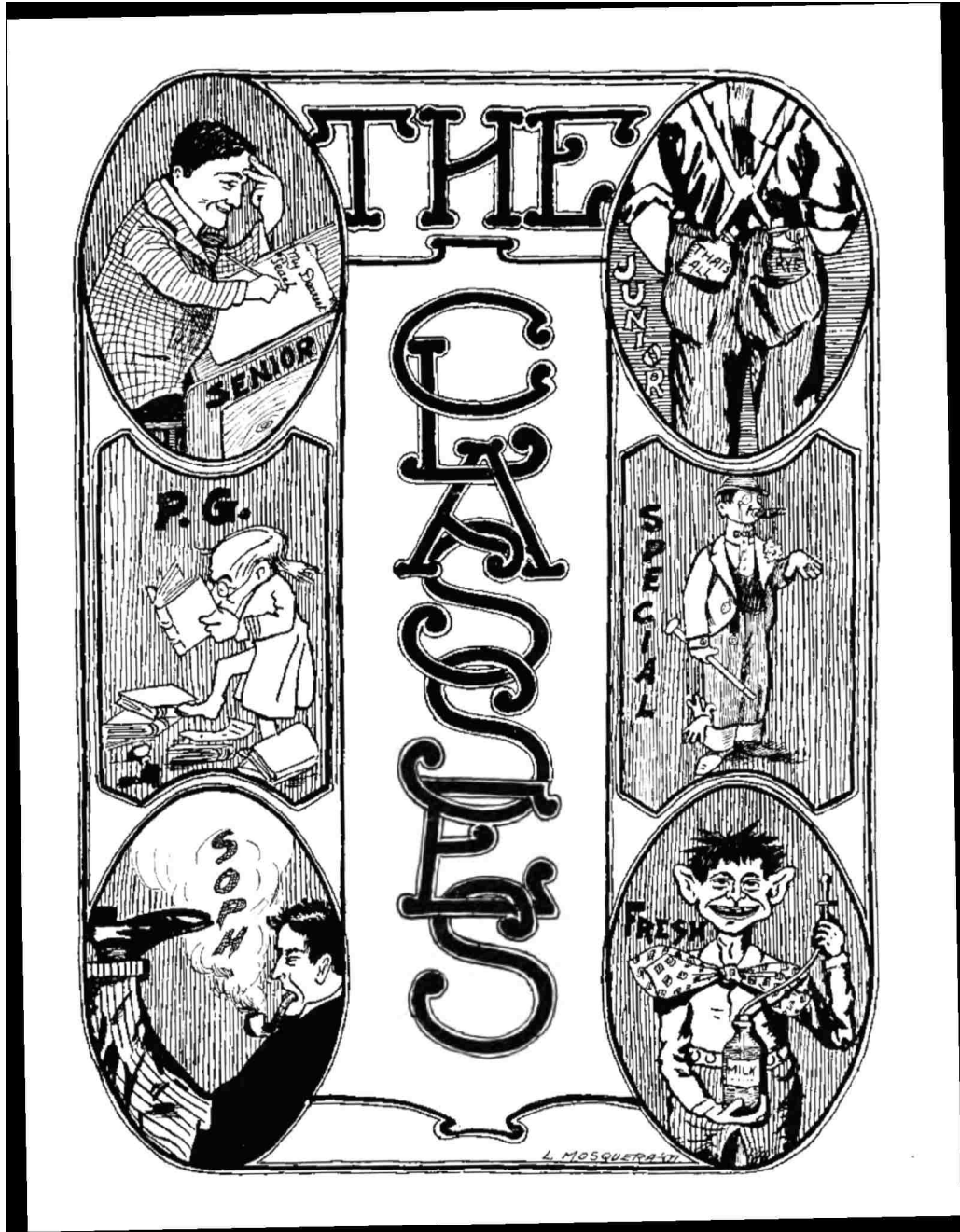
The violence of the rush is an intense, shared experience as well. On the field, individual students became a unified class, defending their territory against an advancing army. After the battle, they shared their war stories, comparing injuries and tales from the fight. Students called on the carpet by administrators for their involvement showed their loyalty to their classmates by refusing to identify and betray others who participated. This kind of camaraderie was critical to a student's identity as a member of his class and a college man. Horowitz's book, *Campus Life*, shows a photograph of three post-rush students.<sup>45</sup> They are posing for the camera with tough expressions, their faces swollen,

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<sup>43</sup> Horowitz, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Bronner, "Rise and Fall," 15.

<sup>45</sup> Horowitz, 44.



cut, and bruised. That students from the Princeton Class of 1895 would stop to capture such a moment for all posterity speaks volumes about the social value of their scars and the prestige the fight might bring them.

For freshmen, the rushes were a rite of passage and an initiation into college life. For the sophomores, they were a way to assert their dominance and ensure that freshmen knew their place in the school's social order. The rushes used physical control of the freshmen in order to establish social control and hierarchy – they were showing their power by preventing freshmen from doing something they wanted to do. Students on their way to participate in class photos and banquets, which showed a class's unity and independence, were also challenged with fights and rushes. Wrote Bronner, "The ability to pose for a picture, emblemize the class year, or hold a banquet/ceremony represented victory and solidarity that the sophomores did not want to concede,"<sup>46</sup>

Class rushes were commonplace in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, as more students were hurt, or even killed, in the skirmishes, college administrators began to take notice and take action. For many, the solution was to substitute class athletics contests for the rushes, channeling the students' energy into pants-tearing contests, football games, or a tug-of-war.

For Lehigh, the turning point came in the late 1880s. As the number of students at Lehigh grew, so did the number of the participants in the rushes – and therefore the number of injuries. In the *Epitome*, the historian for the Class of 1887 reported it was willing to sacrifice the amusement of hazing freshmen "to the good name of the University" and condemned the practice of the rush unanimously. As a result, "The usual

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<sup>46</sup> Bronner, "Rise and Fall," 23.

method of deciding the question of allowing the Freshmen to sport canes having been prohibited by a stern decree of the Faculty, it was supposed that some new and less brutal means of settling the dispute would be decided upon by the two classes.”<sup>47</sup> That year, after Founder’s Day, the classes fought for glory in a different way: by competing in the running broad jump, pole vault, two-mile bicycle race, and a one-mile walk. While the Founder’s Day class athletics competitions continued for decades after the rush was abolished, they no longer inspired the same level of passion.

This was the point when control over the tradition shifted, leaving the event itself in question. The interference of the administration and the relative tameness of the substituted events took the energy out of the annual events. This was, considering the brutal nature of the rushes, a good thing. But by stepping in, the administration negated the students’ own purposes in adopting the traditions in the first place. Athletics competitions lacked the violent, visceral nature of the earliest rushes, leaving students without a way to prove their masculinity and mettle. The growing class sizes and structure of the games meant that not all students could participate in the shared experience, and the experience itself was not as intense or memorable as the original rushes. No longer did students share stories of valor in battle or compare their bruises and scars; they did not have the chance to make their advances on the field. In addition, administrative oversight dulled the sense that the clashes were “out of time,” renegade events, where students ruled. The revised program did continue to provide a forum for freshmen to take on sophomores, which upheld the class hierarchies and a certain sense of tradition and class spirit. But the cane rushes were certainly never as intense or powerful an experience as they had been in their earliest state. Students no longer could

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<sup>47</sup> *Epitome* 1885, 28.

build their “college man” identity in the same way through the experience, and the tradition itself faltered.

As a nod to the continued need for a proving ground of some kind, rushes and skirmishes continued to break out. Cane rushes were held, sometimes surreptitiously beyond the boundaries of campus, though concerns about violence did not abate. In 1889, *The Burr* again reported on a cane rush, this time with the end in sight. “The last cane rush, though not a rough one, was attended with several, if not serious, yet painful accidents and there is reason to believe that, as the years go on and the number of combatants augment, the accidents will increase in the same ratio. This being the case, the ends attained by the rush do not justify its continuance.”<sup>48</sup> That end, in the eyes of *The Burr* author, was class spirit – an outcome that he argued could be accomplished in a similar way through sporting events.

Regardless, rushes on a lesser scale continued to persist for decades. Smaller battles broke out around fraternity and class banquets. A 1930 article in the *Brown & White* recounted the earliest, most violent rushes, but also noted that the lingering custom of “friendly pushing and shoving” had been abolished in that year for the first time. “Remnants of the traditional class fights were observed today,” the article stated, “as witnessed in the rope tying and pants tearing contests. But these controversies are between a small and chosen body of students, and short time limit is adhered to.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *The Burr*, November 1, 1889, 1.

<sup>49</sup> “Frosh-Soph Tussle Began in Early 80s,” *Brown and White*, Sept. 30, 1930.

### *Freshman vs. Sophomore: A Tradition of Hazing*

It is noteworthy that at most institutions of higher education, it is the sophomore class – rather than the junior or senior class – that is charged with imposing social order on the first-year students. This applies to not only the class rush, but most of the class traditions. It could be said to be a tradition, in and of itself.

W. Ross Yates wrote that hazing at Lehigh “apparently began as soon as the first group of second classmen met the second group of first classmen.”<sup>50</sup> From all reports, it seemed uniformly a point of pride for both the first-years and the sophomores – a rite of passage necessary to ensure the maturation of the new students and their assimilation into the Lehigh community and their roles as Lehigh men.

Consider the essays in the early *Epitome* yearbooks. The Class of 1887, in its history, articulated the idea of class unity and identity:

“Class life is in many respects exactly similar to the life of a people or nation. In it there are many diverse elements which, when fused together by the influence of constant companionship, give to it a distinct individuality. Of no class is this more true than of '87. To one who saw us when we first appeared within the walls of Lehigh, it would seem that two years of college life had developed the child into the man. We gathered here as babes and were entrusted to the tender care of '86, much to their delight and our discomfiture.”<sup>51</sup>

So much is wrapped up in this nostalgic statement. This class embraced its identity as naïve freshmen, mere “babes” who would become mature only with the ministrations of the sophomore class ahead of them. They were believers in their class identity, which they attributed to the hazing traditions. Because of these traditions, they had transitioned from being mere individuals and were now part of a “nation” of Lehigh men.

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<sup>50</sup> Yates, 46.

<sup>51</sup> *Epitome* 1887, 28.

In 1906, the seniors looked back on their hazing of the Class of 1907 with fondness. Although they had pledged good behavior, they admitted to doing their part to indoctrinate and control the freshmen. “The moderate amount of hazing done by us seems to have fulfilled the purpose of reducing the refractory spirits of 1907 to a true appreciation of their relative position at Lehigh,” the historian wrote.<sup>52</sup> The sophomores were fulfilling their responsibility of keeping the Lehigh hierarchy of class power intact.

Fast forward another 10 years, and the attitudes were just the same. The Class of 1918 historian wrote of the class’s own freshman experience: “Of course there were numerous indignities to which we were submitted, but these we stood with forbearance, knowing that some day we would have our inning.” Once sophomores, the writer then said, “We took that band of youngsters who call themselves 1919...and have tried to make something out of them, After beating them into submission in two well remembered occasions we seem to be making headway and hope to make them our worthy successors.”<sup>53</sup> Here we have a class of students lamenting their own freshmen experience and looking forward to their own turn as the dominant group. When they have their chance, they proudly dish out the punishment on the upcoming class, with the apparent belief that it will make the freshmen better men of Lehigh.

Lehigh sophomores, like those at other colleges, seem content with their role tormenting the freshmen with the purpose of initiating them, rather than getting revenge on the juniors. Simon Bronner spent time unpacking this phenomenon of “paying forward” hazing, examining the dynamics that helped create the schism between the two groups. He proposed that seniors saw themselves as too mature to participate in the

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<sup>52</sup> *Epitome* 1907, 40.

<sup>53</sup> *Epitome* 1917, 131.

underclassmens' rites of passage, and were content to look ahead toward their futures rather than perpetuate their college experience. Juniors, similarly, were also removed from the customs around initiation, though they were closer to the experience than the seniors. Sophomores, on the other hand, still had their own experiences of being hazed and humiliated fresh in their minds. One might think that they would take their aggressions out on the juniors ahead of them, as revenge for their initiation. But Bronner believes that the sophomores instead focus their ire on freshmen, who are most vulnerable and pose a lesser threat.<sup>54</sup> For sophomores to go against the juniors would be a threat to the social order and hierarchy of the school. Challenging the freshmen can be excused as a ritual or tradition, or even defended as a responsibility that falls to the sophomores. But it is more than convenient that the younger, newer students are easier to pick on.

### ***Freshman Rules***

The first freshmen handbook dates to 1891. Published by the Lehigh University Christian Association, it makes no mention of the college customs. Instead, it is the 1903-1904 edition that first lists the "College Customs," stating "The following are, of course, unwritten laws, but are customs introduced during the history of Lehigh, and are a part of her life. It will be well for Freshmen to observe them."<sup>55</sup>

How the customs came to be printed there can be found in the 1905 *Epitome*. The Class of 1906 historian describes how, after their freshmen banquet, the class "celebrated its conclusion by a scrap with the Sophs. The faculty got wind of the affair, – no one

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<sup>54</sup> Bronner, "Rise and Fall," 42.

<sup>55</sup> *Lehigh University Freshman Handbook*, 1903-1904, 14. Lehigh SCMS L3781 L5272f 1891-1962, Box 1.



knows how, for it was very quiet little shindy – and promptly suspended two men.” In order to reinstate them, the class relinquished posters, rushes and other privileges, including the hazing of the next incoming class. Instead, the sophomores set forth “a set of rules to govern his actions as a Lehigh man in general, and as a Freshman in particular.”<sup>56</sup> While this was not the origin of the class rules – which likely existed informally all along – it was at this point that “college customs” began to be printed in the yearbook as a guide for all incoming students.

In this way, the demise of the class rush and the rise of the documented freshmen rules are related. With the abolition of the rush by decree of the administration, students had lost a tradition that served to help new students establish their identities as Lehigh men and also offered upperclassmen a way to control and organize campus culture. It would have only been natural that a new student-driven tradition would arise at this time to take the place of the one that was lost. What is remarkable is finding this direct link that ties the end of the rush to the new set of rules. It is clear that students, at least on some level, understood what value the rush held in their culture as a way of determining and enforcing roles and the identity of a Lehigh man. These sophomores felt the need to continue to school new classmates in the ways of Lehigh, and to maintain control of the social order by establishing and enforcing roles that would breed class unity while keeping freshmen in their place until their worth was proven.

The class felt the gap that had been created with the demise of the rush, and came up with a way to fill it. So effective was their solution that these college customs, also known as freshmen rules, continued to exist – though contested off and on – until the early 1970s at Lehigh. These rules provide insights into campus culture through the

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<sup>56</sup> *Epitome* 1905, 66.

decades: Again, the more the identity and values of the students shifted, the greater the debates around the rules and how they were enforced, making them an exceptional indicator of the social climate.

By nature, of course, the rules were intended to control social behavior. The first one spoke to the identity of Lehigh students, stating “All Lehigh men must say ‘hello’ when meeting another Lehigh man on campus.” The rule aided the creation of a student community by ensuring students recognize and speak to each other. The language of the “Lehigh man” used here was also found throughout the rest of the handbook, indicating that the freshmen must abide by the regulations if they were to be considered as such. Another rule demanded freshmen set aside their prep school attire; any logos or school names could only be worn on the back of a shirt. This directive required freshmen to set aside any previous loyalties and associations they may have had with another institution, so that Lehigh would come first. This rule also reminded students that they were stripped of any dominance they would have had as seniors in another school, and that they were now back at the bottom of the hierarchy. Other rules demanded that the new students learn school songs and be present to cheer on athletics teams. Here again was an aspect that, when embraced by a newcomer, served to shape him into a member of a unified and proud community.

### ***The Dink***

The wearing of a dink became the most lasting, and also most contested, of the college customs, making it worthy of examination. The first mention of the small brown hats in the Freshmen Handbook is in the 1906-1907 edition, which includes on its list of

college customs: "Freshmen shall wear the regulation black cap from the opening of college until after Christmas vacation."<sup>57</sup>

Dinks, also known as "beanies" or "ducs," were common at many institutions. While on the surface they were simply a way to identify freshmen in an increasingly large population (at the time pushing 800 students), they were also a sign of immaturity, subordination, and naivety. If wearing a tall hat or wielding a cane was an indicator of maturity and power, the dink remained a sign of immaturity and submissiveness. Bronner pointed to Medieval origins of the dink. He wrote: "In Central Europe, illustrators and chroniclers documented a ritual 'deposition' or 'laying aside' in which upperclassmen remove horns and tusks worn by the new students to signal in an evolutionary fashion that even though they are grown, in the context of higher education they begin as animals or brutes and rise slowly to human level." Students, he said, were called beani from the French insult "bec jaune" for yellow beak – a term later applied to the small hats, or beanies, American students wore.<sup>58</sup> Wrote Bronner, "The wearing of freshmen beanies early on established rank associated with dress. The frosh were anxious to remove the infantile head coverings often jocularly referred to as 'dinks,' also a slang term for a small or child's penis."<sup>59</sup>

The hats, in some ways a humiliation, were also a source of class unity. The freshmen hats were a very visible sign of one's identity as a first-year student. The dink was intended to highlight the first-year students to the campus community, the local "townies," and also identify them to each other. Like a nametag at a conference, the hats

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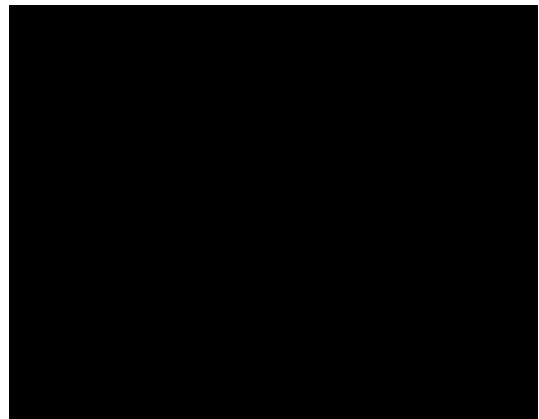
<sup>57</sup> *Lehigh University Freshman Handbook*, 1906-1907, 17. Lehigh SCMS L3781 L5272f 1891-1962, Box 1.

<sup>58</sup> Bronner, "Rise and Fall," 33.

<sup>59</sup> Bronner, Simon J., *Campus Traditions* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 151.

facilitated introductions. They gave the first-years a way to know each other from a distance. And while perhaps not as dignified as a letter sweater, the dink allowed the student to show off his Lehigh affiliation with some sense of pride. Finally, they helped fuel a common experience that created camaraderie within the class – namely, being targeted and hazed by upperclassmen.

The dink was also a tool of persecution in the ongoing conflict between freshmen and sophomores. Essentially, the hats, just like the other freshmen regulations, were a form of hazing. For all of the unity they were intended to build, the dinks were also a way upperclassmen could impose their social dominance. The consequences for being caught without the headgear ranged from the physical (paddling) to the humiliating (having



one's head shaved) to the absurd (being forced to wear a pink bow, barking at the moon, or the like).

Freshmen rules dictated that students wear the hats at specific times through the course of the year, or face punishment (again, usually at the hands of the sophomores). At Lehigh, the rules varied from year to year. The 1906 handbook required them until the Christmas holidays, while a 1908 version says they are required through the whole year. The hat also became tied to Founder's Day class contests in October. If sophomores won the competitions, freshmen would continue to don the hats until later in the year. If the freshmen won, they could lay them aside, except on stated occasions. This aspect of the regulations speaks to the role that traditions have played in establishing the worthiness of a Lehigh man. A noteworthy performance by the freshmen in the class rush used to help prove the class's mettle in the eyes of the school. Now a win in the class competitions allowed the first-years to prove themselves worthy enough to set aside their childish headgear.

### **Greater Lehigh, Greater Traditions? (1920-1940)**

The 1920s and 1930s saw great growth for Lehigh University as an institution. Not coincidentally, it was also a period during which many of the university's earlier class traditions began to wane. Up until this point, class traditions that dictated behavior and identity were passed along by students, enforced by students, and embraced – with varying degrees of willingness – by students. During this era, however, the Lehigh administration became increasingly involved in defining and enforcing the behavior of students. This shift in power challenged the existing traditions and called into question

their purpose and validity. Those traditions that no longer upheld the development of student identity fell by the wayside, while others morphed and changed in order to support the new incarnation of student identity – one imposed on the students from the top down, rather than peer-to-peer.

Much was changing in the 1920s. Across the nation, the number of students attending college was growing. Yates reported that more than three times as many students received a college degree in 1903 than had earned one in 1883. In 1885, Lehigh's enrollment was 325 – up from 66 in 1878. By 1918, student count stood at 901.<sup>60</sup> By 1930, enrollment was 1,500.

Universities across the nation were also evolving. In the earliest days of many institutions, including Lehigh, there was little formal structure within the university.<sup>61</sup> Students were scattered, both in terms of living arrangements and activities, and there was little faculty oversight beyond the classroom. Few could afford to attend a university, so those who were there, even the wealthy, attended for a reason – not simply because it was a popular choice. Athletics had yet to become institutionalized, and alumni were not yet a force with whom to be reckoned.

In the years following World War I, college had become a popular choice for young men, even if they did not have a professional pursuit in mind. While post-Civil War students attended university to perpetuate their family networks or become equipped for a particular field, more students in the 1920s were coming to school simply for the experience of higher education. Observed Christopher Lucas in *American Higher Education*, “The college years in some cases amounted to little more than a prolonged

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<sup>60</sup> Yates, 114.

<sup>61</sup> Yates, 45.

childhood: a time to develop friendships, to socialize, to indulge in good fun.”<sup>62</sup> The social aspects of college – the sports and football games, banquets, house parties, fraternities, and clubs – were a draw for those who wanted to enjoy something new before settling down into the family business.

Increasing enrollment meant that more services and activities needed to be provided for students. Campuses grew to include dorms, dining halls, and other facilities now taken for granted. In 1921, one-third of Lehigh students lived on campus.<sup>63</sup> While students in the founding years were left to their own devices, administration was now anxious to provide structure. During Drinker’s administration from 1905 to 1920, wrote Bowen, “Lehigh woke up, and bestirred herself to put every opportunity for healthy living and healthy recreation in the way of the young men committed to her charge.”<sup>64</sup> Offices for admissions and financial aid came into being, and universities added administrators who would be responsible for these new functions. The 1920s also saw the rise of the concept of adolescence, and this age group began to be viewed as separate from children and adults. From these discussions rose the need to provide new services, such as those provided by student affairs departments.<sup>65</sup> Athletics programs were also developed; administrators appreciated them as a way to channel student energies, but disliked the need for oversight and the vocal role alumni assumed in the programs. Wrote Crowley and Waller, “The old and desirable solidarity had vanished, and gregarious youth sought a substitute, a ground on which to meet, to understand one another’s

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<sup>62</sup> Lucas, 200.

<sup>63</sup> Catherine Drinker Bowen, *A History of Lehigh University* (South Bethlehem, Pa: The Lehigh Alumni Bulletin), 18.

<sup>64</sup> Bowen, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America: 1790 to the Present*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 174-182.

conversation, and to feel a sense of oneness. Extra-curricular activities – especially athletics – furnished the necessary common denominator.”<sup>66</sup>

W. Ross Yates drew a distinction between the Lehigh University that existed before World War I and the institution that existed after, citing 1919 as the specific date of transition. Wrote Yates:

“The old Lehigh cherished an individualistic disposition, which after the First World War became tempered with an organizational ethos. The old Lehigh was essentially a community of faculty and students with a board of trustees closely watching from nearby. In the new Lehigh almost everything became institutionalized. The old Lehigh has no bureaucracy and little administration; the new Lehigh had much of both. In the old university, life for the professors and the students was little regulated, whereas in the new, regulations increased and students, faculty, and administrators entertained more or less constant discussions concerning what the regulations should be and who should make and enforce them.”<sup>67</sup>

Yates’ demarcation between the old and new Lehigh coincides with the shift in Lehigh traditions that occurs in the 1920s and into the 1930s, reinforcing the idea that changes in the ways students understand their identity led to changes in the traditions that help them define who and what they were.

Catherine Drinker Bowen cited 1921 as a watershed year:

“Lehigh is a hardworking, practical kind of a place. Through sixty years, she has kept her ear pretty close to the ground, but every decade or so she stands up and gives herself a shake, and loses about a ton of mossy prejudice left over from the last generation. Early in 1921, it became apparent that the University needed an expert overhauling, as to educational policy, teaching methods, curriculum, and student discipline.”<sup>68</sup>

In 1922, Charles Russ Richards became Lehigh’s president. He inherited from Henry S. Drinker a university free of debt, thanks to the former president’s fundraising

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<sup>66</sup> Cowley and Waller, 384.

<sup>67</sup> Yates, 9.

<sup>68</sup> Bowen, 60.



and relationships with philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie. Drinker's work ensured that Lehigh remained financially steady through the years of the Great Depression.

Drinker was also an alumnus of Lehigh's Class of 1871, so he was very much steeped in traditions such as the cane rush and Calculus Cremation.

Richards was an advocate for liberal arts education, eschewing a singular focus on specialized technical programs. In the progressive, forward-looking spirit of the day, he set the tone for a time of change at the university with his campaign, "Greater Lehigh." He stated that, "No institution can long continue to go forward under momentum created by past achievements and glorious traditions...Any tradition that leads to complacent satisfaction or that in any manner hampers progress, is a bad tradition and should be uprooted and cast aside"<sup>69</sup> (The Greater Lehigh campaign ultimately resulted in the addition of history, music, journalism, psychology, education, and fine arts to the curriculum, as well as fundraising totaling \$2 million.) His decree, far from nostalgic, showed his willingness to challenge the validity of existing traditions and to co-opt or put an end to them as needed.

Richards was not alone in his thinking. During the 1920s, many staples of university life that used to be controlled by students were brought under the auspices of university administration. Horowitz observed, "As colleges and universities harnessed and co-opted college life, the particular institutions and traditions of a segment of the student body became established as the official institutions and traditions of the college."<sup>70</sup> Athletics teams were staffed by coaches, musical groups became officially

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<sup>69</sup> "Specialization of Loss of Arts Hit," *Brown and White*, Centennial Issue Spring 1966, 18.

<sup>70</sup> Horowitz, 111.

recognized, and what had been secret societies were now honors societies at some schools.

Class size also played a role in diminishing traditions and class spirit. In the early 1920s, enrollment hovered around 1,000 students. Brubacher and Rudy in *Higher Education in Transition* remarked, "Class spirit continued to be important on into the twentieth century, but its relative weight tended to decline. This was due in part to the impact of the elective system, which broke up the classes as teaching units, and in part to the growing size of college enrollments, which made the yearly classes too large for the effective maintenance of close-knit social ties."<sup>71</sup>

Larger classes also meant the need to change the way the administration kept order. "Inherited ideas had sanctioned the primacy of the class as a moral and administrative unit...even the more conservative college presidents in the early 1800s had tolerated hazing as a way to brand newcomers with a sense of group identity in a particular class," wrote Joseph Kett in *Rites of Passage*, a work about the rise of the concept of adolescence in America. Yet rising enrollments made that increasingly impossible, so administrators looked for other ways to direct students' energies.<sup>72</sup>

At Lehigh, one of the first traditions to fall by the wayside during Richard's tenure was the Calculus Cremation. With a greater selection of courses to choose from, calculus was no longer an experience shared by the entire sophomore class. The whole affair became much more institutionalized, lacking the rebellious mystique of the earlier midnight rituals. Organizing the event had become daunting for students, whose time was taken up not just by studying, but an ever-increasing array of activities and sporting

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<sup>71</sup> Brubacher and Rudy, 134.

<sup>72</sup> Kett, 178.

events. Attendance, for the same reason, decreased. Then, university alumni had adopted the tradition for themselves, making it part of their June Alumni Day. A description from a 1922 Lehigh Alumni Bulletin shows what a vastly different event the cremation had become:

“While the men were at the dinner many of the ladies (and we had lots of them this year) were having a dinner of their own in the Fountain Room at the Hotel Bethlehem. Such of the husbands who remembered they had wives collected them and started for Taylor Field to view the Calculus Cremation. The unattached plus those who forgot they had parked their wives fell into line behind the band and in a blaze of red fire paraded to the field. Here they found an immense crowd of townspeople who shared in their enjoyment of the clever caricatures of the faculty. The theme of the Cremation was the theme of the hour—a greater Lehigh. Calculus was discovered stealing the contributions the alumni were making to the endowment fund and after a trial was burned on an immense funeral pyre on the upper field.”<sup>73</sup>

At this point, the tradition of the Calculus Cremation has become fully institutionalized, a university event held on the football field, repeating the rhetoric of the university president, with a script focused on alumni fundraising. In this form, it was no longer an event controlled by the students, nor did it serve to mark their passage to seniority, demonstrate their rebelliousness against the administration, or otherwise shore up their identity as Lehigh men. For all of these reasons, the tradition of Calculus Cremation no longer served a purpose. The *Brown and White* reported the last Calculus Cremation was in 1925.<sup>74</sup>

In its place, the journalistic fraternity Pi Delta Epsilon instituted the Gridiron Banquet in 1929, which roasted members of the faculty and student body and was compared in the pages of the *Brown and White* to the Calculus Cremation because of its irreverence and “all-in-good-fun” defiance of the administration. One editorial writer,

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<sup>73</sup> *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, 10, no. 9, 1922-23, 3.

<sup>74</sup> “Memorabilia Show Lehigh's Rise,” *Brown and White*, Jan. 16, 1934.

bemoaning a lack of traditions at Lehigh in the 1930s, held up the Gridiron Banquet as an example of a new tradition established to fulfill the gap left by an old one, stating: “It is because the Gridiron Banquet filled a need created by the death of the Calculus Cremation that it was such a valuable innovation.”<sup>75</sup> Regardless, the Gridiron Banquet only lasted a few years until interest in it, too, waned.

It was during this era that student government also came more directly under the influence of the administration. During this time, college administrations were changing the way students governed themselves, giving them more authority and bringing them into alignment with university ideals – and also under tacit control of the administration. Wrote Horowitz, “In the early twentieth century, as presidents and deans empowered college men as the official student leaders, the canons of college life shifted from antagonism to support of the administration.”<sup>76</sup>

The first form of Lehigh student government was created in 1884. After a spate of cheating incidents, a group of students stepped in and proposed an Honor Court to handle the issue without interference from the administration. The court would try cases of cheating without faculty oversight, and the students pledged not to cheat and to inform on those who did.<sup>77</sup> By 1905, the group known as Arcadia had expanded to become a student governing organization with the charge “to formulate and carry out plans for the advancement of the social and student life of the University and to look after the best interests of the undergraduate body.”<sup>78</sup> By 1914, Arcadia membership included the heads of all the significant campus organizations and living groups, as well as some students at

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<sup>75</sup> “Buying a Tradition,” *Brown and White*, May 9, 1930.

<sup>76</sup> Horowitz, 13.

<sup>77</sup> “Arcadians Were Philosophers and Boxers,” *Brown and White*, Centennial Issue Spring 1966, 6.

<sup>78</sup> *Brown and White*, Oct. 24, 1905.

large. The organization offered students another source of control and another way to enforce structure and hierarchy. Yet unlike earlier traditions driven by students, student government ultimately convened with the blessing and support of the administration, falling under its control.

It is worth mentioning that, in the 1920s, athletics was also brought into the fold. Since athletics became organized at Lehigh, alumni had helped to organize the games and raise funds for equipment and expenses. At the time, the arrangement suited the Lehigh administration, which did not want to be saddled with the responsibility or work involved in the endeavor. But the alumni were outspoken and demanding, and students grew to feel they had too much control over the operation. In 1924, students brought the issue to a head by demanding alumni cede control, and the showdown resulted in the formation of a committee involving students and alumni, but which continued to omit the administration. When the structure was revisited again in 1932, the Lehigh administration assumed responsibility without opposition, and the Division of Athletics and Physical Education was formed.<sup>79</sup>

In 1922, Richards hired Maxwell McConn as the university's first dean, a role that was so unfamiliar at the time that he often spoke to local groups just to explain his job and all it entailed. He described his role to the Bethlehem Rotary as a troubleshooter and jack-of-all-trades, responsible for admissions, problem solving, and even delivering laundry once for an anxious mother:

“What is the source of these numerous rather recent difficulties, which make the dean the necessary evil that he is? The fact is, gentleman, that within the last forty or fifty years, a great disaster, a dire calamity, has befallen the college and universities of the United States: They have become popular. No greater misfortune could have happened to them from the standpoint of the fundamental

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<sup>79</sup> Yates, 149.

ideals, the real purposes of such institutions.”<sup>80</sup>

McConn held disdain for students who came to college for a social, rather than cultural or intellectual experience. In his book, *College or Kindergarten?*, he elaborated on three reasons students choose college. Students with a “bread-and-butter purpose” pursued an education for practical, vocational, and economic reasons, he wrote, while those with a “culture purpose” are pursuing pure scholarship and research. The third group he labels “superkindergarteners.” These students will likely follow in their father’s footsteps or, if female, will marry well. They are not quite ready to work or settle down, but they need to be looked after and kept out of trouble. He wrote, “In short, the social purpose of the college, from the standpoint of this considerable and influential section of its constituency, is that of a superkindergarten, to take care of a group of older babies, who have progressed, in their amusements, from rattles to rah-rahs.”<sup>81</sup>

None of the students wanted to be known as “superkindergarteners.” But for decades, Lehigh students had embraced traditions that supported brawling, defying authority, and keeping one another in their place through hazing and campus rules. Now, their new dean was calling into question what a Lehigh man stood for. At the same time, he was putting into place new rules and oversight of the campus community, including admissions and graduation standards and attendance guidelines. While hazing freshmen had been discouraged before, McConn set new standards in terms of student conduct and fully condemned hazing. Yates reported that McConn was popular among students

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<sup>80</sup> “What Is a Dean and If So Why?” *Lehigh Alumni Bulletin*, April 1926, 6-7.

<sup>81</sup> Max McConn, *College or Kindergarten?* (New York: New Republic, Inc., 1928), 21.

“although at first the students looked upon him as infringing on their liberties.”<sup>82</sup> Even if they liked McConn, the students were thrown off. They embraced Richards’ mindset about a greater Lehigh as well as McConn’s “college, not kindergarten” mentality, echoing their language in their own writings in the *Brown and White*, even including an excerpt of “College or Kindergarten?” in the Freshman Handbook. But the class competitions still had a hold on the student culture, which continued to include hazing in the name of bringing freshmen students into line.

In 1926, the sophomore council – rather than the sophomores individually – was tasked with punishing freshmen who did not follow the college customs. In 1929, a *Brown and White* story reported “Sophomores End Freshmen Hazing and All Rushes,” stating that the sophomore council had decreed an end to hazing and that class contests were reserved for Founder’s Day and banquet activities. Freshmen rules were maintained, but democratic rules and standard punishments were called for, in an attempt to rein in some of the more ridiculous and embarrassing trials imposed on errant freshmen. Proclaimed the article, “The sophomores, as a reason for abandoning all forms of hazing, believe that the freshman of today is older and more experienced than the freshmen of former years, and that no amount of hazing will correct any ‘freshness.’”<sup>83</sup>

The following year, the Lehigh Union (a remnant of the Lehigh University chapter of the Young Men’s Christian Association, which was later folded into Arcadia) proposed an end to the freshman customs as well, a move endorsed by McConn and the leadership of the alumni association. McConn denounced the freshman regulations as “prep school stuff.” “Here at Lehigh we are a little behind the times. All such foolishness

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<sup>82</sup> Yates, 152.

<sup>83</sup> “Sophomores End Freshman Hazing and All Rushes,” *Brown and White*, Nov. 8, 1929.

goes back to the ‘gay nineties,’” he said. “When a tradition outlives its usefulness and fitness of its age, it should be abolished.”<sup>84</sup> For McConn, the traditions were no longer needed to keep order among the students, or to impart to them a sense of identity. After all, that is what the dean and the growing administrative structure of Lehigh was there to do.

Through it all, the rhetoric behind the duties of a “Lehigh man” was still being invoked to rally students to action on other fronts. For example, a 1925 editorial called for students to get involved in campus activities: “Freshmen, find yourselves, and some day you will see that you are benefitted a hundred fold for the things you did to better your Alma Mater.”<sup>85</sup> Also in 1925, legendary wrestling coach Billy Sheridan invoked the specter of the Lehigh man to encourage students to attend the Lehigh-Lafayette game. His editorial, titled “The Duty of the Students,” said, “To slip up in the duty we owe to that team is something that no true Lehigh man can afford to be guilty of.”<sup>86</sup>

Even though some called for an end to the freshmen regulations, the dink tradition remained in favor with students throughout this period, as exchanges in the *Brown and White* reveal. An “Inquiring Reporter” piece in a 1928 *Brown and White* ran four interviews with students, all of whom spoke highly of the hat. One said the hat made all freshmen feel equal, while others liked the ability to identify freshmen on sight – even if it just made it easier for a sophomore to spot an easy target.<sup>87</sup> A 1931 *Brown and White* editorial, “Save the Dink,” read “The dink is not a sign of servitude as is commonly believed. ...It should serve as a means for unifications of the incoming freshman class

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<sup>84</sup> “Officials Favor Plan to Abolish Frosh Customs,” *Brown and White*, March 13, 1931.

<sup>85</sup> “Service,” *Brown and White*, Sept. 23, 1924.

<sup>86</sup> “Sporting Comment,” *Brown and White*, Nov. 17, 1925.

<sup>87</sup> “Inquiring Reporter,” *Brown and White*, Oct. 2, 1928.



and as such deserves a place in the life of every freshman.”<sup>88</sup> In the next edition, Norman Alper ’34 wrote a letter to the editor, showing his support for the dink as a feature of the freshman class, although he too said he would be glad to see other freshmen regulations go.<sup>89</sup> A few weeks later, another *Brown and White* editorial appealed to Arcadia to leave the dink alone: “Sad will be the day when the new men will not be known by their dinks...Let the Arcadia realize the significance of the dink before it acts. The seniors have their blazers, let the frosh have their dinks.”<sup>90</sup>

The regulations continued. So did the hazing. In 1930, four freshmen were penalized with ridiculous sentences for not knowing the alma mater and breaking the dress code. The situation became worse in October 1931, when the sophomore council of the Class of 1934 took it upon themselves to shave the heads of six freshmen found guilty of violating the class rules. The *Brown and White* account notes that many sophomores and upperclassmen found the punishment to be too strict, but the council proceeded anyway after a majority vote. The sophomores defended their actions. “As long as we have rules for their benefit, they must be properly enforced,” they said. The freshmen, in turn, held a rally in the chapel and discussed whether to organize a “protective committee for their own good.”<sup>91</sup> McConn prevailed upon the freshmen to stand down.

The following February, the sophomore council voted to discontinue all freshmen regulations except for the dink and black tie for the first semester. The *Brown and White* praised the step in an editorial titled, in the parlance of McConn, “No Kindergarten

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<sup>88</sup> “Save the Dink,” *Brown and White*, March 10, 1931.

<sup>89</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” *Brown and White*, March 13, 1931.

<sup>90</sup> “Save the Dink,” *Brown and White*, March 20, 1931.

<sup>91</sup> “Victim of Council's Haircutting Addresses Classmates Yesterday to Rouse Opposition,” *Brown and White*, Oct. 30, 1931.

Here.”<sup>92</sup> It stated that, “The pace set by the Sophomore council will be a difficult one for the freshmen to follow; much more so than was the cutting of hair or the browbeating in previous years. The freshmen must now prove that they are the gentlemen that the Council believes them to be or automatically give their class a name more damning than any suggested by hostile sophomores.” A 1933 letter to the editor pondered the question of regulations and school spirit. “What does paddling a Frosh have anything to do with the student’s attitude toward his school? After all, isn’t Lehigh spirit simply a feeling that has grown in the hearts of every student toward his Alma Mater?”<sup>93</sup>

A 1935 *Brown and White* article explained that the freshman rules help forge unity within the Class of 1939 and also “make fallow the freshmen’s minds for the future growth there of the Lehigh traditions which have proved their worth by surviving the test of time.” The author scoffs at the naysayers who assume hazing by upperclassmen remains part of the formula: “That has been left out for some years now on the Lehigh campus... Each of the few surviving regulations is the embodiment of the best empirical judgment of generations of past Lehigh students on facilitating the freshman’s adjustment to his new environment.”<sup>94</sup> While the tone represented a kinder, gentler Lehigh environment, the Freshmen Regulations continued to fulfill the need for which they were originally established: to turn freshmen into true Lehigh men.

The saga of the freshman regulations through the 1930s mirrors the turmoil that Lehigh students themselves were feeling throughout the era. Consider all that was shifting for them. The administration was steadily growing in order to provide more

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<sup>92</sup> “No Kindergarten Here,” *Brown and White*, Nov. 4, 1932.

<sup>93</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” *Brown and White*, March 17, 1933.

<sup>94</sup> “Attendez! Messrs. Les Frosh,” *Brown and White*, Sept. 24, 1935.

services and structure, taking on oversight of athletics and other student activities along the way. Student leaders were being recognized by the administration, yet by bestowing greater authority, administrators were able to bring them even more into alignment with institutional objectives. McConn shamed students so that they would distance themselves from hazing, which also put them at a distance from the freshmen rules and college customs that helped define their identity as Lehigh students. When the students were pushed to reform, none outright rejected the dinks, holding onto a tradition that created class unity and helped define them as Lehigh men. The purpose of the dink remained relevant, so the tradition continued.

It should be known that the debate over the class regulations and dinks did not end there. Throughout the rest of the decade, student groups negotiated and debated the merits of the regulations. A Freshman Union was formed by the Class of 1937 as a result of the 1934 decision by the sophomore council. The sophomore “vigilante” committee came back together in 1936 to once again take up enforcement of the regulations. The year 1938 saw the creation of another new freshman code for the Class of 1942, and a junior committee known as Cyanide took up enforcement. The *Brown and White* reported again in fall 1942 that freshmen regulations were abandoned because of the war, only to have dinks – more modern in design – socks, and ties reinstated in 1944. Throughout it all, students raised a cry in support of school spirit, class unity, and maturity. As a 1938 editorial read, “There has been no loss of spirit – no freshman has any reason to shirk his responsibilities or feel that he is not being made thoroughly and sincerely a part of Lehigh. May the members of the class of ’42 always feel proud of being “Lehigh men.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> “Again, More Frosh,” *Brown and White*, Sept. 27, 1938.

### **“Joe College” and “Joe Veteran” (1940-1960)**

The next challenge to the identity of Lehigh men – and the next major debate over the fate of the dink – came with the end of World War II. The student body of Lehigh grew dramatically as former students were readmitted and veterans enrolled, taking advantage of the GI Bill. Yates reports that 65 percent of the 2,723 undergraduates on campus in 1946 were veterans. By 1949, their proportion of the student population had dropped to below 50 percent.<sup>96</sup>

Class traditions were intended to impose the hierarchy of the student body on immature newcomers. The veterans did not fit this description of the typical Lehigh freshman. They were generally five years older than their civilian counterparts. Some had wives. They had lost several years of their lives fighting in the war and were focused on moving forward, rather than participating in a college experience for its own sake. They were fresh from a different hierarchy – a military one – and had no need for an identity as a college man. Lehigh undergraduates, to be sure, were tentative about imposing their rules on these new, nontraditional students, throwing into question the traditions that they typically used to establish identity and order at the institution.

From 1946 to 1948, veterans represented the majority of all male college undergraduates. Horowitz described this period as a time when “outsiders came into their own.”<sup>97</sup> Because these older, more experienced men were not at the mercy of the younger, greener students, they held power even though they did not fit in. In her work, she referenced Lehigh specifically, stating, “At Lehigh, they refused to wear the brown

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<sup>96</sup> Yates, 185.

<sup>97</sup> Horowitz, 184.

cap required of freshmen or light the cigarettes of upper classmen.”<sup>98</sup> She concluded that while the influx of veterans was short lived, they dramatically changed the institutions they attended. Namely, she claimed that they left university culture more divided, and created expectations around income and career that hadn’t been emphasized as much before.

But did veterans really change Lehigh all that much in the long run? Horowitz’s information about veteran’s refusal to buy into dinks was gleaned from a *New York Times Magazine* article from 1946, titled “The Two Joes Meet – Joe College, Joe Veteran.”<sup>99</sup> The two-page piece by Edith Efron featured stories of how veterans were changing Lehigh culture. In it, traditional undergraduate “civilian” students bemoaned the veterans’ lack of school spirit and their studious and serious attitude. They claimed that faculty favored the veterans, who were all “grinds” and who showed no love of college. These older students did not go out for sports, and would not participate in Lehigh traditions. In her article, Efron claimed that:

“The civilians charge further that the veterans are killing Lehigh traditions, and they cite the most recent example: Lehigh freshmen are required by time-honored law to wear brown ties, brown socks and a brown “dinky” cap. ...Unfortunately, the 400-odd freshmen who had seen military service, flatly refused to play this game...Most professors are secretly delighted to see the Joe College activities dying out, and are grateful to the veterans for their dampening influence.”<sup>100</sup>

Accounts from the *Brown & White* showed no particular animosity on the part of students toward veterans. A 1945 editorial called for the university to admit more

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>99</sup> Edith Efron, “The Two Joes Meet-- Joe College, Joe Veteran,” *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times*, June 16, 1946, (1923-Current file), SM11.

<sup>100</sup> Efron, SM11.

veterans in order to keep enrollment up: “At Lehigh, the veteran is a Lehigh man and no more and no less.”<sup>101</sup> A scathing editorial after the release of Efon’s article condemned the piece as “making a mountain out of a molehill.” The *Brown and White* wrote, “We are happy to report to incoming students that actually no undue friction exists. Veterans and non-veterans are in harmony, and no distinction of any sort is made between them.”<sup>102</sup>

There is little evidence, as well, for animosity on the part of the veteran. One letter to the editor stated that. “I think it very generous of Cyanide to exempt the Veteran freshmen from all the regulations and the duties usually applied to freshmen. However, I cannot agree with its viewpoint...For the length of time he was in service he dreamt of the day he would again be a civilian; now that he is a civilian let him accept the civilian’s responsibilities.” He closes with “with the exception of wearing the brown socks, ties and dink” – even in defending traditions, he could not see himself going as far as to submit to the dress code.<sup>103</sup> Even Yates did not believe that veterans had lasting influence: “Although they demanded independence from authority in the manner of living, they brought no great changes to campus life,” he said.<sup>104</sup>

In some ways, the continuing debate over class spirit inevitably stirred up a feeling of unity. In 1946, the *Brown and White* lamented a lack of student letters to the editor and poor turnout for baseball games and other activities – just as generations of Lehigh students had been doing since the 1890s. The lack of class spirit, the editorial said, “seems to be the new Lehigh spirit. And, we repeat, it is a disgrace to the name of

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<sup>101</sup> “Enrollment Is a Problem,” *Brown and White*, Jan. 24, 1945.

<sup>102</sup> “BW’s Answer To N.Y. Times,” *Brown and White*, July 3, 1946.

<sup>103</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Brown and White*, March 13, 1946.

<sup>104</sup> Yates, 186.

our school.” It went on to say, “The *Brown and White* has not lost faith in the average Lehigh man or in the rebirth of the old Lehigh spirit. We feel that spirit is as much a part of the Lehigh tradition as the old chimney of old Packer Hall or the annual renovation of Christmas-Saucon Hall. We feel that spirit is even more. It is the essence of the intangible something that makes the proud statement, ‘I’m a Lehigh man,’ one of the finest possessions of a Lehigh grad.”<sup>105</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, the population of student veterans had decreased, leaving the campus once again more homogenous. American student culture also seemed to level out. A Cornell study of student culture in the 1950s found students to be “politically disinterested, apathetic, and conservative,” despite the fact that there were myriad social issues present during that time. The study authors reasoned that the problems of the era – poverty, injustice, racial unrest, and threat of war and destruction – were too complex for a simple response: “This generation of college students sees no easy or immediate solution to these problems... There are no clearly defined programs around which to rally, no clearly defined answers to the problems their generation confronts. In the slogan of their own campus culture, they ‘play it cool.’”<sup>106</sup>

True enough. Lehigh students in the 1950s seemed content to immerse themselves in undergraduate life. Cyanide, the junior class council, was once again running point on dink enforcement, and *Brown and White* coverage feels campy, compete with photos of dink-wearing babies and frosh shaving while wearing their dinks. Lehigh students welcomed the comfort of the post-World War II university culture, reveling in house parties and hijinks, and steeping themselves in the traditional identity of a college man.

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<sup>105</sup> “The Same Old Story,” *Brown and White*, May 23, 1946.

<sup>106</sup> Rose K. Goldsen, Morris Rosenberg, Robin M. Williams Jr., and Edward A. Suchman. *What College Students Think*. (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1960), 200.

Overall, dinks were accepted, and even welcomed, as part of the college experience. One student even immortalized the dink with a poem titled “Dinks,” with sentiments that could have been right at home in the 1880s:

All hail the dink, the noble dink,  
That all the Freshmen wear.  
Its white and brown  
Colors crown,  
His shock of uncombed hair.

He wears it through the long, long day  
He says he likes to do it  
But he really has  
To, or the upper class  
Would start to make him rue it.

The numbers white and gleaming bright  
Spell 1953  
The noble cap  
They’re perched atop  
For everyone to see

Yes, all the Freshmen love the dink  
They love it more and more,  
And so the shout  
Comes ringing:  
‘Let’s win that tug-of-war.’

~ A freshman<sup>107</sup>

### **Goodnight, Sweet Dink (1960-1970)**

The trend toward expansive university administration and control in the 1920s and 1930s was coming to an end. The 1960s saw the end of university administration acting *in loco parentis* for students. Scholar Michael Moffatt, in his article “College Life: Undergraduate Culture and Higher Education,” described this development as an

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<sup>107</sup> “Frosh Writes Poem to Sublime, Unsung Poet Fails to Sign,” *Brown and White*, Nov. 11, 1949.



extension of the evolution of university control in the early twentieth century, when schools began to develop an infrastructure of deans, staff, programs, and activities to craft student life. Moffatt explained, “As they did so, however, the students faithful to the older student concept that college was, among other things, fundamentally about adolescent autonomy, progressively revised their own notions of college life so that it still belonged to them, moving its essential pleasures closer and closer to their private lives. The end of *in loco parentis* in the 60s was a key victory in this progressive privatization of college life by the students....”<sup>108</sup>

Beyond campus, the world was changing. In an oral history interview in May 2015, Rein Mannik of the Class of 1965 commented on life at Lehigh in the 1960s.

“Our four years were a time of such change, such turmoil. I haven't seen, looking back, another four-year span of such change...We came in 1961. You have to remember, we grew up in our teen years in the Ozzie and Harriet generations, the Fonz and Happy Days. Then we came to Lehigh...During our time here, JFK, assassinated. ... Peace marches, riots, the Watts riots, the Berlin Wall went up, so much turmoil that when we left Lehigh in 1965, there was a certain angst among us. The world changed. It was dramatic.”<sup>109</sup>

That life beyond campus had superseded life on campus was also revealed by writer John Grinnell, in a *New York Times* article that compared the characteristics of college students through the decades. He cited the 1960s as the end of for “Joe College and Betty Coed.” “Today the campus as a social unit plays a minimal part in the lives of students. The classroom, the parking decal, the campus job, the war, and their draft status are more important.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Michael Moffatt. “College Life: Undergraduate Culture and Higher Education,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 62, no. 1, 1991, 51.

<sup>109</sup> Rein Mannik, interview by author, Bethlehem, Pa., May 16, 2015.

<sup>110</sup> John E. Grinnell, “Goodbye Joe College,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 49, no. 9 (May 1968), 521.

In Lehigh's earliest days, assuming the identity of a college man was essential to acceptance and success. As the 1960s approached, this kind of conformity was decried. A 1959 editorial from the *Utah Chronicle* was reprinted in the *Brown and White*: "The entering freshman is given a dink which becomes his identity and starts him down the road to obscurity...He takes part, he belongs...He is steadily gathering around himself insulation against reality. Can our society survive when it is becoming populated with groups and not individuals?"<sup>111</sup>

In 1963, the newspaper reported the resignation of two student house officers, frustrated with the apathy of their residents. One, the paper reported, cited the individuality of Taylor residents as his reason for quitting. "He called the attitude at Taylor 'hypocritical' and 'indifferent,' and said that it was difficult for individuals to accept the authority of another student their age."<sup>112</sup>

The challenges to the dink custom start up again in 1959, when a series of editorial decried its use as childish and stupid. "How the wearing of a ridiculous brown dink, proudly emblazoned with class numerals, promotes class unity is beyond our comprehension," one story stated.<sup>113</sup> Another cynically declared dinks useless in creating camaraderie. "I doubt if anyone can forward a reasonable argument showing how it is that dinks cause unity. Besides, what is unity anyway, and why is it good?"<sup>114</sup>

A 1962 editorial calls dinks a "symbol of antiquity." "It is due time to take a hard look at Lehigh traditions and decide what is worth preserving and what is not. And something which serves no purpose...and has only superficial reasons for its continued

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<sup>111</sup> "Individualism and Education – Inseparable," *Brown and White*, Nov. 10, 1959.

<sup>112</sup> "Taylor Officers Resign Due to Student Apathy," *Brown and White*, March 8, 1963.

<sup>113</sup> "Wearing of the Brown," *Brown and White*, Oct. 13, 1959.

<sup>114</sup> "Writer Refutes Theories on Wearing of Dinks," *Brown and White*, Oct. 16, 1959.

existence should be the first to go.”<sup>115</sup>

Bronner had observed the same fall off in traditions in his exploration of the cane rush. While Lehigh abandoned rushes at the start of the century, they persisted at other institutions in different forms for many decades. But, Bronner wrote, universities in the 1960s had grown large and student rebellion had become the norm. Traditions were unnecessary and passé. The dink and “the rush became a central image of historic associations of class hierarchy, freshman hazing, old-fashioned classical curriculum, male domination of campus life, and the isolation of the old-time college.”<sup>116</sup> In addition, Bronner said, supporting school spirit meant supporting the administration – something college students of the day found unbearable. During the 1960s, their revolution against authority was, he wrote, “of dubious achievement, for under the banner of liberation from the past and tradition, it also encouraged a new culture of narcissism, of immediate gratification and insatiable desires replacing the political economy of the nineteenth century.”<sup>117</sup> Bronner meant that conformity had given way to passionate individuality, obliterating the need for a tradition whose purpose was to create unity, indoctrinate new students, and subject them to a predetermined hierarchy. Students of the 1960s did not want to be subjected to any sort of authority – from administrators or from fellow students.

Moffatt also noted that by the 1960s, college traditions that were handed down through student generations in the past were no longer important to students. He commented in his footnotes, “Such intramural historical forces were undoubtedly important among the undergraduates at one time, especially in the late nineteenth and

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<sup>115</sup> “Symbol of Antiquity,” *Brown and White*, Sept. 18, 1962.

<sup>116</sup> Bronner, “Rise and Fall,” 28.

<sup>117</sup> Bronner, “Rise and Fall,” 32.

early twentieth centuries. But after the 1960s, once there was no longer a strongly marked, highly valued, specifically collegiate subculture to transmit (older, elite versions of ‘college life’), these forces became far less significant. The growing scale and diversity of most institutions of American higher education...has also increasingly mitigated against such internal inheritance of student culture.”<sup>118</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, the dink was on its last legs as a Lehigh tradition. Roger Miller, a leader of the Lehigh chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society, a left-wing student activist group, called for students to burn their dinks in 1967. In 1969, the *Brown and White* reported that most of the dinks available in the bookstore had gone unsold, and those that were purchased were not worn. By 1971, dinks had disappeared, just in time for the arrival of women on campus. The launch of co-education at Lehigh cemented the demise of class traditions and hazing, as this new population was not one to be controlled through rituals based on masculinity, in the name of “the Lehigh man.”

An editorial titled “The ‘Dink Era’ Comes to an End” commented on class regulations that had been abandoned four years before. “Gone are the days of dinks, bonfires, pajama marches, panty raids, and Houseparty Formals. This does not mean that school spirit is dead, but that it has been directed toward other areas of University life.” The writer goes on to encourage students to set aside lazy apathy and become active in student government to show school spirit. “You can sleep through Sunday’s Forum session, or you can exercise your responsibility. Would you rather wear a dink?”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Michael Moffatt, “College Life: Undergraduate Culture and Higher Education,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 62, no. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 1991), 57.

<sup>119</sup> “The ‘Dink Era’ Comes to an End,” *Brown and White*, Sept. 10, 1971.

## **In Conclusion: “Traditions Make Them Family”**

The rise and fall of class traditions at Lehigh offers a new dimension to its rich history. From the advent of the cane rush in the university’s earliest years to the demise of the dink in the 1970s, these traditions served various and valuable purposes for the students who embraced them. In these rites, early students found their feet in a new environment and were instructed in the ways of the university. Through them, they gained an identity not just as a college man, but as a Lehigh man. And once they cemented their role in the college order, they leveraged these traditions to impose the established hierarchy of class power on the next group of students.

When these traditions falter, it is because they have been taken control of by the administration or another body, or because they no longer serve their original purpose for another reason. The Calculus Cremation ceased once sophomores were no longer uniquely bound by a singular class experience, leaving the ceremony to be appropriated by nostalgic alumni. The cane rush was dismantled (rightfully so) by an administration fearing a violent tragedy; the activities substituted in its place were discarded by students because they no longer held meaning. Freshman rules then arose, spelling out exactly what it would take to be a Lehigh man and providing a framework for enforcement through the university’s student social order. Ultimately, students turned away from attempting to control and enforce a conforming identity all together, leaving class traditions entirely by the wayside.

What is perhaps most interesting about these traditions is the correlation between the times during which they are contested and the eras when the identity of the Lehigh student is called into question. In the 1920s and 1930s, when administrative shifts and

greater oversight took more control away from the students, class traditions were a rallying point. When veterans joined the ranks of the university, diversifying a previously homogenous group of students, dinks were brought to the forefront as a symbol of the changing nature of the undergraduate. From these comparisons, one can garner new insights into the Lehigh student experience and the way it has shifted over time.

A version of the dink lingers today at Lehigh. Alumni dust them off and don them for reunion events. The university bookstore carries a version for children. The alumni association recalls them in trivia games at nostalgic events, and included them in its round-up of traditions cited in its “Little Brown Box” project for all incoming students.

It is more than fitting that the alumni association used the dink and other class traditions as a touch point for those new to Lehigh. Their intention with the project was just the same as it was when the traditions were in force more than one hundred years ago: to impart Lehigh’s traditions to the newcomers, in order to create a sense of belonging, pride, and school spirit. Ultimately, like the Lehigh men generations before, they sought to foster loyal Lehigh students, who would one day become loyal Lehigh alumni. They wanted traditions to help create and build the next generation of the Lehigh family. While a rule against walking on the grass might seem whimsical today, bygone traditions might still be used to help students begin to understand and embrace their new home – and to motivate their actions and loyalty. After all, that is what these traditions were intended to do for students who came to Lehigh more than a century before.

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## Experience

### Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA • November 2001 to present

*Senior Director, Advancement Communications*

Lead 13-person team responsible for strategic communications in support of principal and major gifts, annual fund, and alumni and corporate relations efforts for top-tier private research university. Manage coordinated communications and marketing plans that further advancement priorities and campaign goals. Create compelling content that motivates donors and prospects, including case statements, articles, website and marketing copy, proposals, stewardship reports, videos, press releases, executive speeches, and correspondence. Set and enforce standards for messaging and track communications to ensure quality, consistency, and overall effectiveness.

### Harleysville Insurance

Harleysville, PA • September 1998 to November 2001

*Public Relations Administrator*

Responsible for media relations and employee communications for a \$1 billion company. Developed and maintained content for an intranet serving 2,500 employees and an extranet serving 2,000 insurance agents; created marketing and communications programs in support of corporate objectives; wrote, edited and published monthly and quarterly publications; coordinated special events, including product launches and corporate celebrations; supervised freelance writers, photographers, and designers; served as a contact for the press; handled speechwriting, photography, and media production.

### People's Medical Society

Allentown, PA • January 1995 to September 1998

*Editor, Health Writer*

Managed editorial projects from manuscript through production for a nonprofit consumer health publisher. Wrote, copyedited, and proofed in-house projects and packaged books. Clients included publishers such as Macmillan, Crown, IDG Books and Walker. Authored three books, including *First Aid for Dummies* (IDG Books, 1999).

### The Express Times / The Bethlehem Star

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Duties included coverage of Bethlehem education beat plus features, police logs, and breaking news on deadline.

## Education

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